

DEMOS

WHAT NEXT? PRIORITIES FOR BRITAIN

FROM
RENEW NORMAL:
THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSION
ON LIFE AFTER COVID-19

SEPTEMBER 2020

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK has touched every aspect of our lives. From our sleep to our social lives, from our jobs to our journeys, from our finances to our friendships. It has already cost tens of thousands of lives, and caused suffering, loneliness, bereavement, and turmoil to millions of us.

But does this crisis also offer an opportunity for change? Has the experience of Covid-19 opened up new ways to make Britain a better place? Have we learned anything from lockdown that should inform the future path of our country? These are the questions Renew Normal, the People's Commission on Life after Covid, set out to answer.

The answer, set out in this report, is a qualified yes.

We have to recognise that Covid-19 has caused unparalleled pain, heartbreak and suffering. This is not a story of a crisis that healed us. This cloud may have a silver lining, but it is still a cloud. The disease has not gone away, and the economic storm is still gathering, with the potential for mass unemployment in the teeth of a global recession. Unless and until the disease is suppressed globally, we cannot expect a full economic recovery.

And beyond the obvious stories of economic turmoil and ongoing public health measures,



there's a third challenge, uncovered by the work of Renew Normal: Britain has not been brought together by Covid-19, as it seemed in the early days. Our early work showed how diverse Britons' experiences have been: from those who loved home working to those who hated it; from those who've been better off to those who've been on the breadline for months; from those who've been overwhelmed by loneliness to those who are desperate for a moment alone.

Now this report shows that social divisions have opened up too - more toxic even than Brexit. The stakes are so high, when it comes to protecting lives and protecting livelihoods, that people are starting to see those who disagree with them on Covid as "bad" people. This threatens attempts to build national solidarity for a programme of reform and repair.

Nevertheless, we should not despair in the face of these challenges. Instead, we should look harder for the opportunities presented by these unique circumstances. We should not surrender to social division but work to counter it, by focusing on a positive agenda for our shared future. The findings set out here show us where the best opportunities to do that lie: the issues on which the British public most want to see change in their own lives, or in the way the country is run.

Renew Normal was designed to enable citizens to be part of this vital work to find and capitalise on the opportunities Covid-19 has given us. We started by mapping the changes that have happened during this crisis period. Last month, we published *Britain Under Lockdown*, a comprehensive look at the extraordinary breadth and depth of change that our country, and the individuals and communities that comprise it, experienced in the last few months. That report was made possible by contributions from nearly 12,000 members of the public who shared their experiences, stories and ideas.

But our goal in establishing Renew Normal was not to simply observe change happening. Throughout this project, we have sought to ask: what change was welcome? This process of sorting through the good and the bad is key if we are to develop a sense of what "better" should look like. That's where this report fits in.

It summarises the findings of a large scale survey conducted with a representative sample of 10,000

members of the public. The survey was also made available on the project website, renewnormal.co.uk, where hundreds more contributed their views.

The survey enables us to take the next steps in the Renew Normal conversation. Thanks to contributions from the public we have now identified the areas where this crisis has offered the biggest opportunities for positive change in our lives and the way our society is governed. Those are set out in the following pages, which provide a detailed assessment, across different demographics of the population, of what kind of change was welcome, and where the greatest challenges lie.

In the coming three months, we will look in detail at those areas, and develop a set of practical ideas about how to hold on to the change we want; how to reach for better; and how to heal the damage the crisis has caused. As infection levels rise, and public health measures intensify once more, it is clear that the fight against Covid-19 is not over. That makes it vital for us to hold on to as much positive change as we can, to give us the strength to get through the hard times ahead.

We believe that holding open this conversation about how Britain should change - welcoming views and ideas from people of all backgrounds and ideologies - offers us the best chance of bridging the social divisions the crisis has opened up. Our work shows that alongside people's anxiety about the future, there is huge ambition among the British people for our country and how we live, how we work, and how we support each other.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A DIVIDED NATION

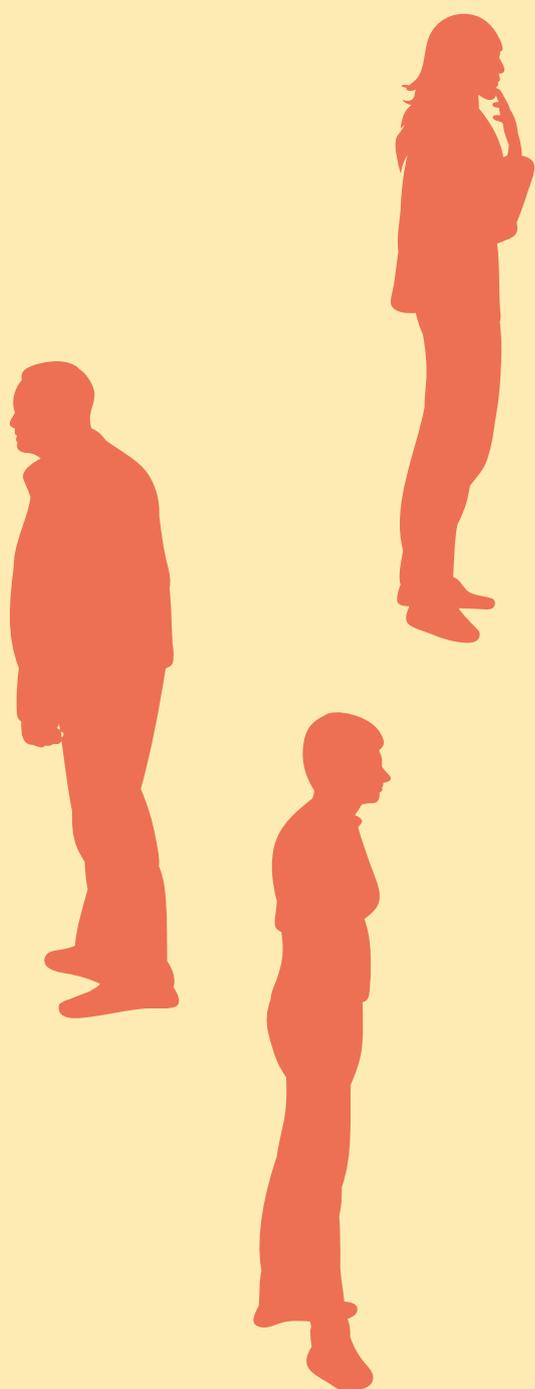
Overall, Covid-19 has had a net negative impact on a whole range of factors in people's lives, from job security to mental health, but this masks wide variation. A substantial minority reported positive impacts on every topic. There were also some areas where people were more likely to report improvements to their lives: connection to their local community, to friends and family and - for parents - relationships with children.

Middle class people were by far the most likely to report upsides from this crisis. For example, 22% of those on incomes of less than £20,000 felt their spending habits had improved, rising to 37% of those on incomes of more than £50,000. More than a third of those in social grade A said they felt happier, compared to just 18% of those in grade E.

Despite being disproportionately affected by the illness itself, BAME groups were slightly more positive in their outlook on a whole range of measures including job security, stress levels, mental health, physical health, and prospects for the future. Black British and Asian people were a lot more likely to say that lockdown was a good thing for their children's educational development.

There was also a divide between young and old, including wider variations in impact among young people. Young people were more likely to say they've got better mental health during the pandemic, but also more likely to report loneliness and isolation.

Covid-19 has also created sharp social fractures between groups who take a different view about the appropriate personal or policy response. Our findings show that the social divide on the key questions associated with Covid-19 - such as mask wearing or lockdown rules - is now deeper than the divide over Brexit.



CHANGING OUR MINDS

We identify a number of issues on which people have changed their attitudes, and a number of areas where people have made positive changes to their habits and behaviours that they are keen to maintain. These will form the core of the next phase of Renew Normal.

When it comes to changes of belief and attitudes, green space is the biggest mover: 48% said green space was very important to them. The next biggest shift is on the question of whether the UK should try to be more self-sufficient for goods and services. 41% said this was very important; a quarter of this group have strengthened their opinion on this.

These self-declared shifts in opinion are only seen among relatively small groups of people. On green space it's only a net 16% of people who newly believe this is very important this is in the life of the UK. 5% newly believe air pollution is very important. The figure is 9% for social care and 8% for health inequality. Finally, 6% reported a shift in their belief about how important educational inequality is, and 9% said they were more concerned about fake news on the internet.

People also perceive themselves to have shifted their views a little on the importance of key workers. 94% say they think low paid workers have been important during the pandemic, compared with 84% who said they thought these workers were important beforehand. 68% say key workers have been "very important"; only 40% say they believed this before the pandemic.

However, roughly half of that shift is reversed when considering how important low paid people will be after the pandemic. Higher paid people were less likely to think low paid workers will still be important after the crisis.

CHANGING OUR HABITS

Lockdown changed our daily lives - our routines, our interactions with families, neighbourhoods and communities - more profoundly than anything else. Many people are keen to maintain these changes once the pandemic is over.

Home life, health and wellbeing: The standard pattern, whether on spending habits, exercise or eating, is that lockdown had no impact for about 40-50% of people. For 20-30% of people it made things much better; for the other 20-30% it made things much worse.

Community connection: The majority of people have felt a change in their relationships with their local community, with just over a third of people feeling more connected to their local community.

Volunteering: Our survey suggested real appetite for more public involvement in the future. nearly three quarters of us believe that volunteers playing a greater role in public services would be good for society, and good for public services.

Working from home: People want to work from home more than they did before the pandemic but less than they have during the pandemic. Only 19% want to work permanently from home, but this rises to 37% when you include those who want to be at home "usually". That is a dramatic uptick from the 21% who worked in this way before the pandemic.

NEXT STEPS

At the heart of the project in the coming months will be a series of open, collaborative surveys on the Polis platform, an open source democratic tool that Demos has pioneered the use of in the United Kingdom. This series of Polis surveys will enable any member of the public to put forward ideas on a number of topics, and rate the ideas and opinions of all other contributors.

The eight topics we have chosen are:

- **Our daily lives**
 - Community networks and volunteering
 - Green spaces and the local environment
- **Our working lives**
 - Where we work
 - National resilience and self-sufficiency
- **The social contract**
 - The role of low paid workers
 - Reducing inequalities
- **Life online**
 - Fake news and misinformation
 - Living well online

In addition, we will be working in partnership with a number of organisations to explore a range of additional opportunities for the UK public policy landscape, including on food, savings, and the future of the urban landscape.

A DIVIDED NATION

METHODOLOGY

Demos conducted a nationally representative survey of 10,061 UK adults aged 18+ online between 31 July - 7 August 2020. Data are weighted to the profile of the population. Full tabulated results are provided alongside this report. We asked a series of questions, informed by the first phase of the Renew Normal project, probing around changes in attitudes and experiences related to the pandemic, and whether these were for the better or for the worse.

MIXED EXPERIENCES

Overall, Covid-19 has had a net negative impact on a whole range of factors in people's lives, from job security to mental health. But while the crisis has, overall, had this negative effect, there remain substantial minorities who have seen positive change. For example, more than a third of people said their financial situation had got worse, but nearly one in five reported that their financial situation had improved.

The seven areas where responses were weighted most heavily towards the negative were:

- 36% of people said their job security was worse - while only 9% said it had got better
- 35% said their financial situation was worse - while 17% said it was better.
- 45% said their stress levels had increased - while 13% said they had decreased.
- 38% said their mental health was worse - while 12% said it had improved.
- 42% said their prospects for the future had deteriorated - while 13% said they had got better.
- 36% said they had been more lonely - while 11% said they were less lonely during lockdown.



- 44% had been more isolated during lockdown - while 9% had been less isolated.

There were, however, some areas where people were more likely to report improvements to their lives. 31% of people said they felt more connected to their local community, and 39% reporting being more connected to friends and family. As with the net negative effects, there were substantial minorities who disagreed: 20% reported being less connected to their community, and 28% said they were less connected to friends and family.

The most positive response was recorded in relation to parents' relationships with their children. 63% said that the experience of lockdown had improved things in their family, while only 9% said it had made relationships harder. Nevertheless, these strong family bonds were counterbalanced by strong feelings about the impact of school closures on children:

- Half said lockdown had been negative for kids' education, and for their social development.
- Only a quarter said the experience had improved their children's education and social development.

When it comes to people's experiences with technology, the picture is just as complicated. Greater use of - and reliance on - video conferencing apps and online services was seen as a good thing by more than half of respondents. Less than one in ten saw this as a problem. But there was real concern about increased prevalence of fake news - 54% believed this had got worse, and only one in ten thought things had got better. The same story played out in relation to online fraud: 49% said the situation was worse, while 8% believed things were better.

THE NATURE OF THE DIVIDE

When lockdown started, many people suggested that this would be a great leveller in society, as we were all forced to live under the same strict set of rules. This survey confirms the findings of our earlier research, and other studies, that this did not happen. Not only were experiences wildly divergent, the patterns of harm and benefit mapped closely onto existing inequalities in society. In short: the poorer you were before this crisis, the more likely you were to struggle during it.

Middle class people were by far the most likely to report positive upsides from this crisis. Take

improved community relations: 46% of those in social grade A reported improvements, falling to just 27% of those in social grade E. This divide is replicated across a whole range of factors:

- **Spending habits:** 22% of those on incomes of less than £20,000 felt their spending habits had improved, rising to 37% of those on incomes of more than £50,000.
- **Eating habits:** 17% of those on less than £20,000 said they had eaten better, compared to 27% of those on incomes of more than £35,000.
- **Exercise:** 40% of those in social grade A were exercising more, compared to just 21% of those in grade E.
- **Financial situation:** In social grade A, 27% said their finances had improved, while in social grade E, only 12% felt their finances had improved.
- **Education:** Families in the highest social grade reported almost the opposite result to the population at large. 45% said lockdown had been good for their children's education, and only a quarter said it had been bad.
- **Happiness:** More than a third of those in social grade A said they felt happier, compared to just 18% of those in grade E.

A range of evidence has shown that people from BAME communities have been more likely to catch Covid-19, and have been at greater risk of losing their lives. In June 2020, Public Health England published research confirming that BAME people were significantly overrepresented in the COVID-19 death toll. When controlling for region, deprivation, age and sex, the researchers found that people of Bangladeshi descent were twice as likely to die from the coronavirus as people who were ethnically white, for example.

Social consequences have been more mixed, however. We know that people from BAME backgrounds are disproportionately represented among those on low incomes and in poverty; given the findings above, we would expect to see higher levels of negative social consequences among non-white groups.

However, on a number of issues the reverse is true. BAME groups were slightly more positive in their outlook on a whole range of measures including job security (23% of Asian Britons and 20% from

Black and mixed race backgrounds improved vs 8% among White Britons), stress levels (28% better among Black and Asian people, 11% among White people), mental health (improved among a quarter of Asian and Black people compared with one in ten White), physical health (42% improved among Black Britons compared with 18% of White Britons), and prospects for the future (32% of Black Britons say it's got better, compared with 24% of Asian and

mixed race Britons and 11% of White Britons). Black British and Asian people were a lot more likely to say that lockdown was a good thing for their children's educational development: 47% and 44% respectively, compared with 23% of White people.

BAME groups reported feeling more connected to their communities, and their friends and family, in greater numbers than White respondents.

	Asian	Black	Mixed	White	Population average
More connected to community	36%	37%	42%	30%	31%
More connected to friends and family	52%	57%	42%	37%	39%

BAME respondents were also more likely to newly have someone to ask for help in their local community: 9% of Asian respondents reported this, and 10% of Black respondents, compared to only 6% of White respondents.

There was also a greater shift in perceptions of the police - in both directions - from BAME respondents.

	Asian	Mixed	Black	White
Views of police improved	25%	25%	25%	18%
Views of police worsened	25%	33%	39%	21%

COMPARING YOUNG AND OLD

There has been a huge debate during this crisis about which generation is suffering the most. Older people are far more likely to suffer the health consequences of catching the illness, as well as being far more likely to be shielding to protect themselves. However, younger people are most likely to be employed in sectors that are most adversely affected by lockdown, and will be left with the fiscal and economic legacy of the crisis.

Our survey reinforces the idea that this is a complex picture.

On job security it is people in their 40s who appear worst hit: 8% think their situation has improved but 48% say it has got worse. By contrast, 24% of the

youngest group - 18-24 - said their security had improved.

Young people were also more likely to say their financial situation is better as a result of the pandemic: 26% of 18-24s compared with a population average of 17%. Across all age groups, about a third said their finances had got worse.

Young people were also more likely to say they've got better mental health during the pandemic: 21% of 18-24s and 24% of 25-29s compared with 11% overall. This may be associated with the numbers reporting better health habits during the lockdown period: younger groups were far more likely to say they had eaten better, exercised more, and improved their physical health.

On the other hand, young people were also more likely to report loneliness and isolation. 55% of 18-24s said they were lonely, compared with 31% of those over 70. 59% of 18-24s reported isolated, compared with 40% of those over 70.

THE NEW SOCIAL FRACTURES

Demos has long been interested in political and social divisions in our society. Last year, in the run-up to the General Election, we published a Political Division Index, which mapped the health of the debate on a range of political issues. This included an assessment of the empathy people felt towards those of differing political opinions. The research showed that, on the vast majority of issues, most British people were willing to ascribe positive motivations even to those on the opposing side of the debate. Brexit was one of the few issues on which division and tribalism held sway, and the debate had become toxic.

Building on the methodology we deployed in the PDI, as part of the Renew Normal survey we asked people to tell us how they felt about people who disagreed with them on a number of current political issues, both associated with Covid-19 and more broadly. Our findings show that the social divide on the key questions associated with Covid-19 - such as mask wearing or lockdown rules - is now deeper than the divide over Brexit.

- 58% of mask wearers say they hate (12%), resent (29%) or think non-mask wearers are bad people (16%)
- 56% of lockdown supporters say they hate (11%), resent (30%) or think opposers of lockdown are bad people (16%)
- 68% of people who did not break lockdown rules say they hate (14%), resent (33%) or think lockdown rule breakers are bad people (21%)
- 36% of people who clapped for the NHS say they hate (8%), resent (18%) or think non-clappers are bad people (9%)
- 60% of people who did not stockpile essentials say they hate (14%), resent (31%) or think stockpilers are bad people (15%)
- For comparison, 33% of people who didn't vote leave resent, hate, or think people who voted for Brexit are bad people; 26% either admire, respect or think they're good people

- Leavers are even less resentful of Remainers - 33% of people who didn't vote Remain say they admire/respect/think Remain voters are good people, only 20% that they resent/hate/think they're bad people

The anger seems to be felt more intensely by those who support stronger counter-measures in the fight against Covid-19. People who are more relaxed or sceptical about lockdown and safety precautions did not resent the more concerned and cautious - non-mask wearers were more likely to say positive than negative things about mask wearers, with the same true of lockdown opponents about lockdown supporters.

Like the Brexit divide that dominated politics for the years after the referendum, there is a clear separation in attitudes to lockdown between people of different age groups. Retired people are the biggest supporters of lockdown itself: 91% support lockdown. By contrast, a quarter of 18-24s opposed lockdown and 29% admitted to breaking the rules.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The primary goal of conducting this survey was to identify the areas of public policy in which positive change could emerge from the crisis - either because new options had been tried, and worked well, or because people's perspectives about what matters had changed. In *Britain Under Lockdown* we identified a huge array of different areas for potential change, grouped around four domains:

- **Our daily lives:** family, wellbeing, communities and the local environment
- **Our working lives:** commuting, urban space, pay inequality, and our industrial strategy
- **The social contract:** our health and care systems, health inequality, and the welfare safety net
- **Life online:** the impact of relying more intensively on the internet for our news, our economic and social lives, and public services.

This survey has allowed us to look in more depth and identify the topics on which to conduct more detailed analysis with the public.

This section looks at different topics we covered in the survey and reports where people identified the most welcome changes in their lives or perspectives, and where things had been more difficult. It therefore enables us to identify the issues on which the Renew Normal conversation should focus in order to find the best ideas for Britain's future.

It looks at two sets of perspectives: the issues on which we have changed our minds, and the domains in which our habits and behaviours have shifted. On the issues where we have changed our minds, this may open new political space for new policy work. Where it is our habits and behaviours that have shifted, the opportunity is different: it is to identify ways to enable people to stick with the



improvements they have made, or move away from impacts that have been harmful.

CHANGING OUR MINDS

Key to this analysis was a set of questions about how important some political and policy issues were to people both before the pandemic and now. People perceive that their attitudes have changed somewhat on a range of issues that now seem more politically important to them.

We can't go back in time and ask respondents what they thought about issues before this crisis. But we can ask them what they believe they have changed their minds about. These questions identified a range of topics on which participants believe their opinions have shifted from what they believed before the pandemic. We chose these topics on the basis of an open-ended question in our first Renew Normal survey, where we asked people to tell us what they had changed their minds about during or as a result of the pandemic.

Green space is the biggest mover: 48% said green space was very important to them - a third of whom say this is a new opinion. The next biggest shift is on the question of whether the UK should try to be more self-sufficient for goods and services. 41% said this was very important; a quarter of this group have strengthened their opinion on this.

In thinking about how Britain should and could change as a result of the pandemic, it is important to recognise that these self-declared shifts in opinion are only seen among relatively small groups of people. On green space it's only a net 16% of people who newly believe this is very important this is in the life of the UK. 5% newly believe air pollution is very important. The figure is 9% for social care and 8% for health inequality. Finally, 6% reported a shift in their belief about how important educational inequality is, and 9% said they were more concerned about fake news on the internet.

In addition, many of those who have 'upgraded' these issues in their political priority list only say their view has shifted from thinking the issue is "important" to "very important". When we look at the increases in the number of people newly marking an issue as "fairly important," or "very important" the opinion shifts are even smaller:

We cannot know the extent to which people are misreporting their past beliefs. It may be that opinion has shifted more, or less, than people

Issue	% increase in people reporting the issue is fairly or very important
Access to green space	8
Air pollution	4
Health inequality	6
Issues facing the social care system	6
The benefits system	5
Educational inequalities	5
How the internet affects the news we read	5
UK self-sufficiency	7

remember. Overall, however, responses suggest the pandemic has triggered relatively subtle shifts in public opinion, even on the issues that have dominated the media and political debates.

IN DEPTH: LOW PAID WORKERS

To test in more depth the extent to which people have changed their minds on one of these core issues, we asked a series of questions about low paid workers. This suggests people do have more respect for low paid workers, but there is already evidence of regression to come.

The public has perceived a net positive move in attitudes to low paid key workers, though the plurality hasn't seen a change: 28% say attitudes have improved, 18% say they have got worse, while 46% report no change.

People perceive themselves to have shifted their views a little on the importance of key workers. 94% say they think low paid workers have been important during the pandemic, compared with 84% who said they thought these workers were important beforehand. 68% say key workers have been "very important"; only 40% say they believed this before the pandemic.

However, roughly half of that shift is reversed when considering the importance of low paid people after the pandemic - 53% say they will be very important (down 15 points from during), 89% that they will be important (down 5 points). For those whose views revert back, the previous change presumably is seen as being something specific to the circumstances of the pandemic rather than a

more fundamental insight into the importance to society of low paid workers.

Women were more likely than men to say they have been very important during the pandemic (71 vs 65); similarly, E grade were a lot more likely than A grades (72% vs 54%); retired people were a lot more likely (80%) than homemakers or students (64%, 65% respectively); and White people (70% vs 55% Asian people). Interestingly, White people have seen one of the largest increases in value of low paid workers, with 36% of White people thinking they were 'very important' before the pandemic compared with 70% during the pandemic and then 54% of them thinking they will be very important after the pandemic.

People earning £50k+ were less likely than those earning up to £20k to say they valued low paid workers. This difference has vanished during the pandemic, with a similar percentage at both income levels thinking low paid workers were very important. However, it is likely we will see regression: those over £50k were 11 points less likely to think low paid workers will be very important after the pandemic.

Issue	Earning < £20K	Earning > £50K
Low paid workers were important before...	43%	34%
Low paid workers were important during...	68%	67%
Low paid workers were important after...	57%	46%

CHANGING OUR HABITS

Lockdown changed our daily lives - our routines, our interactions with families, neighbourhoods and communities - more profoundly than anything else. Our survey shows that, while experience was divided as set out above, radical shifts occurred in most people's lives in one way or another.

Home life, health and wellbeing

Nearly two thirds of parents, as reported above, said the pandemic had been a good thing for their relationship with their children - though stay at home parents were less likely to record

this improvement, at 54%. A third of us said our relationships with our families had improved - and young people were most likely to say this.

But across most other domains of home and personal life, the lockdown has been a tale of extraordinary variance. The standard pattern, whether on spending habits, exercise or eating, is that lockdown had no impact for about 40-50% of people. But for 20-30% it made things much better; for the other 20-30% it made things much worse.

For example: 28% reported their eating habits had got worse, while 23% said they had got better. Across exercise, spending and eating habits young people were more likely to report positive changes - though students were also more likely to report negative changes to their food consumption.

Community connection

The majority of people have felt a change in their relationships with their local community, with just over a third of people feeling more connected to their local community.

A small number of people have built new networks, but the majority already had them:

- 69% of people already knew someone in their neighbourhood that could help them before the pandemic.
- The groups most likely to have someone they could call on for help locally were: White (69%); those earning over 50k (72%); retired (82%); As (75%); people living in the East of England (74%).
- However, 6% of us have now got someone locally they could ask for help, whereas before they could not.
- The groups most likely to have said that they have now got someone they could ask locally where before they could not were: 10% of Black British people and 9% of Asian; 8% of people living in Wales; people in social grade As (10%); 18-24s (12%); with children (8%).

Similarly, a small number of us now know the names and contact details of our neighbours, but the highest increases have been seen by the groups more likely to have had them previously.

A significant proportion of us still do not know the names and contact details of people in our neighbourhood (45%) - but a slightly larger

proportion of us do: 48%. In particular, people in London and North East (both 51%); Asian British (52%); 61% of those in social grade A report this: substantially higher than those in grade D, 36% of whom reported having this information.

These groups have similarly been more likely to see an increase in now knowing the names and contact details. For example, the largest increase was for people in A: 14% of them now know the contact details and names where before they did not - which makes them almost twice as likely as the average person to have built new social networks during lockdown.

Volunteering

12% of Britons say they volunteered for the NHS during the pandemic. BAME groups were roughly three times more likely than White people to volunteer, with 27% of Asian people and 30% of mixed race people reporting that they have volunteered in the NHS or another public service. 28% of those aged between 18-24 said they had volunteered.

Logic would suggest this is an overestimate, likely caused by a combination of social desirability bias and including other volunteering (for example contributing to a mutual aid group).

But this is an area where our survey suggested real appetite for more public involvement in the future. 42% of respondents said that they were very likely or fairly likely to volunteer for the NHS or public service in the future. And nearly three quarters of us believe that volunteers playing a greater role in public services would be good for society, and good for public services.

Working from home

People want to work from home more than they did before the pandemic but less than they have during the pandemic.

During the crisis, the number of people always, or usually, working from home, doubled. 19% said they always worked from home - up from 11% before the pandemic. And another 16% usually worked from home, also up from 11%. It is important to remember that - even at the peak of the crisis - about 40% of working people never worked from home, and will never be able to do so.

Government is now working to encourage more people to return to offices in order to support town and city-centre economies, and public transport networks, which have been starved of their regular customer base. By 51% to 9% people think more working from home has been good for themselves personally, and 62% to 10% say it's been good for the country overall - though this may change as more attention is paid to the impact on the high street.

What people want going forward is greater flexibility, with a clear shift towards a greater preference for home working. Only 19% want to work permanently from home, but this rises to 37% when you include those who want to be at home "usually". That is a dramatic uptick from the 21% who worked in this way before the pandemic.

NEXT STEPS

Renew Normal is a national conversation in which everyone's contributions and ideas are welcome. That is why, in the next stage of the work, we will make sure there are a wide range of opportunities to contribute that are open to anyone who wishes to take part. These open research methodologies will be conducted alongside more targeted work on specialist topics - including deliberative forums, further representative polling, interviews with experts, and wide engagement with representative and membership organisations.

At the heart of the project in the coming months will be a series of open, collaborative surveys on the Polis platform, an open source democratic tool that Demos has pioneered the use of in the United Kingdom. This series of Polis surveys will enable any member of the public to put forward ideas on a number of topics, and rate the ideas and opinions of all other contributors.

We have prioritised the issues on which there is the most potential for positive change in society, either because public attitudes have shifted, or because our habits and behaviours have shifted.

The eight topics we have chosen are:

- **Our daily lives**
 - **Community networks and volunteering** - there has been a substantial shift in people's experiences during lockdown, there is new infrastructure in place, and the public reported a strong desire to see more volunteering in the future.
 - **Green spaces** - this topped the poll when it comes to a shift in what people value most. There may be an opportunity to improve access for all, and this should see improvements in wellbeing and mental health.



- **Our working lives**

- **Where we work** - the shift to more widespread home working has been one of the most obvious and dramatic changes during the pandemic. It has huge knock-on consequences for town and city centre economies. And our survey demonstrated there is substantial appetite for lasting change.
- **National resilience** - our survey showed that the issue of Britain’s ability to be self-sufficient for essential goods and services is of huge importance to the public in the light of the pandemic, and its salience has substantially increased.

- **The social contract**

- **Low paid workers** - The pandemic demonstrated to many people the importance of low paid workers in our economy, and while there is some sign of regression, there is nevertheless a substantial number of people who believe their change of heart will be long lasting.
- **Inequalities** - Our survey suggested a small, but meaningful increase in the number of people who are concerned about a range of inequalities including on health, race, and education.

- **Life online**

- **Fake news and misinformation** - Our survey reported a substantial shift in public attitudes about the importance of this issue, which may become even more salient if and when a vaccine emerges. This may open new areas of public policy debate.
- **Living online** - This is an area where people’s habits changed very dramatically, and there is clear evidence that people will not shift fully back to the way things were. We will explore public attitudes to the implications of this shift.

Topic	Polis fieldwork week commencing
Low paid and key workers	14 September
Online life	21 September
Fake news (inc vaccines)	28 September
Places of work	5 October
Communities and volunteering	12 October
Economic resilience	19 October
Green spaces and the local environment	26 October
Inequalities	2 November

In addition, we will be working in partnership with a number of organisations to explore a range of additional opportunities for the UK public policy landscape.

This will include a depth analysis that cuts across the three domains of our home lives, our working lives and the social contract, addressing all three of these domains through the lens of our attitudes about food.

We will be partnering with a pension firm on analysing the opportunities for helping people to improve their savings habits, and an investment firm on the wider economic implications of a shift to home working. Further partnerships will be announced in the coming weeks.

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