

11th September 2020

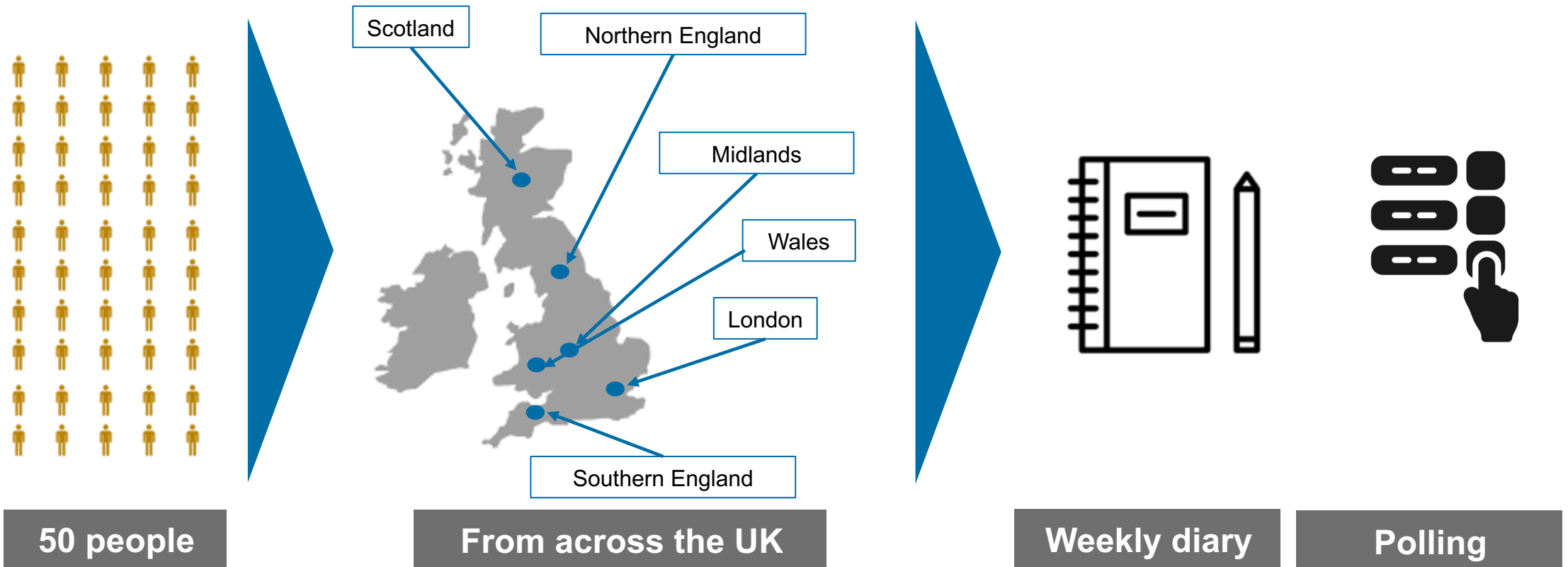
BritainThinks

Coronavirus Diaries

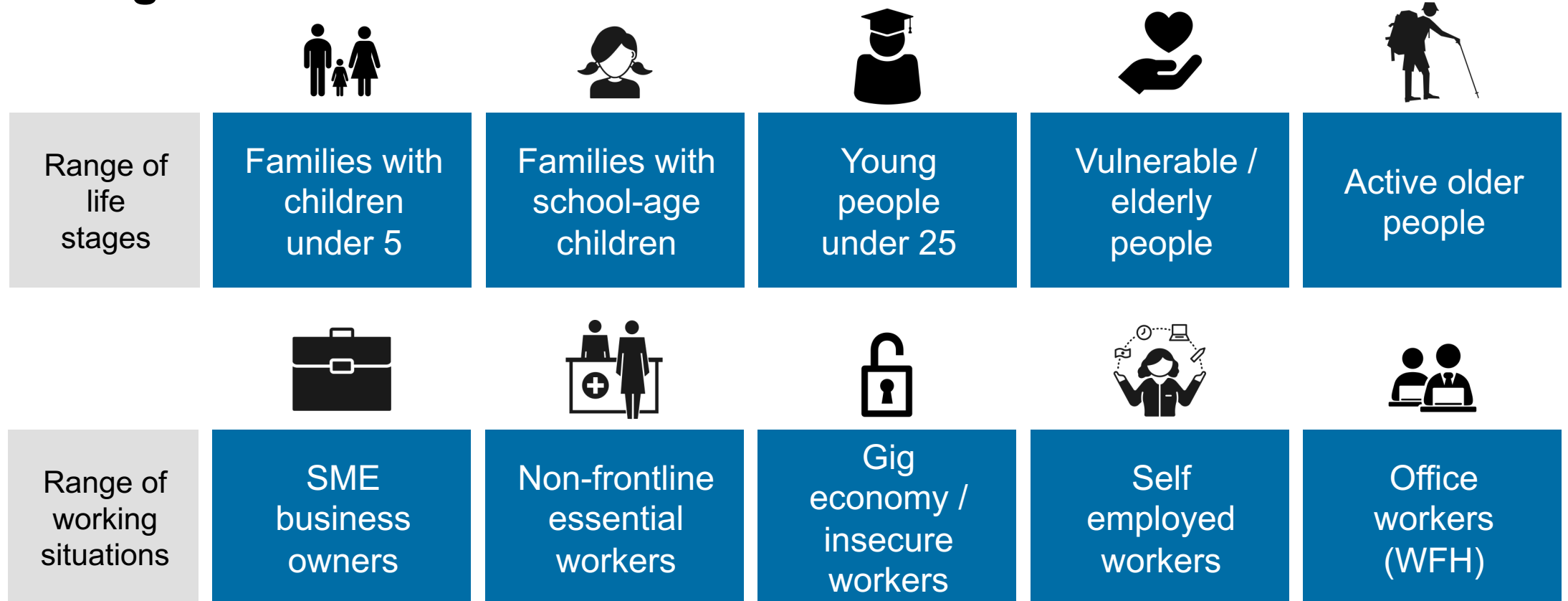
Week 22 Report

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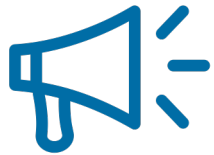
We have been following the crisis as it plays out in people's lives in real time since early April



Our Diarists come from different locations, lifestyles and backgrounds



Each week Diarists tell us about their views and experiences of the pandemic:



Context

The news stories that have stood out to Diarists each week



Mood

How Diarists are feeling each week and what's on their minds



Behaviour

What have Diarists been doing differently and how it makes them feel



Reputation

Perceptions of Government, politicians and brands at this time

Key findings

- 1** **The mood seems to have returned to frustration** – Diarists describe a sense of ‘limbo’ with little hope of real progress on the horizon.
- 2** **Nonetheless, Diarists have been out and about more (and spending more)**, with many saying their experiences of eating out gave them confidence to try other ‘new’ activities.
- 3** **For parents, the return to school has gone better than expected**, with huge appreciation for all that teachers and school staff have done to make schools safe.
- 4** No matter whether they prioritise health or the economy, **Diarists feel the Government is performing poorly**: too gung-ho for some, too risk averse for others.
- 5** In a ‘snap poll’ taken on Thursday evening, **Diarists tended to support the intention of the new ‘Rule of 6’ but questioned whether it is as simple or sensible as it seems.**

Students returning to school and high rates of infection amongst young people have been the most dominant news stories this week

Domestic CV developments:

- **Schools returning**
- **Rapidly changing foreign travel restrictions and airlines cashing in on returns to the UK**

- Increasing number of cases in Scotland, Glasgow in particular
- UK cities being on watchlists or being placed back into local lockdowns

International CV developments:

- Covid-deniers protest in Berlin

Brexit is now beginning to be noticed again by a small number of diarists, however the news stories that gained most attention this week were:

- Students returning to school after much debate about whether this is the right move
- Variations in travel restrictions adopted by different EU countries and the rush to return to the UK

"There is this strange shift back to Brexit discussions that is quite amusing. Brexiteers are scrambling to achieve some semblance of a deal, but I doubt that'll happen."

Under 25

"The travel safe list has changed so frequently I don't know what is safe anymore."

Office worker (now WFH)

For our Diarists, a sense of limbo has returned with many describing the same sense of monotony felt during lockdown earlier in the year

3 words used by Diarists to describe how they feel

w/c 31st August



- There's concern that the numbers of infections is rising again, and frustration at the continued restrictions on day to day life
- In line with published polling, there are signs of emerging divisions, with young people an increasing focus of anger

54%

think that the coronavirus situation in the UK is getting worse (vs. 31% two weeks ago)

68%

of people who did not break lockdown rules have strong negative views about lockdown rule-breakers²

"It feels like we're playing whack a mole and every time it gets whacked in one place it pops up in another."
Gig economy worker

Despite this, we are seeing much greater levels of activity amongst Diarists, reflecting a wider increase in consumer spending



Barclaycard said **consumer spending saw the smallest shortfall since lockdown began**, at only **2.6% lower** than in July 2019.

Cinema trips



"I went to see Tenet, and they did a fantastic job of reassuring customers that it was safe."

Under 25

Back to work



"I went back to work this week and I've had the most normal week since lockdown begun."

Essential worker

Football matches



"I've been to football tournament with my son for the first time which was really good."

Essential worker

'Staycations'



"I went away with my family to get away from the bad news. I felt very relaxed."

Office worker (WFH)

Eat Out to Help Out played a significant role: For many, a safe restaurant experience gave them confidence to try other activities



- Diarists were impressed by the measures that had been put in place and said this activity acted as a gateway to them taking part in other retail and leisure activities

"You get so used to staying in your own bubble that you need to socialise and get back out there."

Unemployed

"It got people out into restaurants and feeling comfortable around strangers again."

Parent with school aged children

However, there is still a minority who say they are too afraid of the health risk to go out into a social setting

For families, the last week has been dominated by the return to school which on the whole has been a positive experience

- 32/50 in our sample felt that the return to school had gone well
 - Parents reporting children across age groups adapting well to their new schedules and rules within school
- Teachers and headteachers were praised throughout our sample for the huge effort in preparing schools
 - Parents stated noticing a number of different strategies in place to keep children their safe:



**Staggering
school start and
finish times**

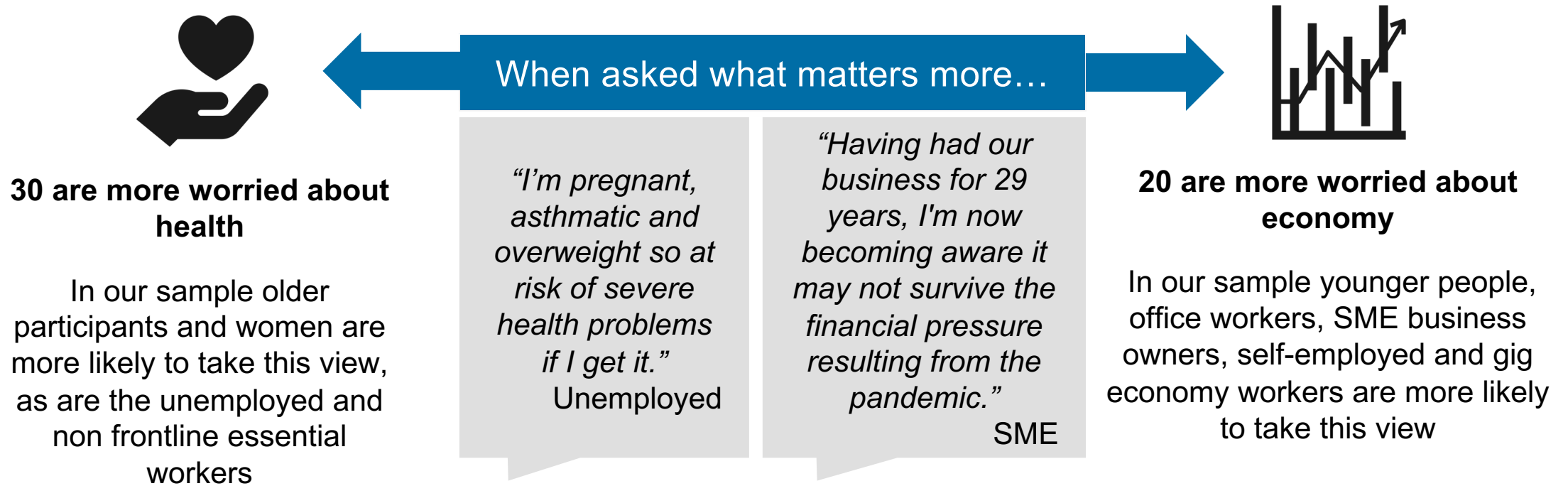
**Students
cleaning desks
at the start / end
of each class**

**Sending emails
and letters out
to keep parents
updated**

**Teachers standing
at school gates
with hand
sanitizer**

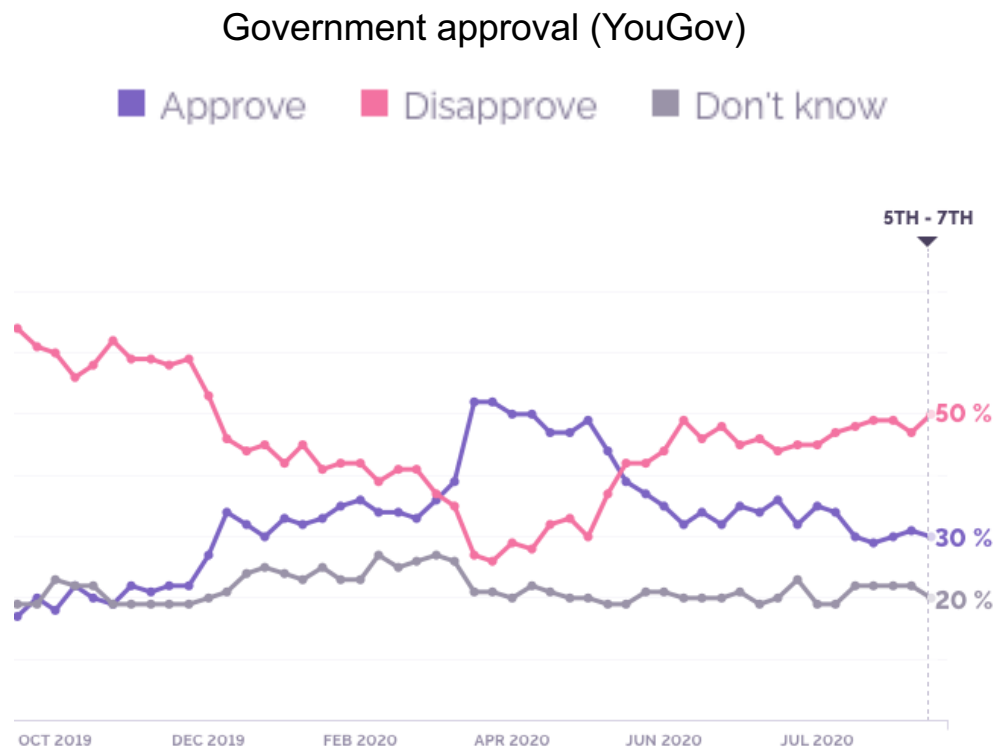
**Alternating break
and dinner times
between year
groups**

Health was the clear priority over the economy in previous weeks. Our Diarists are now much more split on which matters most.



Polling shows that the economy and health are almost tied as the top issues facing the UK; 55% say the economy and 52% say health is the more important (decline from 60% in early Aug)

No matter which they prioritise, Diarists have a dim view of Government: Too gung-ho for some, too risk averse for others



Opening up too quickly...

VS

Being too risk averse...

"The Government is doing too much too soon. Schools can't socially distance."

Parent with young children

"Across all metrics worldwide, the risk of death to healthy individuals is low. But the risk to society of a continued convulsion is very high."

SME business owner

Government approval has flatlined over the last month, as it struggles to reconcile emerging divisions

The pandemic is cementing views on politicians' characters

If X were an animal, what kind of animal would they be....

Boris Johnson



"People tend to see pigs as comical and fall for their oafish charm."

Parent with children under 5

39%
Approval

41%
Disapproval

Keir Starmer



"Looking down on the situation, analysing everything. Can be aggressive."

Office worker
WFH

21%
Approval

19%
Disapproval

Nicola Sturgeon



"Trustworthy and loyal, protects her people. Makes a lot of noise."

Gig economy worker

30%
Approval

43%
Disapproval

While they would like business and the wealthy to pay, most Diarists expect 'ordinary people' to bear the brunt of the Covid bill.

- Diarists want to see high earners and big business targeted (especially those who have seen profits increase during the pandemic)
- But they expect that tax rises will have the worst impact on 'ordinary' people

"As bad as paying extra tax is public service cuts would be worse."

Self employed worker

70%

Expect their taxes to rise as a result of the crisis

"Sadly it's probably average Joe that's going to be worse affected. That's always the way isn't it."

Gig economy worker

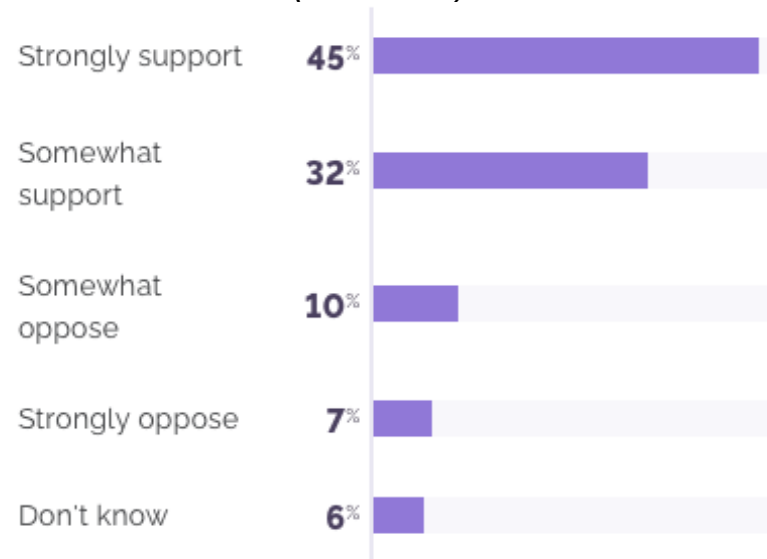
60%

Would be willing to pay more tax to see the NHS better funded

We conducted a ‘snap poll’ at the end of the week to get a read on how our Diarists had responded to the ‘rule of 6’ announcement

There is support for the new rule of 6, but it has worsened the mood

Do you support or oppose the new lockdown rules which limit social gatherings in England to six people? (YouGov)



"I support this because I'm fed up with young people disobeying the rules"

Older, retired

"I oppose this because the rules are haphazard and don't seem to be backed by science."

Office worker WFH

3 words used by Diarists to describe how they feel on...

Monday

Friday



Whilst the rule *feels* simple and clear, Diarists see lots of inconsistencies, and there is criticism of how it fits with other rules

- There is support for the idea of a single, simple rule that everyone can follow
 - And general agreement that if this can stave off a second lockdown, then it is worth it
 - For some, this is welcome proof that the Government is prepared to take tough and unpopular decisions

"I'm happy that they're meeting the rising cases of coronavirus with further restrictions so that we don't risk going back in to full lockdown. I would be disappointed if they had done nothing."

Older, retired

However, many diarists question whether the new rule really makes sense:

Both on it's own terms...

"It's just silly. I can mix with 6 people from different households then they can mix with another 6 people so in reality everyone is mixing" Parent with young children

...and in relation to all the other rules & exemptions

"It is all so contradictory, how does it make sense that i can go and play a competitive football game mixed with 22 other households but i can't go and meet over six friends"

Office worker WFH

Thank you

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