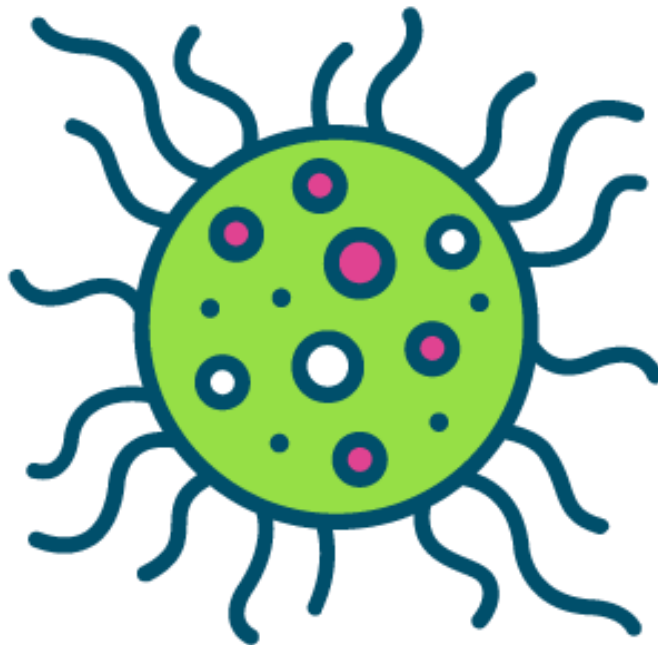


COVID-19 Lockdown Experiences in Bury Survey Report



September 2020

Contents

Executive Summary 4

Introduction 5

Methodology 5

Key findings 6

Demographics 20

Appendix 1 22

Tell us a bit more about you23

Executive Summary

In June and July 2020, Healthwatch Bury gathered feedback from 47 respondents, gathering people's general experiences of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this report is to understand people's experience of the lockdown and how it impacted on their daily lives.

The information will be important when planning for the future, as we continue to recover from the outbreak. It should also inform preparation for a second wave.

Key themes and findings

The findings from the survey results have provided mainly qualitative feedback, such as what people have found helpful during lockdown. Things that people have found most helpful are as important to focus on as things people have found most difficult which the respondents to the survey also highlighted.

- Top of the list **(45%)** of things people say have been most helpful was **connecting with their friends and family**.
- When asked about what people had found most difficult, nearly 1 in 10 said that **isolation and loneliness** had been the hardest things to come in terms with in the recent months.
- **40%** of the respondents had been doing some form of **exercise** in their spare time.
- **1 in 5** said they want **clear, concise and consistent messages from the government** and for those messages to be strongly delivered and up to date during transition from the lockdown.
- **1 in 3** stated they were most worried about the **second wave of Coronavirus** following lockdown.
- People also highlighted the need for **mental health support** such as counselling to be widely available and accessible and for the **other health services to resume** as soon as possible.

Given the above we recommend:

- Develop a clear, simple, transparent and accessible strategy to inform local communities about the local government plan which is in place for the prevention and potential second wave of Coronavirus or any other infectious disease in the future outlining any further developments and changes as soon as they occur.
- Put systems in place to identify the priorities of local people, especially those who are more vulnerable or from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
- Proactively engage with local residents and the voluntary sector to develop sustainable, effective community support and strategies.

Introduction

All residents of the Borough of Bury were affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown which commenced in March 2020.

Healthwatch Bury, the local independent health and care champion, launched a survey in June 2020 to explore the direct and indirect impacts of the lockdown.

The aim of the survey was to capture a snapshot of people's lockdown experiences and share these with service providers and partners across Bury, to inform not only the COVID-19 response, but also to identify any longer-term effects resulting from the crisis.

The survey focused on several themes, including:

- The experiences of lockdown and people's feelings about it.
- What has helped people most and what they have found most difficult?
- What would be most helpful during the transition from lockdown?
- The main worries for people following lockdown.

The survey ran in web-based and hard copy format until the first week of August and a total of 47 responses were received.

Methodology

The Healthwatch Bury COVID-19 survey tried to capture the direct and indirect impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. For a copy of the survey please see Appendix 1.

Survey questions were devised following an analysis of existing surveys and engagement activity being undertaken across the country, both within the Healthwatch network and by public and voluntary organisations.

Survey promotion and distribution

Following its official launch on Wednesday, 10th June, the survey was distributed and promoted in a range of ways, including:

- Extensive promotion via Healthwatch Bury's website and social media channels (Twitter and Facebook)
- Promotional flyers placed in food parcels distributed to vulnerable and shielded households by Porch Boxes
- Asking statutory organisations, health and social care providers, local businesses, voluntary sector partners and community groups to promote the survey.
- Direct emails to contacts and organisations
- Document versions of the survey were available for download from the Healthwatch Bury website and hard copies were available on request. An option for completion over the phone with staff members was also put in place.

Key findings

1. Tell us about your experience of lockdown so far, and your feelings towards it?

Responses to this question varied due to demographics and other individual circumstances. Some running themes that people highlighted were increased community support, working and volunteering during lockdown, isolation or living in difficult circumstances.

Some mentioned the **increased community support** they had received during lockdown:

- ☛ *My husband and I are in lockdown till end of June, our family, friends and neighbours have supported us wonderfully. Without their support we would have struggled.*

There were responses from people who have carried on working during lockdown:

- ☛ *Some moments of enjoyment (back to basics with children and nature, increased interaction with neighbours) but overall a negative and stressful experience. Both parents in the home key workers which mean teenagers have had significant time alone without other family, peers or education.*
- ☛ *I work in Adult Care as manager and been in work throughout lockdown. As I have been able to go to work my routine hasn't changed much, however I have found supermarkets particularly challenging. I have on the flip side enjoyed this slower pace of life. My husband is self-employed and not been able to work at all, he has also not been able to claim any support from the government which has been stressful.*
- ☛ *Mixed messages from government. Going into work where some are and some not social distancing.*

Some people used this time to volunteer:

- ☛ *Lockdown was OK for me, I had lost my job but signed up to Volunteer at Fairfield & the Community Hub - gave me purpose. Got fitter during the lockdown - walking around Elton Reservoir will do that for you. Nervous now as we start to exit lockdown - more to do with people's deteriorating behaviour.*

There were many who explained how lockdown had made them feel more isolated because they were unable to do the things they usually enjoy:

- ☛ *Isolated, stressful with disabled children.*
- ☛ *Lockdown has been very difficult as I am full time carer for my husband who has Parkinson's and dementia and due to lockdown has been unable to go to his day*

care center which he went to 3 days a week which gave me a break as I am 76 and have arthritis.

- ☛ *I am self-isolating so I don't do my own shopping which I miss doing. I am very grateful to people who are helping me with this. I miss my previous life before lockdown when I was often going out to art classes and a friendship club also for coffee and meals out with friends. I always spent a day with my grandson when he was off school and baby sit in the evening sometimes. Now I do my art at home or outside and only see my grandson when he visits with his parents once a week and we meet up outside. It's quite a lonely life now but I'm getting used to it and I do keep in touch with other family members and friends and have met them outside. Life is very different but I'm used to it now and just get on with it.*
- ☛ *Live alone, in my 50s. Felt frightened, then insomnia and anxiety. Very cut off and feeling like others didn't really want to bother. Not a good time*

The responses also highlighted that housing situation can have a direct impact on people's wellbeing:

- ☛ *Lockdown has been incredibly frustrating so far. It has been frustrating to feel I am sacrificing my mental health in order to minimise the spread of COVID-19, and yet any trip to the supermarket or glance at the news informs me most people are not taking it this seriously. It has been terrifying to see how little regard our government and other authorities have for human life. On a more personal scale, lockdown has highlighted and exacerbated problems with where I live. I don't have a garden and I can't exercise at home without the neighbours below complaining, so I've become intensely aware that my health is impacted by my living situation. My use of cigarettes has doubled. Whilst I've had frequent social contact with family and colleagues, this has actually felt like an additional pressure at times due to the perception that everyone needs the same things in lockdown. Meanwhile, being expected to pursue self-development and thrive in lockdown, when merely being able to continue working at all should be seen as an achievement, has been emotionally bruising.*
- ☛ *Have been able to keep pretty busy and also in touch with family and friends with social media. Being over 70 have been being careful and out only for local walks. Luckily I have a lovely garden and a husband so not alone and not unable to be outside. Now over the strange feeling of not being able to shop, meet up with people and so on.*

Many said it had made them feel fearful:

- ☛ *Initially enjoyed not being busy. Loved exploring the local countryside on my daily walks. Found shopping difficult at first as didn't want to go into shops due to my husband's chest problems. Valued social media which allowed me to keep in touch with family & friends. But also quite worried that if I contracted COVID19 I may not get the treatment I needed due to my age. People I knew who were working in*

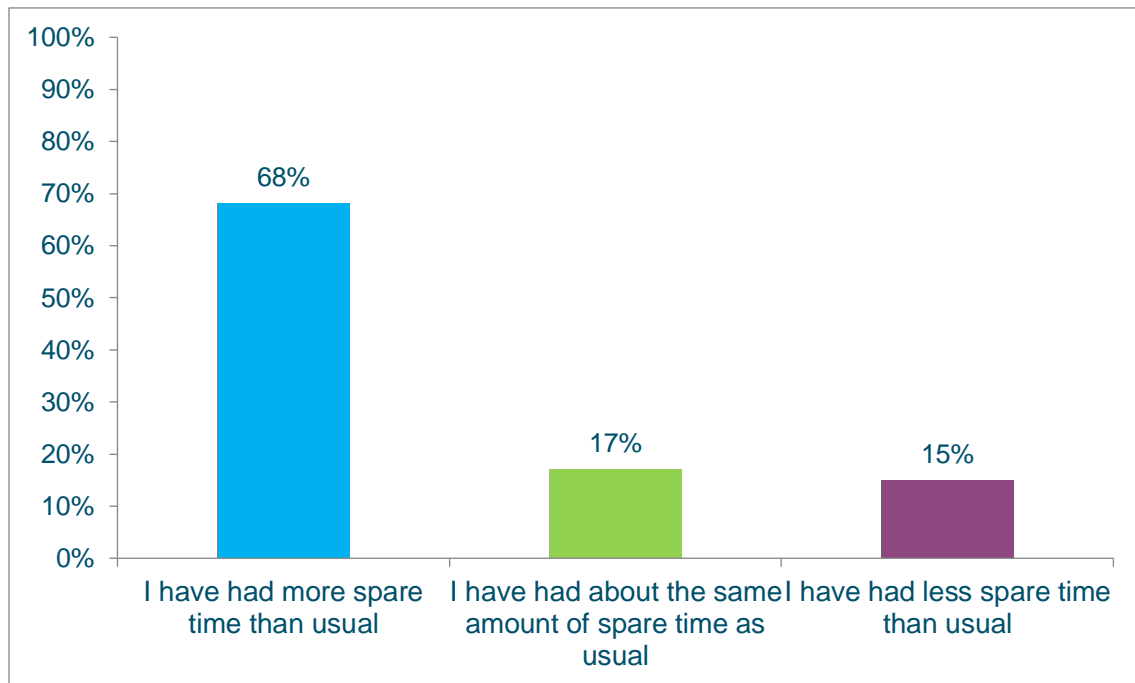
hospitals advised that if facilities were overrun people over 65 would not be prioritised.

- ☛ *OK at first, but feeling more lonely as it continues, missing exercise classes and walking groups*

There were others who told us they found the experience to be positive:

- ☛ *My experience has been largely positive. I have walked a lot in my local area and met (briefly) lots of people. I sleep better and feel healthier. However I don't like queueing for the supermarket.*
- ☛ *We have enjoyed family time and 1:1 learning*
- ☛ *I have found it to be a good opportunity to slow down and reflect*
- ☛ *Have had mixed experiences. It's been positive because able to spend more quality time with my child and partner but life has changed a lot and been unable to do things I usually enjoy.*

2. During lockdown have you had more spare time than usual?



The majority of the respondents, 68% (32) stated they have had more time than usual during lockdown. 17% of people who completed the questionnaire said they had had about the same amount of spare time as usual and 15% said they had had less time than usual during lockdown.

3. During lockdown, what have you been doing in your spare time?

☛ *Still working throughout the lockdown so being in touch with colleagues.*

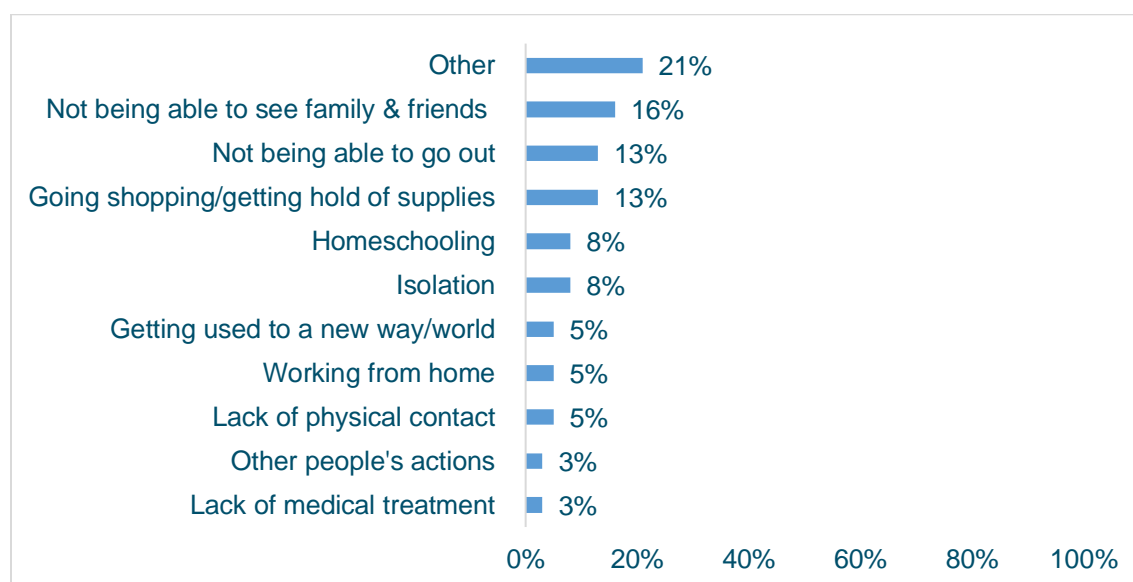
☛ *Helping vulnerable members of the veterans hub in Bury*

Other people found solace in their faith and times of reflection:

☛ *My faith in God*

☛ *The whole experience has been powerful with regard to giving me the time and space to attune with my emotional self. To develop critical thinking skills with relation to my role. To smile openly when I see people I love. To be better connected to me, my needs and develop kinder relationships with senior colleagues this helped me see past the role or authority of a person and gave me a chance to see the human being behind their title. Very powerful time of deeper appreciation of myself and life in all of its manifestations.*

5. During lockdown what have you found most difficult?



Residents of Bury had found most difficult during lockdown **not being able to visit their family members** (16%) with many saying how much they missed seeing their grandchildren. **The lack of physical contact** with others was something that some people (5%) had struggled with. Respondents also stated they had been worried about their family and friends' health and wellbeing.

☛ *Not seeing my family like I used to and having no respite time. We are a close family and it's been hard not able to go to each other's houses.*

☛ *Not seeing my daughter and granddaughter as much and no cuddles.*

A number of people (13%) said they had found it hard not being able to go out and do their usual walking around town, shopping and catching up with friends. Isolation and being alone has been a struggle for many in the recent months with strict government guidelines in place to protect the public from the COVID-19 virus.

- ☛ *The most difficult thing has been not being able to freely roam around the town to sit with a coffee and people watch, sit on a bench and just be especially near the Victoria Wood statue, I love that space it's surrounded by trees and for me is a healing space much like the Parish Church and the garden and benches a very beautiful space to just be. I did indulge in the small green space near Marks and Spencer's the tree canopy just ooze peace and vitality...totally refreshing and very grounding for me.*
- ☛ *Being alone during the day and in the evenings*
- ☛ *Isolation from and worrying about risks to family and friends*

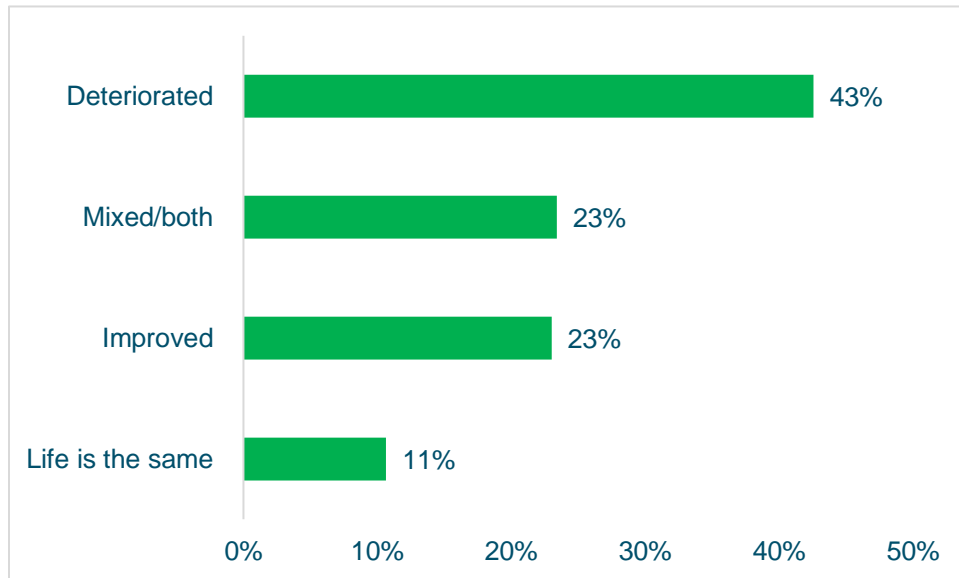
People also said how they had struggled with practical aspects of life **like shopping during lockdown and getting hold of the supplies** (13%). **Working from home** (5%) and **homeschooling** (8%) had proved to be challenging at times for some.

- ☛ *Shielding has meant we don't have access to food and supplies. Care in the community services have had to stop so usual support networks aren't there.*
- ☛ *Initially struggled with working from home but gradually got used to that. I have found going shopping for lots of different household particularly stressful, trying to balance their expectations.*
- ☛ *Homeschooling has been a huge undertaking with very little support from school.*
- ☛ *Lack of support. Lack of learning tools 24/7 family with children who have SEN*

Other comments included:

- ☛ *The sense of uncertainty is difficult to deal with. I feel that my life is in the hands of other people who are not transparent with their decision making - whether that's people in the supermarket who aren't observing social distancing, employers who haven't revealed a back-to-work strategy or government figures who seem to be making up policy as they go along.*
- ☛ *Our close friend and neighbour died of pancreatic cancer. He didn't get the funeral he deserved. Another neighbour committed suicide. It has completely rocked our stability.*
- ☛ *Medical treatment, being alone, surreal*
- ☛ *Not able to go to the dentist to sort my teeth out.*

6. In your view, has life improved or deteriorated since the lockdown began? Can you provide examples illustrating why you believe this to be the case?



Nearly half the respondents (43%) felt that life **had deteriorated** since the lockdown began, while some respondents told us they had used additional time productively, others felt like they had lost their independence and were also missing socialising with their family and friends.

- ☛ *Life has deteriorated without doubt. In a time of extreme stress, there has been social pressure to have a *productive* period in lockdown and this is simply not realistic. Lockdown has exaggerated the impact of inequality in society*
- ☛ *It's deteriorated because I don't feel as independent as I don't do my own shopping. I used to go to the synagogue every week and I miss that as well as my art club and art class as well as my friendship club. That was the highlight of my week as I had lunch there and met friends and there was always a good speaker.*
- ☛ *Having to isolate meant I couldn't participate in the street VE celebrations. I have missed my grandchildren immensely. It was my husband's 70th birthday, which was not as planned. We had also planned a 50th wedding anniversary cruise to have the honeymoon we couldn't afford as youngsters. This has also had to be cancelled. It has been a struggle mentally. Plus we have been worried about catching the virus, and dying from it.*
- ☛ *Deteriorated. - Children's education (Y10, Y12) has been barely existent which may lead to future difficulties. - Ongoing worries about work risks (I am a nurse and became positive for Covid-19 during this time) - Isolation from friends and family particularly from elderly parent and vulnerable others - Anxiety for the future - Loss of social interactions e.g. sport/music, eating out, cinema which helps positive feelings*

Some people's circumstances meant that lockdown had a really negative impact on their wellbeing:

- ☛ *Life has deteriorated dramatically. My cancer treatment and support has ceased. My pain management has stopped. My physio has stopped. I am in physical pain*

constantly so sleep deprived. I am still attempting to homeschool whilst suffering, struggling to cope with my autistic son and his behaviour. I lost my mum during the lockdown and couldn't go to her funeral. This I will never get over. I never got to say goodbye and I will never recover from this

23% of the respondents felt that life had **improved** and given them a chance to slow down and appreciate small things. Respondents also expressed their gratitude to volunteers and what they do to help their local community in Bury.

- ☛ *I think my life has been less stressful as I have not felt the need to be having to do everything I as previously striving to. We have been forced to accept life being lived at a far slower pace e.g. queueing to get in the supermarket whereas before I would feel the need to rush in grab some essentials then dash onto my next task. I have had less pressure and fewer tasks to have to juggle.*
- ☛ *I think in general that people have become a little kinder, warmer & caring. No shortage of volunteers and appreciation of volunteers and the work they do - particularly Bury MBC/Bury LCO/VCFA hub*
- ☛ *The air is cleaner, environment is quieter and as the weeks have passed people out walking have become friendlier.*
- ☛ *In my view and experience life has totally improved. I do see and notice that others have had more trials than I have. So many fantastic resources have been created and shared. However if you don't have the device then this is a problem and I think a real problem for some of our members in the community such basics as a safe place to rest, food, warmth and shelter. I am so very grateful to have my basics. The mental health issues now can get the attention in my opinion that is very much needed. My own journey through depression and ongoing relationship with anxiety have given me empathy, insight and more compassion for myself and others. I do recognise life is about perspective as much as many other things. I have a deeper appreciation for myself, my work, my family and ultimately my experience of now: Life.*

Another 23% had **mixed views** and could see positives and negatives in their situation.

- ☛ *I would say both. It has certainly improved as we have been able to spend more quality time together and have had more time to reflect on life. Deteriorated in a sense that missing social interaction and contact, feeling low at times.*
- ☛ *Improvements: On the whole, people have been kinder to each other. They have had time to think about what is important to them. Negative: loneliness and lack of stimulation, particularly for elderly people.*
- ☛ *Being able to pause for thought has been positive and not clock watching. In that respect I feel much less stressed. However, where initially my relationship with my daughter improved, the lack of support from her father has left me doing more than ever, including homeschooling. This has had a detrimental impact on my*

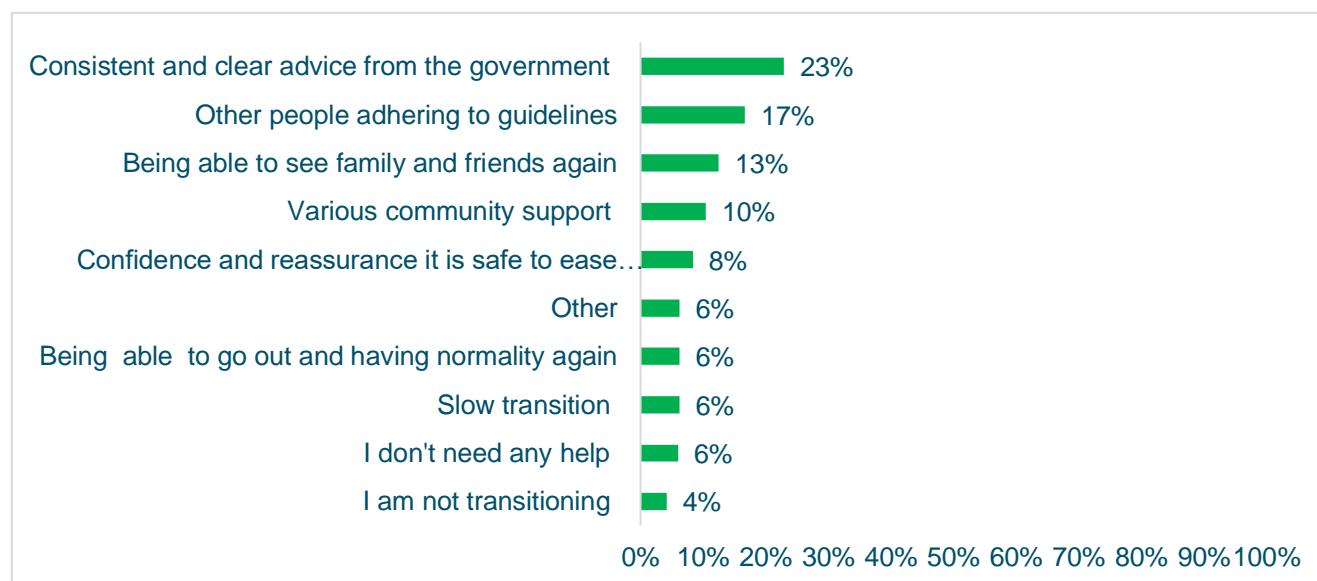
relationship with her because I'm tired resentful and she is missing her friends and routine.

- ☛ *Financially deteriorated but been able to garden and redesign it with the spare time*

11% of the respondents felt their life had been the same during lockdown:

- ☛ *Not a lot changed, really, although my weight is the highest it has ever been.*
- ☛ *If you mean my life, it is the same. I am content, happy and have all I need*

7. What do you think will be helpful to you in the transition from lockdown?



Almost a quarter of people (23%) said they want **clear, concise and consistent messages from the government** and for those messages to be strongly delivered and up to date during transition from lockdown.

- ☛ *Clear and concise updates on the current situation to relieve anxieties about the pace of the transition*

17% of the respondents stated it would be helpful if **other people adhered to guidelines**.

- ☛ *Other people, including retailers, respecting & following guidance about social distancing, wearing masks etc. I worry that the virus will spike again*
- ☛ *If other people obeyed the rules as we come out of lockdown instead of ignoring them and doing what they please. We are all meant to be in this together but a lot of people seem to think things are already back to normal.*

Residents of Bury said that **being able to see family and friends again** (13%) and having more **community support in place** (10%) will be helpful during the transition.

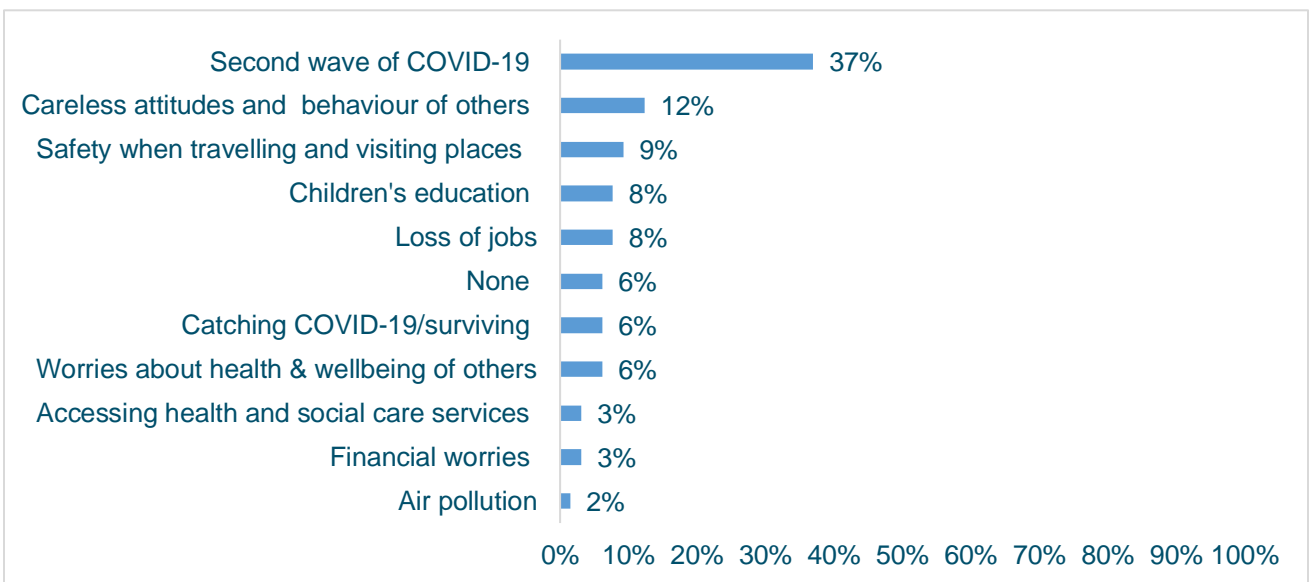
- ☛ *Less stringent restrictions - being able to see family -- especially grandchildren*

- ☛ *I actually think that maybe some short term counselling would be helpful. I also think that trained counsellors should go into schools to do group sessions with the children to help them readjust.*
- ☛ *Setting up local social groups for singles in different age groups. Where activities especially after work and at weekends can be part of the agenda. And people can meeting others in a similar situation. Be this online or in real life.*

Other comments also included the following:

- ☛ *Reassurance that the local government as well as the national government has a plan in place for the second wave of corona virus or any other infectious disease in the future and sharing this with public or enabling public to contribute with their ideas.*
- ☛ *I'm not sure about this as I am quite anxious so I can't imagine really coming out of it myself and doing my own shopping again.*

8. What are your main worries following lockdown?



When asked what main worries are for Bury residents following lockdown, some of the respondents (37%) stated they are most concerned about a **second wave of Coronavirus** in the near future and what that may look like.

- ☛ *Will there be a second peak? How will the future look until we get a vaccine? How will I ever be able to get close to anyone again? Job security. Will I ever be able to travel, which I really enjoy? The list is endless.*
- ☛ *Second and third wave. Not being able to protect elderly and vulnerable as infection will still be out there. What the world be like in terms of everyday activities, travel,*

socialising, working etc. - the new normal. Not being able to relax about any of the above anymore.

12% of respondents expressed their **concerns and frustrations regarding the attitudes and behavior of other people.**

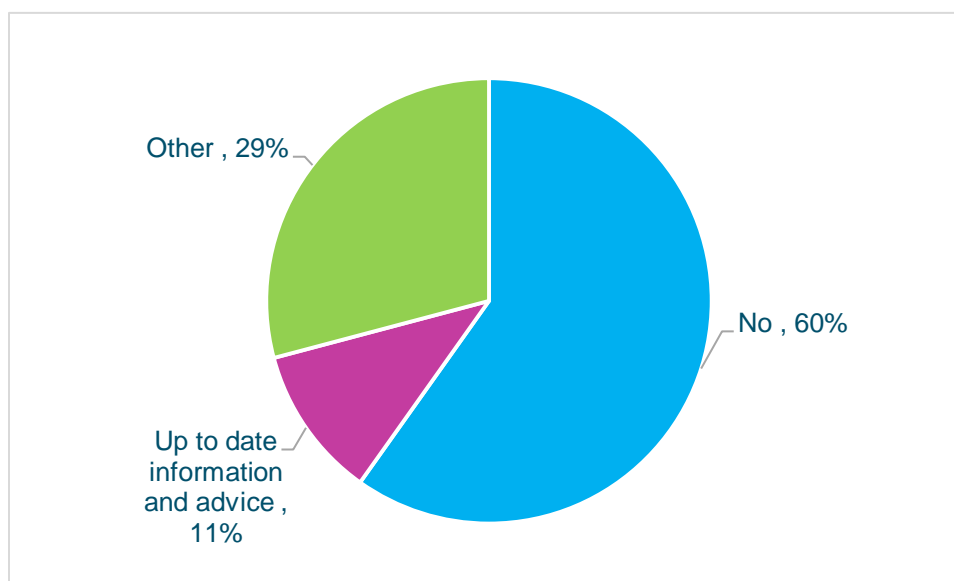
- ☛ *I feel the majority of people are already behaving as if social distancing is no longer necessary. I feel employers will be under pressure to return to the status quo regardless of safety issues. I feel there will be a second wave of coronavirus and I feel COVID-19 has revealed unhealthy aspects of British attitudes towards crisis which will go unchallenged.*

Concerns about **safe travel, children's education and loss of jobs** were also raised frequently:

- ☛ *Worried about my husband who was worried about his job. Worried about my children's education as they are both struggling to cope with not going to school and college. Worried about the holiday I have already booked and paid for and whether I will get my money back from it.*
- ☛ *The emotional wellbeing of the children I work with, how those who have not really engaged with school will present and how difficult it will be to get some of them back into school.*
- ☛ *That the virus will spike again. That travel won't be safe, especially in close proximity to others - buses, trains, planes, hotels, rented accommodation*

Concern about the health and wellbeing of one's family, friends and community as a whole was an overarching theme from the answers provided.

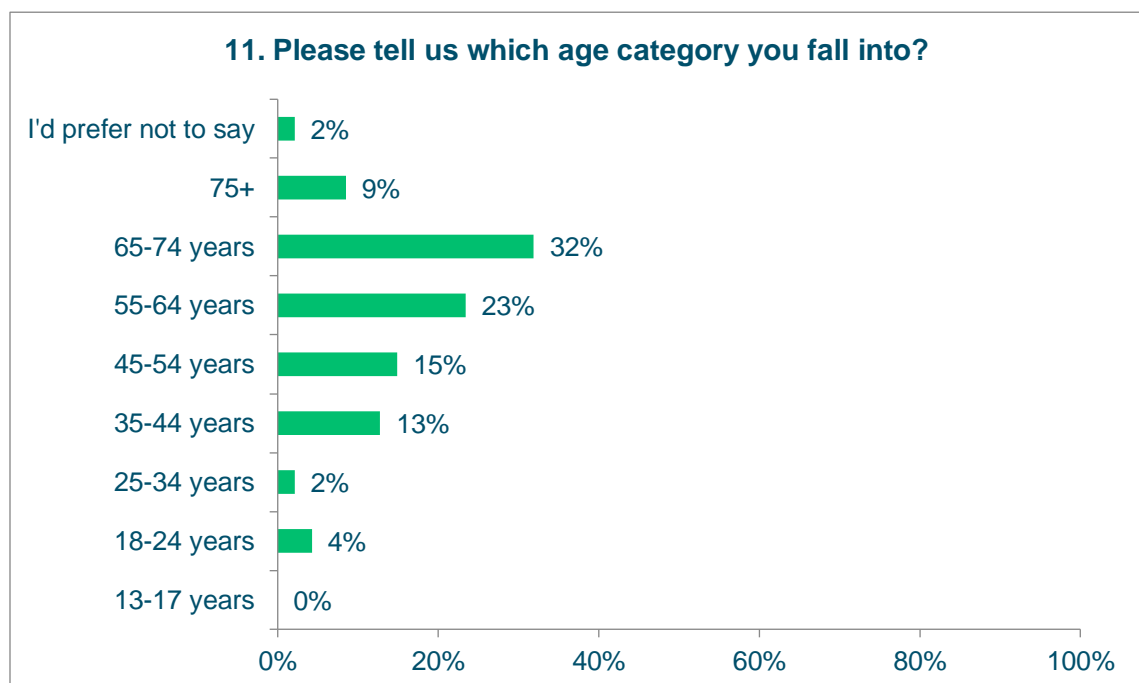
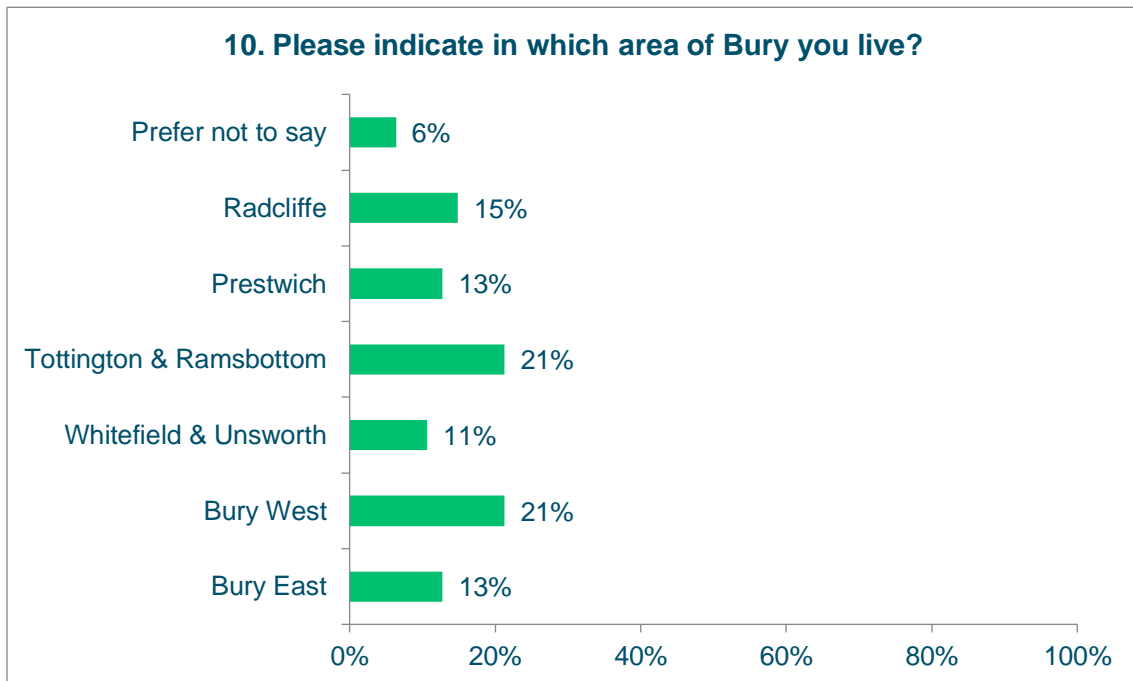
9. Is there anything Healthwatch Bury can do to support you?

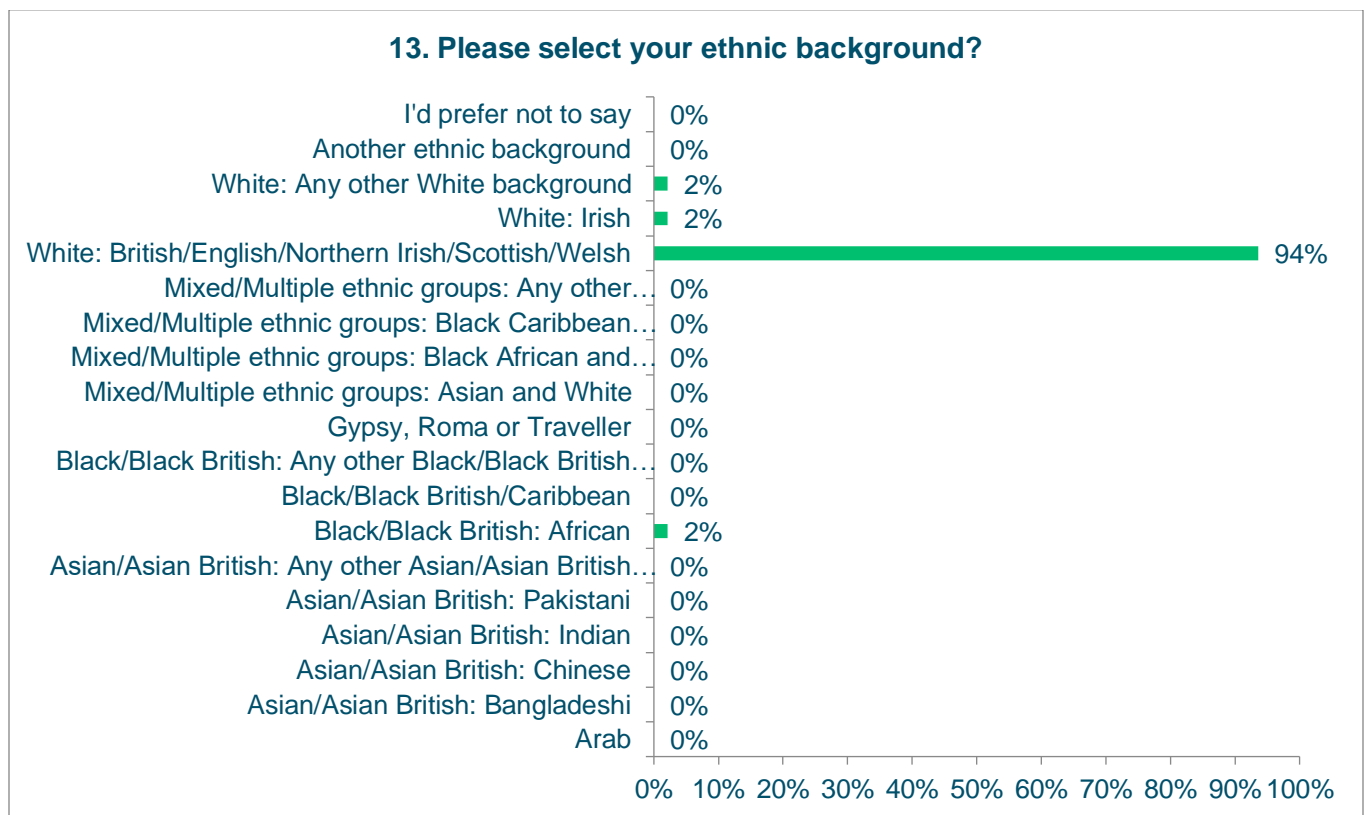
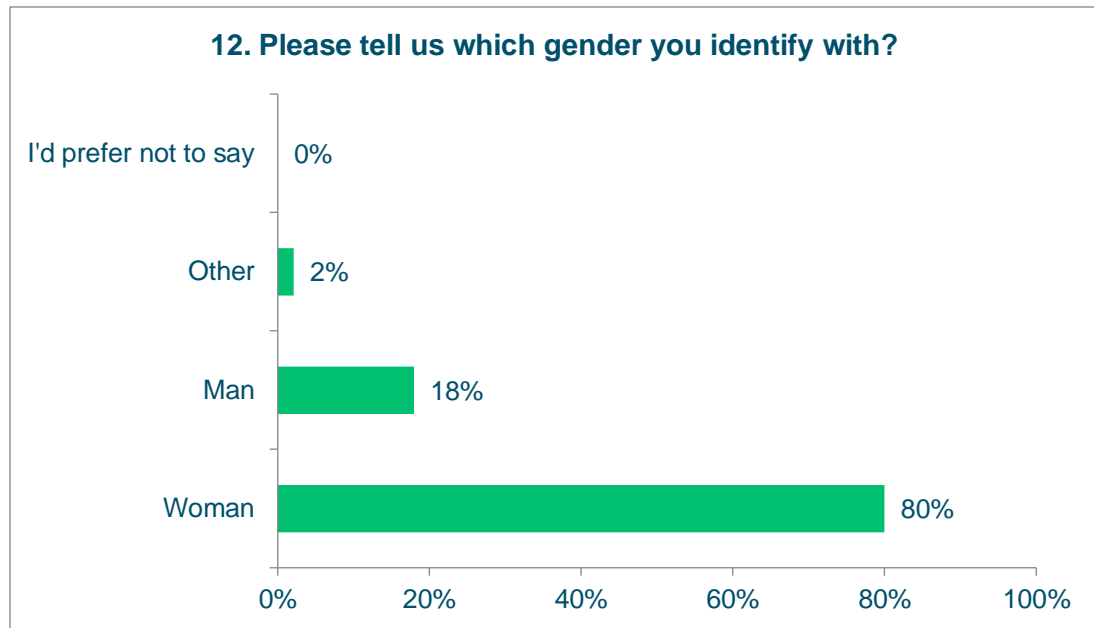


Comments:

- ☛ *I'm not sure what Healthwatch does but I feel that I would benefit from some personal and family counselling.*
- ☛ *Yes get the dental practices up and running please.*
- ☛ *Children to be given extra resources/ learning packages / laptops to bridge the educational gaps. I'm extremely disappointed that vulnerable children were offered school places with no structure or education or SEN support. This would have been an ideal opportunity for bridging learning gaps for the most vulnerable.*
- ☛ *Encourage parents to understand that schools are being vigilant and help them understand that their child really needs to be in school*
- ☛ *Please ask health organisations to stop sending resources out constantly. The number of coronavirus resources is now overwhelming - it is impossible to tell the good stuff from the bad stuff and there is no time to look at it all. A more coordinated approach to compiling these would have been more helpful. Instead of thousands of mediocre resources, it would have been better to have a dozen good ones.*
- ☛ *Can you prescribe the time that some may need to be supported? The Samaritans self-help app is very good, if you have a device. Continue doing what you are doing. Thank you.*
- ☛ *We have had local neighbors, and family support. We are not the type of people to seek external help, but it's good to know it would be available if required. Death, suicide, cancellation of big celebrations and holidays has been difficult to come to terms with. But, we are grateful to be healthy.*
- ☛ *I think the voluntary sector should be more integrated into the local PCT. There should be more "joined" up thinking and working together of voluntary groups*
- ☛ *Ensure that health service provision and appointment/operation systems get back to normal as soon as possible.*
- ☛ *Fight for a better way forward by GPs and NHS services*
- ☛ *Need more carers' support*
- ☛ *Yes have a group set up for single people who are feeling low and have been feeling lonely during all of this time*

Demographics





Appendix 1

Healthwatch Bury Covid-19 survey - lockdown experiences

We are Healthwatch Bury, an independent consumer champion for health and social care in Bury. As part of our ongoing work to listen and represent local people about their healthcare experiences, we would like to hear from people how people spent their time during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Our findings on this will ultimately be used to create a short report conveying people's thoughts and experiences. We will share the report with statutory organisations and community groups Bury.

We are not asking people to identify themselves. All responses will be treated in confidence and people are not asked to identify themselves through this survey.

If you require assistance to complete this form in or wish to express your views in another way, please get in touch using the details below.

Telephone: 0161 253 6300

Email: info@healthwatchbury.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchbury.co.uk

Healthwatch Bury hope you will stay safe and well during this difficult period.

1. Tell us about your experience of lockdown so far, and your feelings towards it:

2. During lockdown have you had more spare time than usual?

- ☐ Yes, I have had more spare time than usual
- ☐ No, I have had about the same amount of spare time as usual
- ☐ No, I have had less spare time than usual

3. During lockdown what have you been doing in your spare time?

4. During lockdown what has helped you the most?

5. During lockdown what have you found most difficult?

6. In your view, has life improved or deteriorated since the lockdown began? Can you provide examples illustrating why you believe this to be the case?

7. What do you think will be helpful to you in the transition from lockdown?

8. What are your main worries following lockdown?

9. Is there anything Healthwatch Bury can do to support you?

Tell us a bit more about you

By telling us more information about yourself, you can help us better understand how people's experiences may differ depending on their personal characteristics. However, if you do not wish to answer these questions you do not have to.

10. Please indicate in which area of Bury you live

- ☐ Bury East
- ☐ Bury West
- ☐ Whitefield & Unsworth
- ☐ Tottington & Ramsbottom
- ☐ Prestwich
- ☐ Radcliffe
- ☐ I'd prefer not to say

11. Please tell us which age category you fall into:

- ☐ 13 - 17 years
- ☐ 18 - 24 years
- ☐ 25 - 34 years
- ☐ 35 - 44 years
- ☐ 45 - 54 years
- ☐ 55 - 64 years
- ☐ 65 - 74 years
- ☐ 75+ years
- ☐ I'd prefer not to say

12. Please tell us which gender you identify with:

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I'd prefer not to say

13. Please select your ethnic background:

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian / Asian British: Chinese
- ☐ Asian / Asian British: Indian
- ☐ Asian / Asian British: Pakistani
- ☐ Asian / Asian British: Any other Asian / Asian British background
- ☐ Black / Black British: African
- ☐ Black / Black British: Caribbean
- ☐ Black / Black British: Any other Black / Black British background
- ☐ Gypsy, Roma or Traveller
- ☐ Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White
- ☐ Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White
- ☐ Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White
- ☐ Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
- ☐ White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh
- ☐ White: Irish
- ☐ White: Any other White background
- ☐ Another ethnic background
- ☐ I'd prefer not to say

{ Thank you for your time. }