

7th August 2020

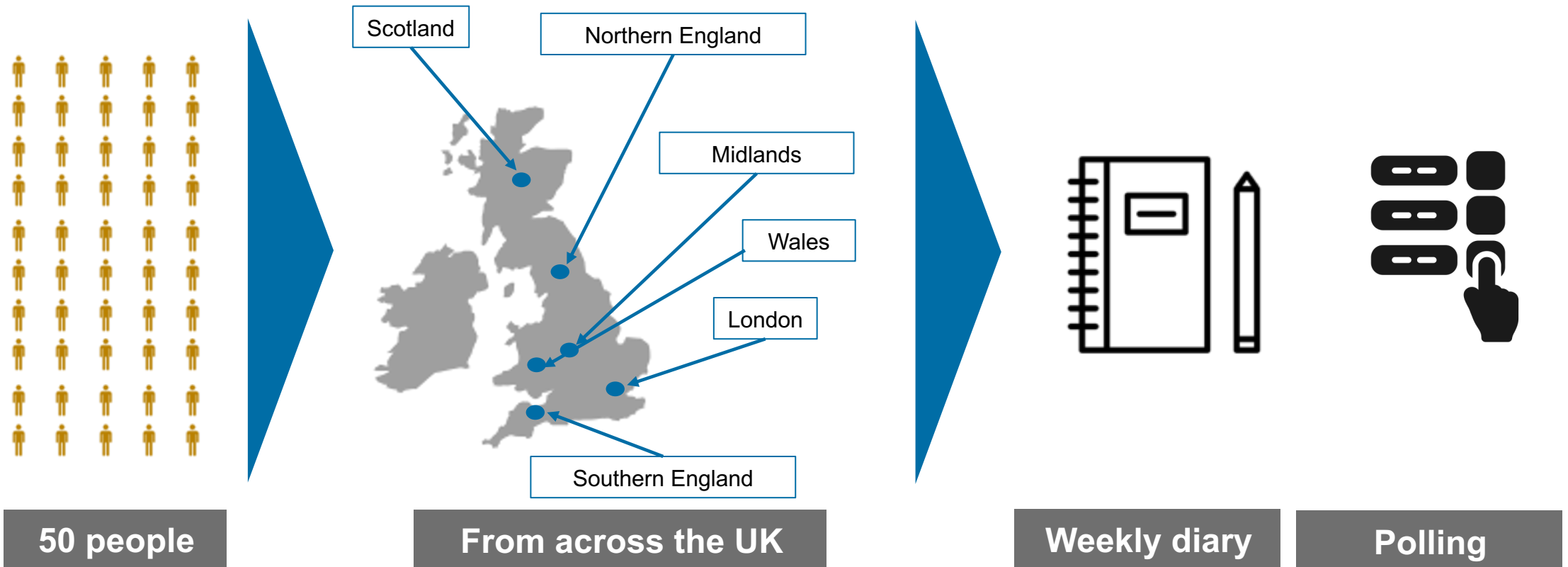
BritainThinks

Coronavirus Diaries

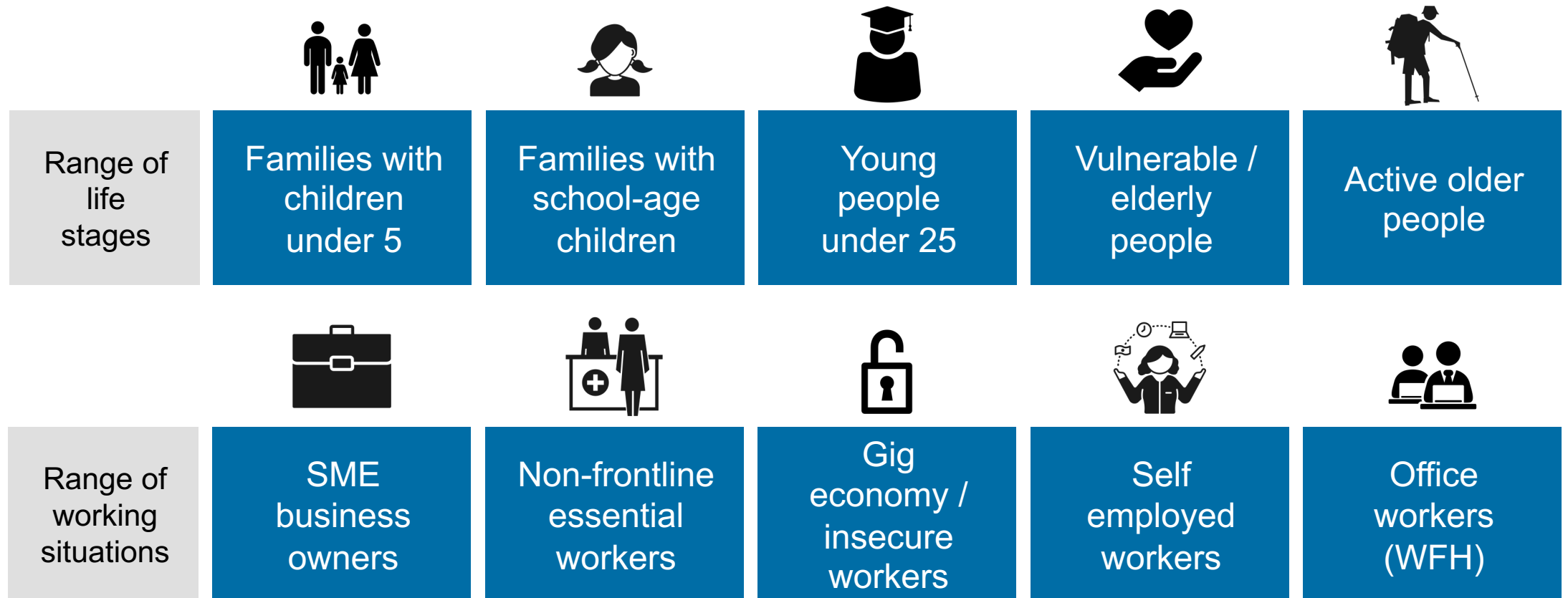
Week 18 Report

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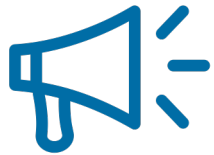
We have been following the crisis as it plays out in people's lives in real time since early April



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** There has been a shift in mood as Diarists start to understand that ongoing restrictions and local lockdowns are likely to be part of life for the foreseeable future
- 2** Life right now is a dilemma; normality seems within reach, but every decision involves a risk assessment. Nowhere is this clearer than when trying to book a holiday
- 3** Concern about the economy is mounting as the public realise the economic impact will last longer than they initially anticipated
- 4** Those in financial distress fear they could end up 'locked out' of the economy. This is most acute for those who slipped through the gaps in government support
- 5** Government support levels have stabilised, and largely reflect partisan views. Local lockdowns are supported, but there is criticism of the way they have been implemented

Local lockdowns in the North have been the most dominant news story this week by far

News stories standing out to Diarists this week are dominated by Coronavirus

Domestic CV developments:

- **Local lockdowns in Manchester and other places in the North of England**
 - **All non-essential travel to Spain is banned and a mandatory two-week quarantine is in place when returning to the UK**
- Boris Johnson acknowledges the rising risk of a second spike and second lockdown
 - The launch of the Government's new 'Eat Out to Help Out' initiative
 - UK Government ordering new vaccines

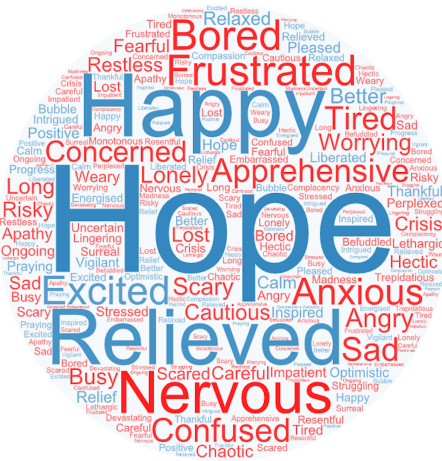
International CV developments:

- **Lockdowns being reintroduced in different countries**
- US elections means that Covid-19 has taken a backseat in US politics

- This week mentions of non-CV related news has dipped, as the focus this week has returned to the crisis in the UK.
- News stories that gained most attention from Diarists include :
 - New lockdown restrictions across the North of England following a spike in Covid-19 transmissions
 - Reintroduction of a travel ban on Spain, as widely reported in the media

There has been a distinct change in the public mood; whereas for weeks optimism was on the rise, now we are seeing this fade

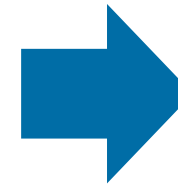
3 words used by *Diarists* to describe how they feel

w/c 6th July

w/c 13th July



w/c 20th July

w/c 3rd August

"It's now August! I don't think anyone expected this to go on for so long!"

Office Worker WFH

Over the past two weeks we've seen big changes in the public's behaviour as the country opens up



73%

Met up with other people to socialise this week

52%

Would feel comfortable eating at a restaurant

54%

Have travelled to work in last week

"I went to Westfield and met up with a couple of friends that I've not seen since lockdown began and that really helped cheer me up."

Non-frontline essential worker

"We went to the seaside and had a holiday with a group of friends. It was so nice to be social again, and be out in nature again."

SME business owner

But this is accompanied by the realization that local lockdowns and social distancing will be part of life for a long time to come



88%

Expect the effects of coronavirus to last longer than a year

76%

Expect there will be a second wave in the next year or so

We can see initial excitement around new freedoms has worn off and is instead being replaced by steady realisation that this may be the 'new normal' for a long time to come

"It's getting to the point where we've spent more of 2020 in some form of lockdown than not and it's tiring, I think I've accepted that it's not going to be the same as it was again."

Young person under 25

"I'm worried we'll never move on from this "stage" of lockdown. It feels a bit like purgatory."

SME business owner

Holidays perfectly encapsulate the dilemma of life right now; they are almost within reach, but they are full of anxiety



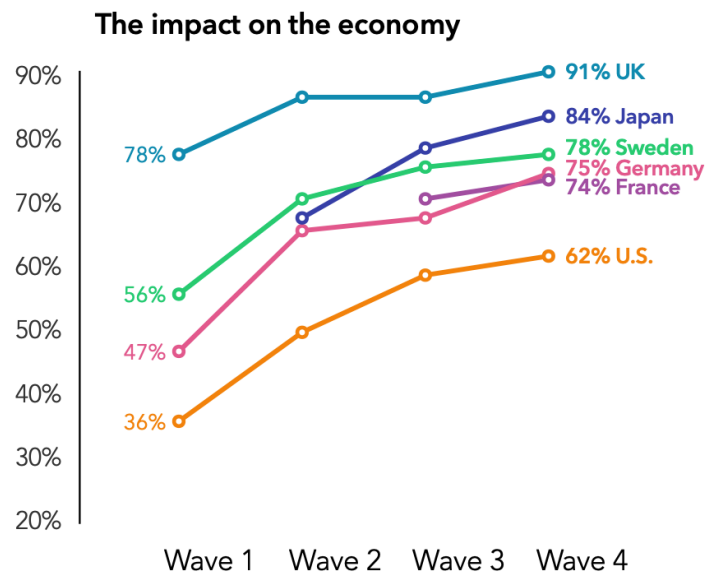
Jess* is 26 and desperately wants to go on holiday but is extremely worried about catching the virus onboard the flight and does not want to run the risk of falling ill abroad due to concerns about the validity of travel insurance.

“I’m sick of it now. I was going to book Croatia for next week, but after reviewing the R number and cases per day I have decided it’s just not safe to go despite the Government’s advice, and travel insurance is no longer valid.”

Non-frontline essential worker

Alongside ongoing health fears, the reality of the long-term economic impact is setting in

Showing proportion saying impact of crisis will last 'longer than a year or longer than two years'



- For the past month, we've seen a trend amongst our Diarists of increasing concern about the economic impact of the crisis, reflecting polling which shows that the vast majority of the UK public now think the economic crisis will last more than a year

"The economy is still the biggest worry as it will effect the young more than my generation."

Active older person

"Our finances are still in dire straights because of Covid."

Parent of young children

There are concerns about being 'locked out' of the economy



People making compromises in order to secure work



Since the crisis hit, **blank job searches have become more common** and are up 5 percentage points over the year ending June 2020.

(Indeed Hiring Lab, 2020)



Even those with jobs are not convinced that they are secure



Indeed's job site had **42 million visits in June** and **over 1.5 million people have uploaded or updated CVs in the past three months**. This is more than the latest official number of unemployed people.

(Indeed Hiring Lab, 2020)



Self-employed workers have been particularly struggling to find work



Figures show a record quarterly decrease in the number of self-employed workers, which is **down by 131,000** compared to the same period last year.

(ONS, 2020)

We can see this in our sample, particularly amongst those who ‘fell through the cracks’ of Government support

Left a job just before the crisis or recently made redundant

People in between jobs, or even those who had secured contracts but not started, were left out of furlough schemes

“When lockdown hit, I’d already left my job and didn’t get any furlough pay from them. I was on a salary of £2k per month before and now I am on Universal Credit.”

Working multiple, insecure jobs

Where only one job has been covered by furlough payments, meaning household income has reduced.

“When you work in hospitality it’s all minimum wage jobs, and we weren’t offered any furlough money.”

Self-employed for under 12 months

Those without the relevant paperwork were entirely ineligible for government support; or those paid through dividends

“I was pushing ahead with advertising, was about to get new website, was starting to spend money pre-empting the business, and then everything stopped.”

Left a job just before the crisis

Tom*, 32, Sheffield

Tom was most recently working as researcher at a university on a contract. When his last contract ended at the start of the year he decided to take break from work to travel for a short stint. During this period he had been covering the cost of his trip on credit cards, and was hoping to arrive back and get another contract to start paying this off. He landed back in the UK 10 days before lockdown.

Prior to the crisis, Tom felt that he was managing his finances well, though was conscious of the fact that his work was somewhat insecure due to being on temporary contracts. While he had a relatively low income, he had minimal debts and owns his own home (with a mortgage) as he was given some money by a family member.

Since lockdown, Tom has been struggling with his finances. He has been accessing Universal Credit though this isn't quite enough to cover his outgoings so he has been using up his savings to make his credit card repayments and cover the bills.

He feels particularly frustrated as he feels that he could have been earning a good income, but the combination of his trip, lockdown and being in between jobs has left him in a tricky situation.

"I'm quite frustrated by getting so close to getting something steady set up before the lockdown, so there's the frustration of a missed opportunity. I could have been earning all through that point, instead I'm scraping in the gov approved minimum.

I've dipped into my overdraft a couple of times by forgetting I have bigger bills coming out around this time of year, and it was a long old slog to getting UC set up."

Working multiple, insecure jobs before the crisis

Vicky, 34, Glasgow

Vicky is a single mother of two children. Before lockdown she was running an afterschool club, temping in nurseries and also volunteering in a children's hospital and charity shop.

Prior to the crisis Vicky felt that she was getting by on a modest income with income support. She was able to cover the essentials with a little bit left over for small treats, though she wasn't able to put anything into savings. She doesn't have a credit card because she doesn't like the idea of getting into any debt.

Throughout the crisis Vicky has received some money through furlough support, though this hasn't covered her full income. In addition, her income support ended in June and she had to switch to Universal Credit, however the payment hasn't arrived yet. She is really unsure of how much money she will receive through Universal Credit and when she would receive it. She had to limit the usage of electrics in the home to cut back on bills during the crisis.

Vicky feels very worried about her finances; she is unsure if Universal Credit will be enough to support her and her children until she is able to return to work.

"We aren't using anything really. We haven't had the heating on, just showers and cooking, and we have the lights on a little bit. I don't spend a lot, I don't buy new clothes or things like that."

If I have to give up anything else, I will give up my car, but I don't really want to. Sacrificing good food is the only other thing I can do."

Self-employed for under 12 months

Anne*, 38, West Sussex

Anne lives with her husband, a police officer, and their two children. She has been working as a massage therapist for the last 5 years, and has been training as a chiropractor alongside this. She qualified in December 2019, and had spent early 2020 setting up her business.

Prior to the crisis Anne and her husband were just about managing to cover their finances. They were heavily overdrawn and had used up their savings on her training and the new business. Anne had just started getting clients through the door in February.

Anne managed to claim some government support through the self-employed scheme but even with her husband's income, this wasn't enough to cover the bills, mortgage and overdraft repayments. They accessed a mortgage holiday to ease burden. However, they have had to cut back on all unnecessary expenditure to stay afloat.

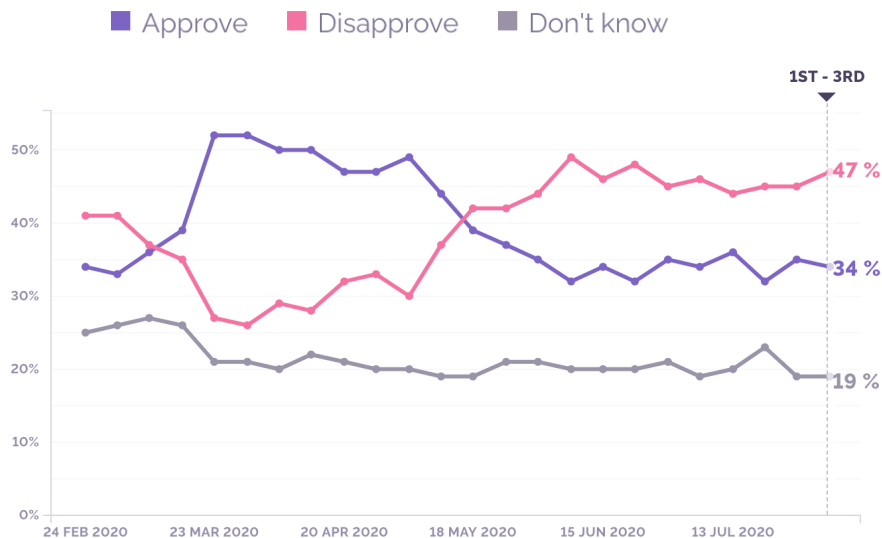
Anne is managing for now, but is worried about the future. She has a large tax bill coming up, and has used up the money set-aside for this to cover bills.

"We had no savings, I wasn't going to be earning anything and there was also the overdraft to pay. We took a mortgage break when we did because we just didn't know how long lockdown would last.

Our current situation feels uncomfortable, I know I've got a tax bill coming and I've still got to find that money at some stage. If we have to live on toast for a week, I will."

Government support has reached a steady state, after the highs and lows of lockdown

% saying they approve or disapprove of the Government (YouGov)



- Views have settled since lockdown with much narrower fluctuations than we were seeing previously
- From our work, we can see more partisan divisions coming through, with Diarists divided in how well they think the Government is tackling this next phase of the crisis

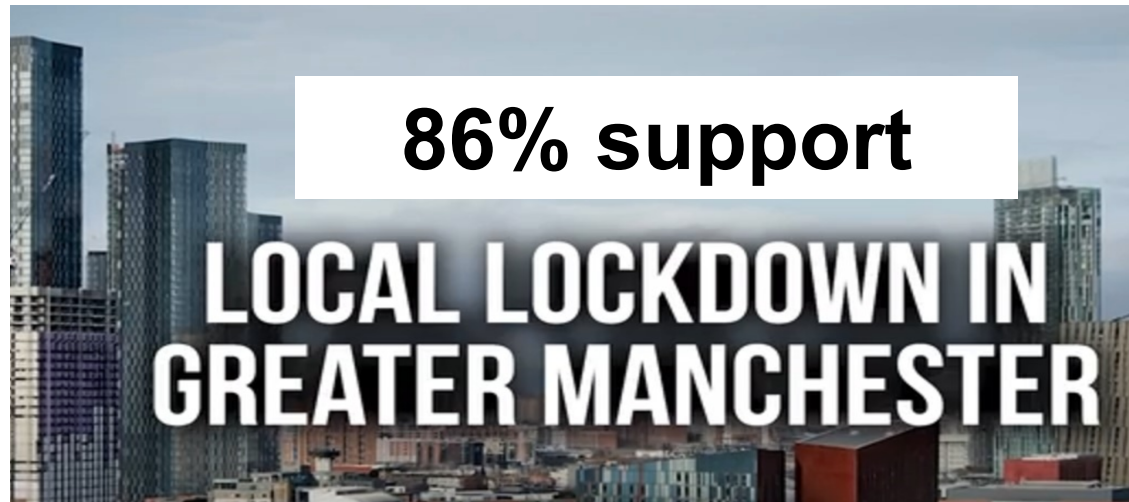
"I have great faith that our government are doing everything in their power to keep the British people safe."

Non-frontline essential worker

"Government still seems to be struggling to get a handle on the situation both now and for the winter."

Active older person

Despite very high levels of support for local lockdowns, the way they were announced and implemented is a source of criticism



- Diarists all approve of local lockdowns as a necessary measure for controlling spread of COVID 19
- But there is criticism of how the most recent policy in Manchester was implemented, with many feeling that it was chaotic and lacking in co-ordination

"It shows they are not afraid to make bold moves."
Gig economy worker

"There have been too many U turns and last-minute decisions."
Office worker WFH

Thank you

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