

# Public unclear on COVID-19 guidance as winter approaches

The Health Foundation releases new polling data with Ipsos MORI looking at the public's attitudes towards the Government's handling of COVID-19

6 September 2020

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- Health Foundation warns that the Government must urgently clarify its public coronavirus guidance, particularly on who people can meet and where.
- Approval of the Government's handling of the pandemic has dropped and half the nation feels current measures do not go far enough.

**The Health Foundation has today released new polling data with Ipsos MORI looking at the public's attitudes towards the Government's handling of COVID-19 and the measures it has taken to tackle the outbreak so far. The data shows a significant change in the public's perceptions on these issues since May this year, when the first round of this polling by Ipsos MORI was carried out.**

In the latest round of research, the public were asked to think about the Government's official guidance on what people need to do to help contain the virus. Nearly four in five think the guidance on wearing face masks on public transport is clear (78%)<sup>1</sup>, but only 44% think official advice on who and how many people you can meet is clear (54% think the advice is unclear)<sup>1</sup>.

When asked about their perception of how well people are following official Government guidance, people feel the guidance on self-isolating and wearing face masks on public transport is being followed the most (64% and 63% respectively). 57%<sup>2</sup> of respondents feel that people are not following guidance well on staying safe outside the home, with 59%<sup>2</sup> saying they don't think guidance around

visiting places such as pubs and shops and attending public gatherings is being followed well. In areas where people think the guidance is clearest, more people are thought to be observing the rules.

The new data also shows that there has been a significant decrease in how well the public feel the Government has handled the pandemic. Over half (56%) think the Government has not handled COVID-19 well<sup>2</sup>, compared to 39% in May. When asked about their views on the different measures the Government has taken to tackle the pandemic, significantly fewer people feel the Government's response is about right (40%) than in May (58%). Similarly, 50% now feel the measures the Government has taken do not go far enough and more should be done, compared to 37% in May.

Despite the drop in support for the Government's handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, there is strong public support for going further than the existing measures to tackle the pandemic. 50% feel that the measures the Government has taken do not go far enough and more should be done. Only 33% of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds think the measures are about right – compared to 40% overall – which is perhaps unsurprising given that black and minority ethnic groups are among the worst affected by the virus.

**Dr Jennifer Dixon, Chief Executive of the Health Foundation, said:**

'Managing the pandemic is a complex and changing task, but this survey shows declining public confidence in how the government is handling the situation. The survey shows the public are willing to support further measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic, but many are still unclear on what precautions they need to take. Increasing confidence in and clarity from the Government will be critical as we face further risks from COVID-19 this winter.'

## Notes to editors

## Media contact

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## References

<sup>1</sup> 78% net clear, eg very clear or fairly clear

<sup>2</sup> 54% net unclear, eg not very clear or very unclear

<sup>3</sup> 57% net not well, eg not very well or not at all well

<sup>4</sup> 59% net not well, eg not very well or not at all well

<sup>5</sup> 43% net well, eg very well or fairly well

## About the survey

The July survey was conducted by telephone on the Ipsos MORI CATI Omnibus survey, a weekly telephone omnibus survey of a representative sample of people aged 18 and over in Great Britain. Fieldwork took place between 17 July and 29 July 2020. A total of 2,246 people were interviewed. For the main sample, quotas were set on age, gender, Government Office Region and working status. In addition to the people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds interviewed as part of the main sample, a booster survey was conducted. The sample includes a total of 423 interviews conducted with BAME participants.

For the overall July findings, data has been weighted to the known population proportions for age within gender, Government Office Region and working status and social grade. For the BAME findings,

data has been weighted to the known population proportions for age, gender, Government Office Region, working status and social grade.

The May survey was also conducted via telephone on the Ipsos MORI CATI Omnibus survey. A total of 1,983 people were interviewed between 1 and 10 May 2020. Where questions were repeated in the July survey, these have been included in the report against the May data for comparison, with significant differences commented upon.

## Further reading

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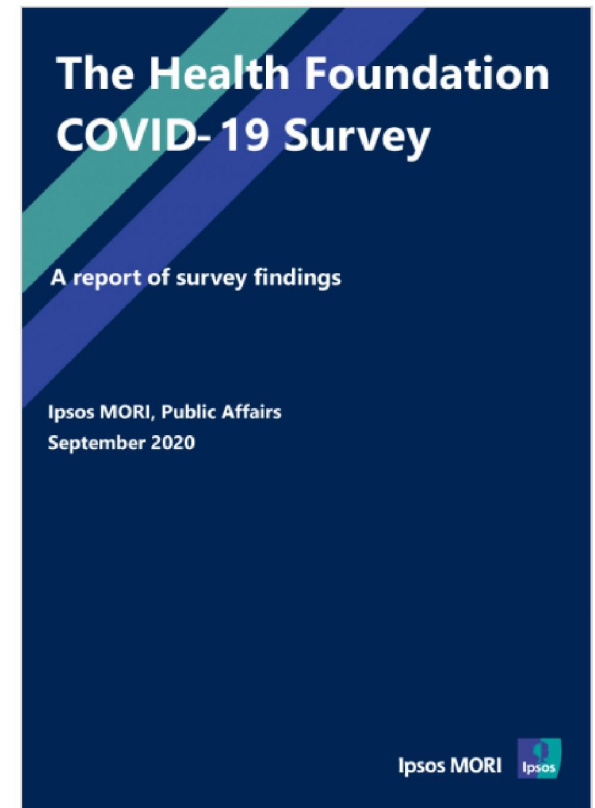
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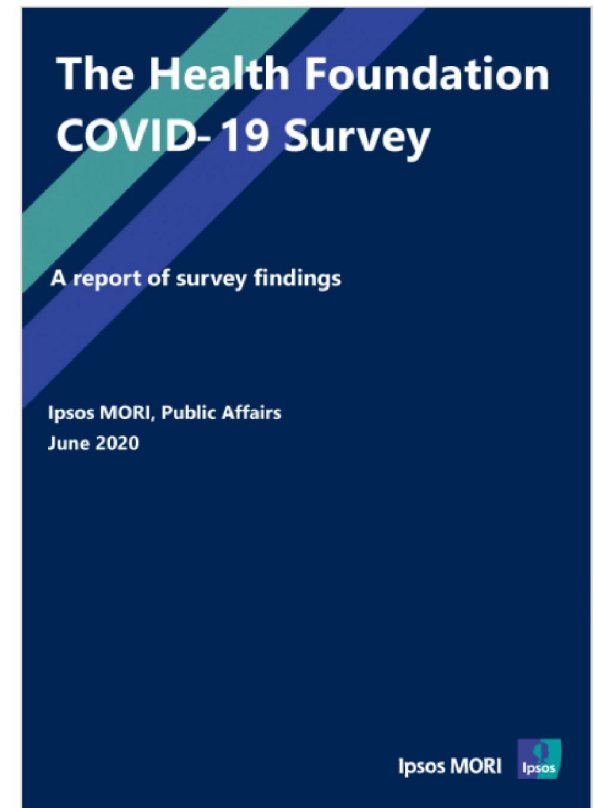
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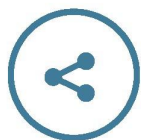
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