C19 National Foresight Group: Intelligence Briefing Paper 20
Data Trends, Covid and the Under 29s and Festive Celebrations
23/09/20

Paper prepared by Dr Stacey Stewart, Adam Potter, Dr Lucy Justice, edited and synthesised by Rich Pickford and Dr Rowena Hill
Nottingham Trent University

This briefing synthesizes data with systematic findings from across academic subjects. This evidence of empirical data and academic insight contributes to our existing knowledge on who is most likely to be experiencing adversity in our communities.

Context

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Evidence related to Covid-19 psychological, social and economic trends are reviewed to inform, frame and prioritise discussions at national and local strategic decision-making level (LAs and LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group synthesise data trends and academic findings across disciplines, with evidence of existing vulnerabilities and inequalities to start to build existing and emerging risk or adversity profiles of impacts from Covid-19.

Who is this for?

This is most useful for **national thought leaders, local strategic decision-makers, intel cells and those involved in populating the MAIC**.

Focussed theme this week: This week we are focussing on the evidence that younger adults have contributed to a greater extent to viral transmission than other age groups, preparing the messaging and advice for festive celebrations ahead in the coming months in to 2021.

Academic Synthesis

Gathered from systematic literature reviews, rapid reviews, webpages, academic articles, pre-prints, academic expertise.

N.B. This is not a literature review, but a review of the broad area (balanced with Covid-19 specific literature) to see what topics lie within the area to inform future work. Predominantly based on systematic literature reviews and rapid reviews, this is to indicate the size of the literature review should we wish to commission one. Carried out by Adam Potter, Dr Stacey Stewart, and Rich Pickford, with revisions and edits by Dr Rowena Hill, NTU. Please contact us if you require a list of sources consulted to develop your own literature review. Our purpose is to provide an overview of the academic and research foresight on the developing areas of latent and emergent needs in the community.

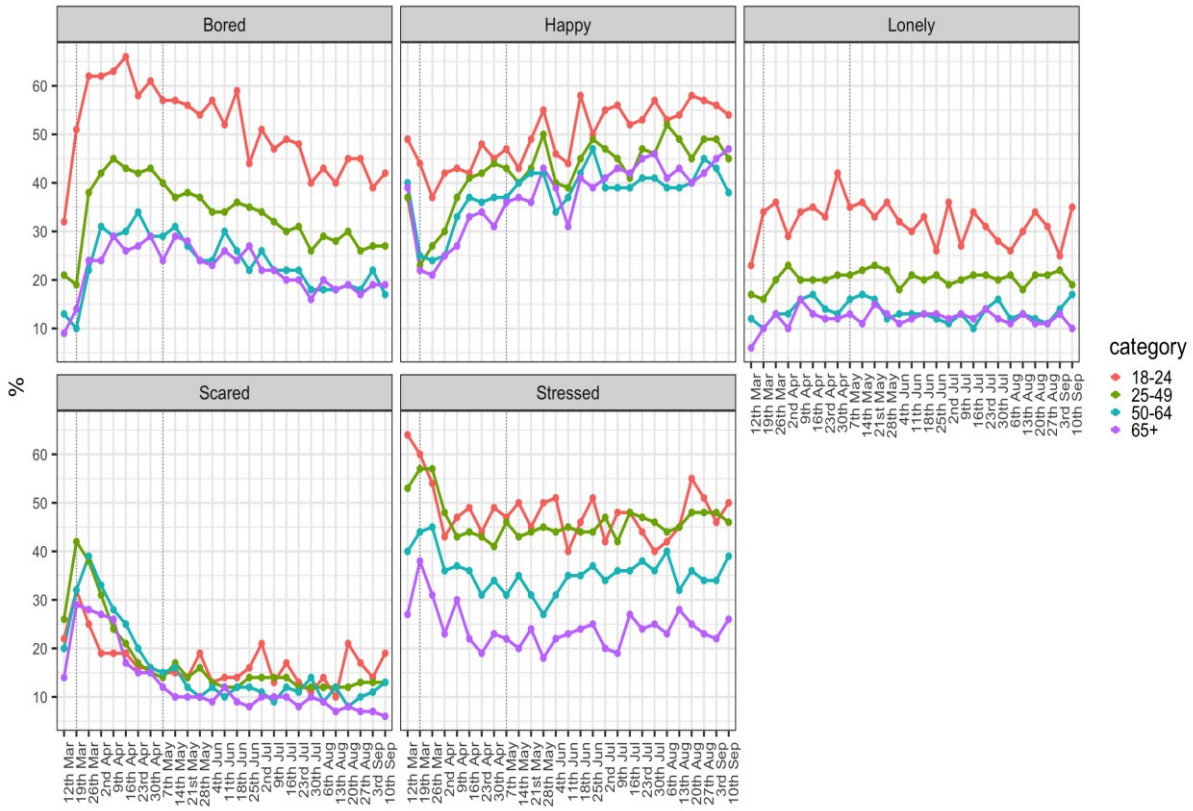
YouGov Mood

21/09/20

Happiness has dipped by around 5% for all age groups except 65+ year olds who have increased for the third consecutive week. Respondents from **Scotland also show a large drop in happiness of around 15% from the previous week.**

Boredom and loneliness are plateauing for all groups although non-working respondents report being around 10% more lonely than all working groups.

Nearly all groups show a slight increase in feeling scared and feeling stressed with younger adults (18-49 years), females and those from London reporting the highest stress levels (45-50% of respondents).




Bored
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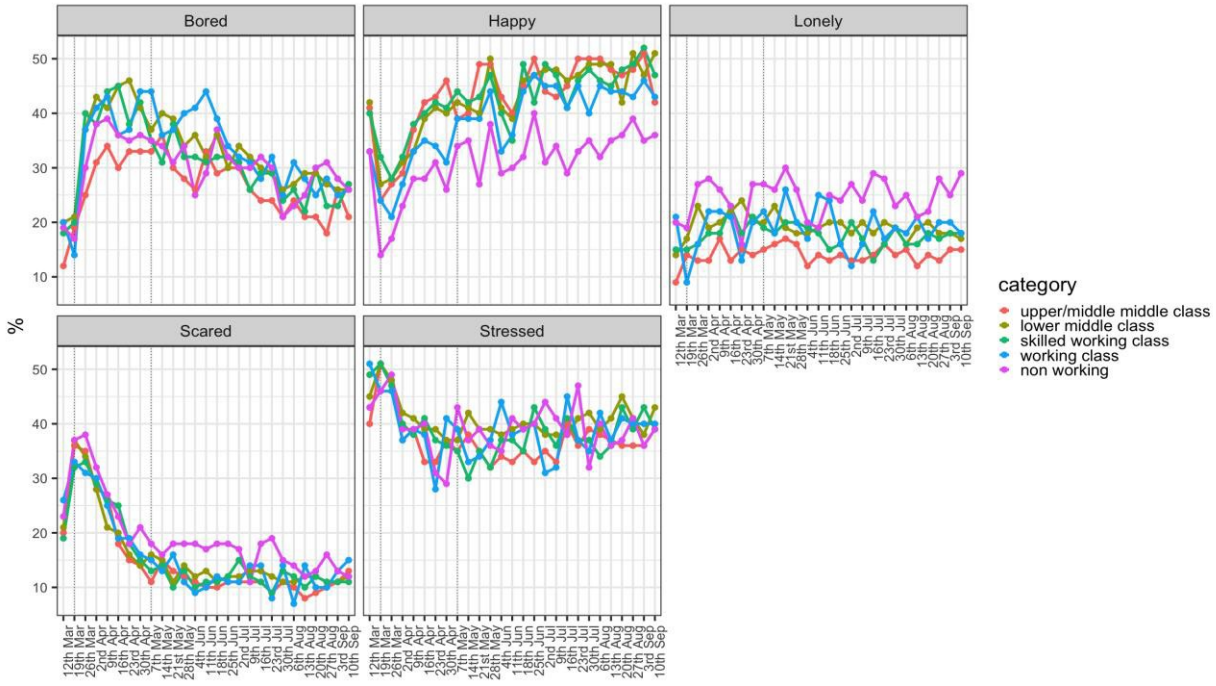
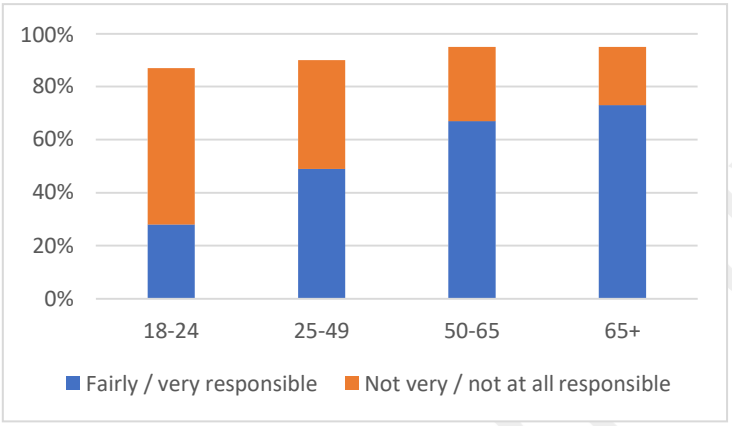


Focused Report on Youth (29 years and under)

This section of our report this week focusses on the perspective and evidence surrounding young adults. We have tried to collate data to unpick some of the claims that have been levelled at young adults over the past weeks. This focusses on responsibility, perceptions of the government's handling of the crisis and following government's guidelines on Covid-19.

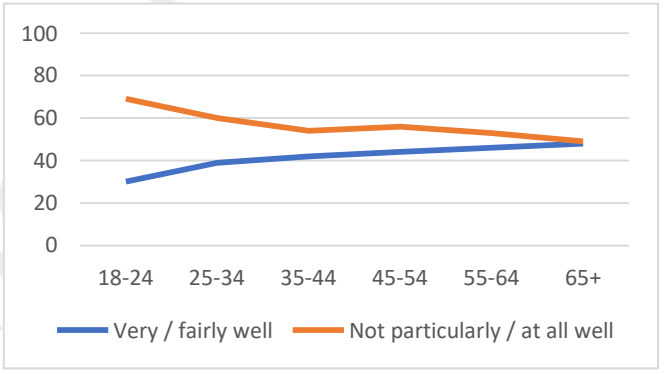
Responsibility

On 11th September YouGov.co.uk asked 2,551 individuals "How responsible, if at all, do you hold young people for the rise in coronavirus infections?". Across all respondents, 57% held young people as fairly or very responsible with 35% responding with not very or not at all responsible. However, **as age increases so too does the belief in responsibility of young adults for the rise in infections**, as shown below.

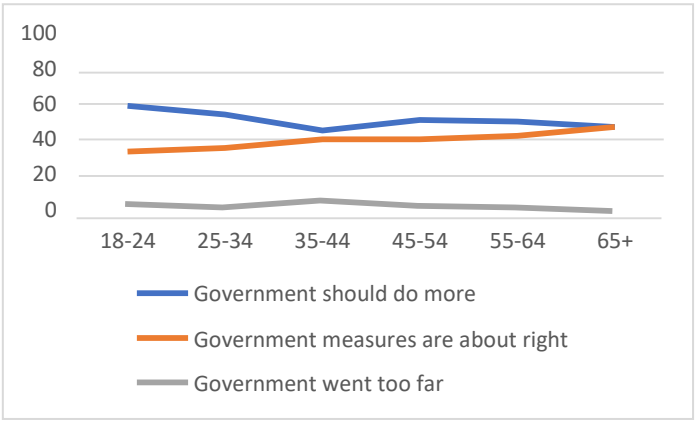


Government handling of the pandemic

Between 17th and 29th July Ipsos Mori and The Health foundation asked 2,246 individual's "Overall, how well, if at all, do you think the UK Government has handled the coronavirus outbreak so far?". Results show that support for the government's approach to handling the pandemic increases with age, with **around 30% of 18-24 year olds reporting supporting the approach** but nearly half of 65+ year olds.

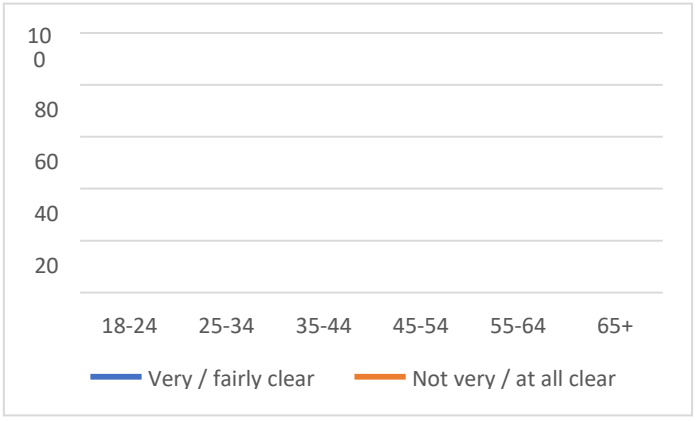


Respondents were also asked "When thinking about the different measures the Government has taken so far in order to tackle the coronavirus outbreak, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?". Results showed that younger people (18 – 34 years) were most likely to believe that the government should have done more in response to the pandemic, with **less than 35% of young adults agreeing that the government measures were about right.**

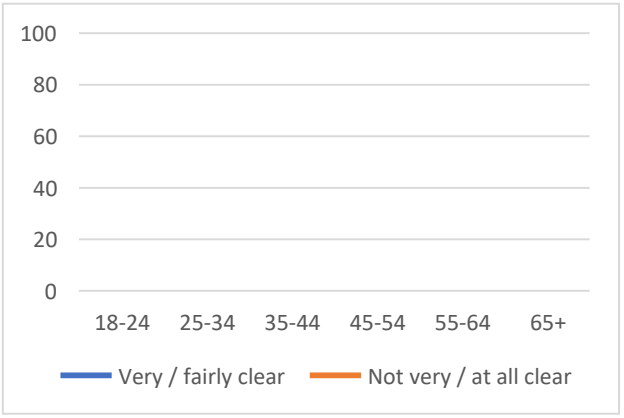


Age groups responded similarly to the question "How clear, if at all, do you think the official guidance is on when people should stay at home to self-isolate?", with around **65%-70% of most age groups agreeing that advice had been very or fairly clear.**

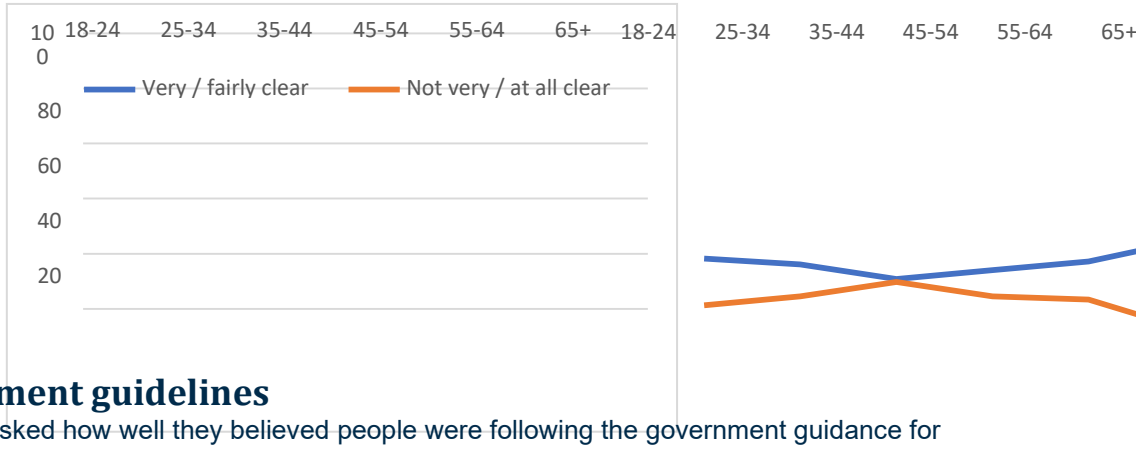
Most age groups were split with around half believing that the clarity of the government's advice on visiting places such as pubs and shops, and attending public gatherings was clear and the other half stating it was not clear. This trend was slightly different for those in the 65+ age group where 60% stated guidance was clear and 40% that it was



Respondents were asked "How clear, if at all, do you think the official guidance is on staying safe outside the home, for example social distancing?". Older adults were most likely to report feeling the guidance was very or fairly clear with around 65% of 55+ year olds providing this answer, **whereas this dropped by around 10% for 18-34 year olds with just over 40% agreeing.**



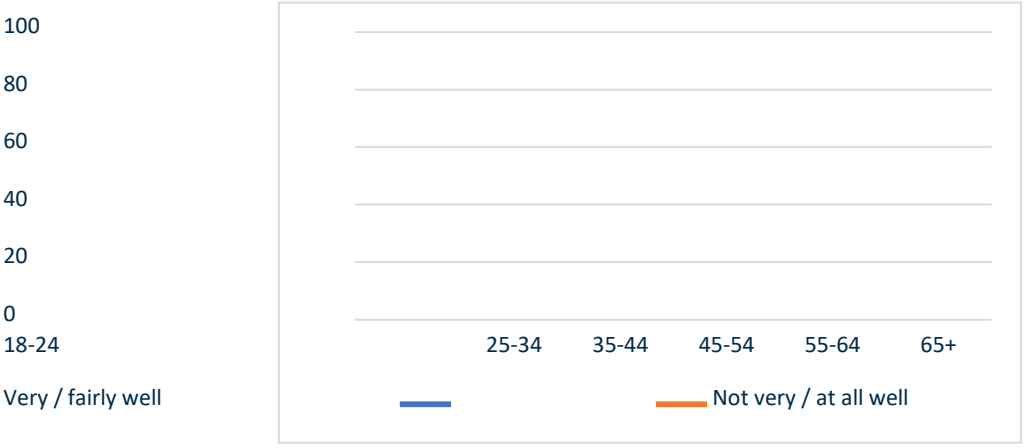
The majority of respondents in all age groups reported that the clarity of advice on who and how many people they are able to meet with was not very or not at all clear with the 35-44 year old group having the highest reports of lack of clarity.



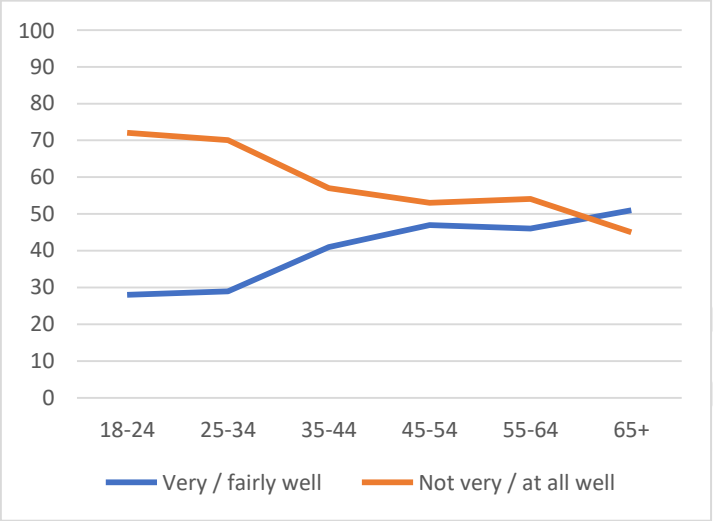
Following government guidelines

Respondents were then asked how well they believed people were following the government guidance for each of the above areas.

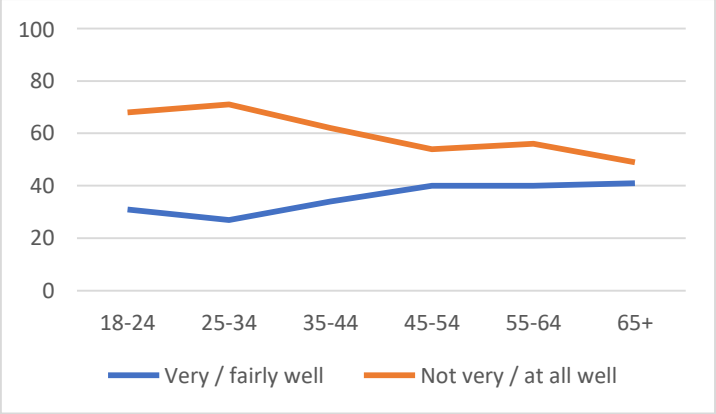
Around a third of younger adults (18-34 years) thought that people were not following the guidance on Staying at home and self-isolating when they have symptoms, compared with a quarter of older adults (55+ years).



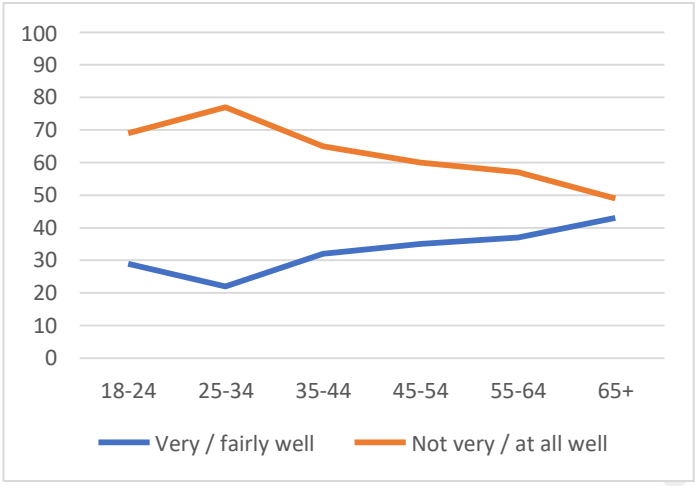
There were large age differences regarding the response to the question “how well, if at all, do you think that people generally are following the official government guidance on Staying safe outside the home, for example social distancing?”. **Around three quarters of young people (18-34 years) believed that people were not following advice very well or at all,** whereas this dropped to around half of respondents in the 45+ year groups.



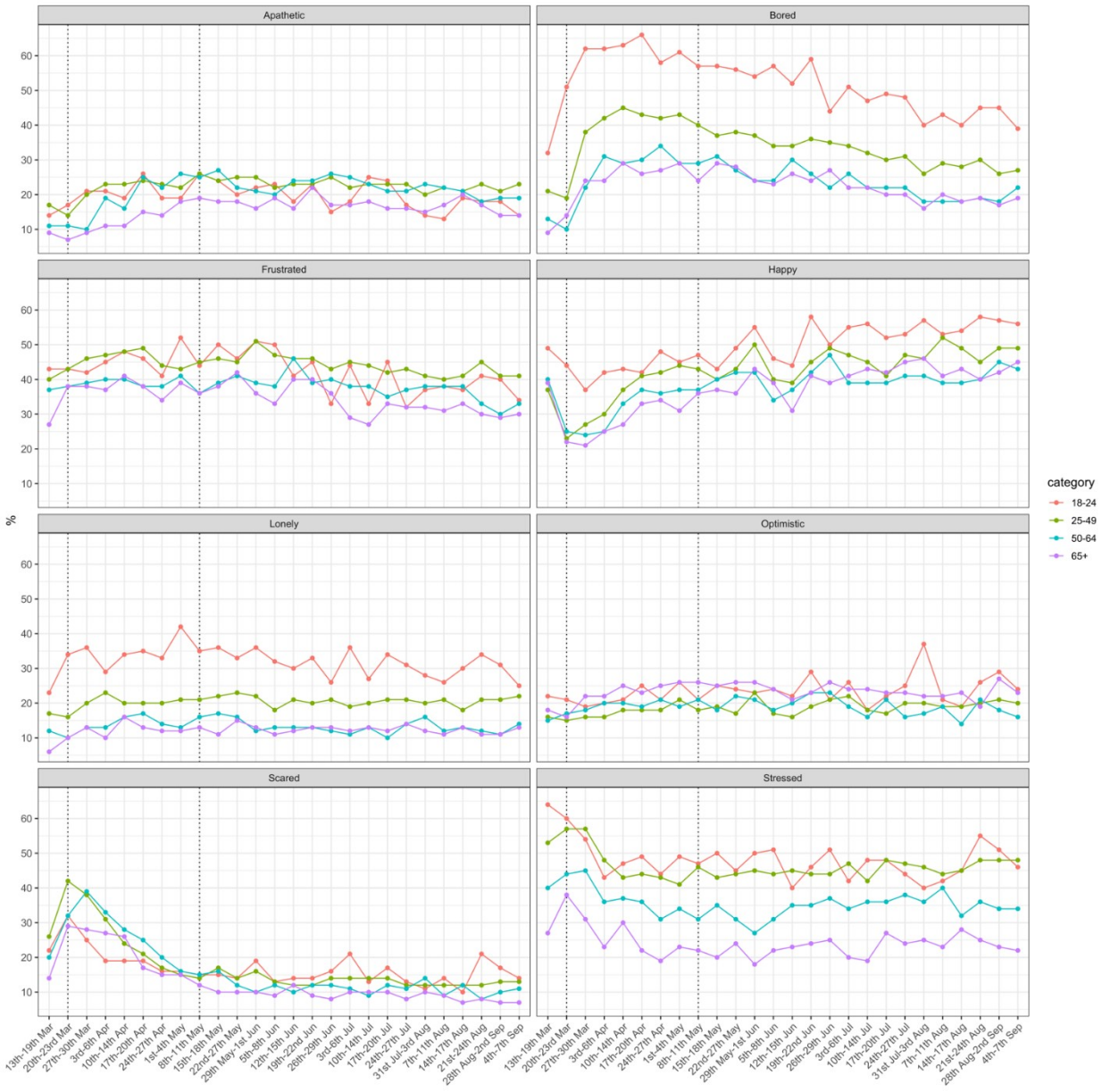
Younger people were also more likely to think that people were not following government guidelines on visiting places such as pubs, shops other public gatherings then older people. **Around 70% of 18-34 years olds believed guidance was not being followed** well with this decreasing to around 50% of older adults (46+ years).



Responses to the question “how well, if at all, do you think that people generally are following the official government guidance on Who and how many people they can meet with?” showed a similar trend. **Around 70% of 18-34 years olds believed guidance was not being followed well** with this decreasing to around 50% of older adults (65+ years).



Up to 2,081 individuals have provided their mood across each week of the pandemic, shown below. Across the pandemic **younger adults report being bored, lonely, stressed and happy at a higher rate** than other age groups. For other emotions, younger adults report similar levels to other age groups.


Apathetic
Bored
Frustrated
Happy
Lonely
Optimistic
Scared
Stressed
%
category
18-24
25-49
50-64
65+
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20th-23rd Mar
27th-30th Mar
3rd-6th Apr
10th-14th Apr
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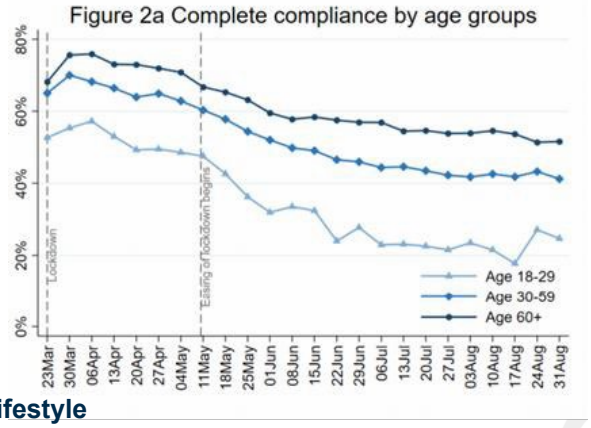
24th-27th Apr
1st-4th May
8th-11th May
15th-18th May
22nd-27th May
29th May-1st Jun
6th-8th Jun
12th-15th Jun
19th-22nd Jun
26th-29th Jun
3rd-6th Jul
10th-14th Jul
17th-20th Jul
24th-27th Jul
31st Jul-3rd Aug
7th-11th Aug
14th-17th Aug
21st-24th Aug
28th Aug-2nd Sep
4th-7th Sep

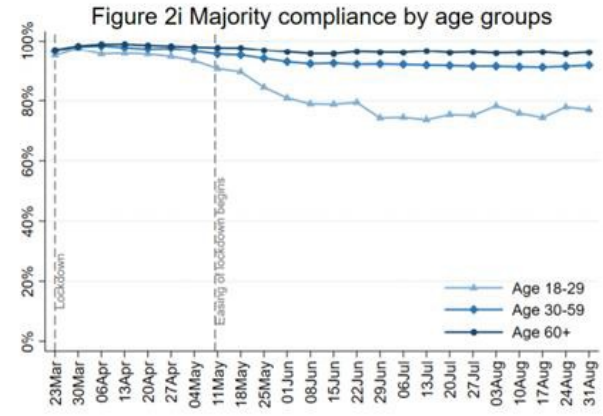
Communicating Health Behaviours to the Under-30s

Background

Compliance

According to the Covid-19 Social Study compliance has continued to remain stable over the past six weeks, although "complete" compliance remains at just 20%-25% in adults under the age of 30, 40% in adults aged 30-50 and 50% in adults over the age of 60. "Majority" compliance remains around 90% overall but is lowest (75%) amongst adults under 30. These findings should be interpreted in light of the results in a previous Covid-19 Social Study report showing that understanding of the current guidelines is low. As such, these figures reflect people's belief that they are complying rather than necessarily actual compliance levels.





Lifestyle

28% of adults have reported that their lives are currently completely different or have lots of differences compared to prior to Covid-19, despite lockdown measures having eased substantially. 33% have said there are quite a few differences, whilst 35% have said there are only a few differences, and just 4% say their lives are entirely the same as they were before the pandemic. These figures are an improvement from lockdown, when 50% of people said their lives were completely different or had lots of differences, 28% said there were quite a few differences, 18% said life was only a little different, and 4% said their lives were entirely the same as before the pandemic. Differences during lockdown were most stark amongst 18-29 year olds, when 60% said their lives were been largely or completely difference compared to just 40% of adults over the age of 60.

Wellbeing

The Covid-19 social study reports that under 30s are suffering poorer mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic than other age groups. The under 30s report higher levels of depression, anxiety, loneliness, thoughts of death and self-harm, lower life satisfaction and happiness, as well as higher rates of physical or psychological abuse than other age groups. According to ONS data (https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsonyoungpeopleingreatbritain/3aprilto10may2020) young people were much more likely to say the lockdown was making their mental health worse (42%) than older adults.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on behaviour have had a significant impact on the lives of young adults, more so than other age groups. This has resulted in high rates of poor mental health, with many young people struggling with mental health problems, mood disturbances and abuse. Any communication strategy should be sensitive to the lived experiences, difficulties and impacts of restrictions on young people.

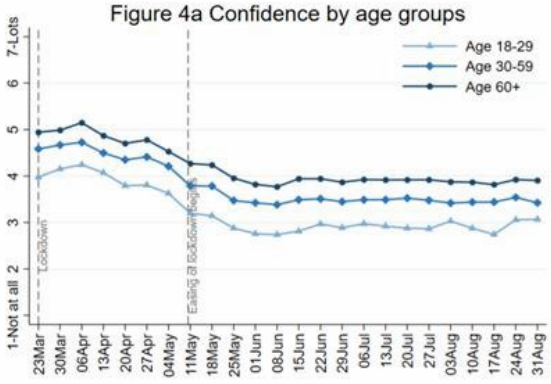
Trust

Trust is of vital importance when communicating health measures. The perceived reliability and trust in the source of information during a pandemic influences the likelihood that individuals will adopt recommended behaviours- higher trust in the government, health agencies and media sources

(Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2011; Siegrist & Zingg, 2014; van der Weerd et al, 2011; Setbon et al, 2011), belief in their expertise and responsibility to protect (Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2011), and perceiving their information as useful and reliable (Agüero et al, 2011; Bults et al, 2011) all increase the likelihood that individuals will follow recommended behaviours.

In England, confidence in government is still lowest in those under the age of 30. This means that any communication strategy may be undermined unless trust and confidence in the source of the communication is developed first. Modelling of recommended behaviour by officials is important for building trust (Siegrist & Zingg, 2014)- for example, Fancourt, Steptoe and Wright (2020) report that there was a significant drop in confidence in the government following the reported breaking of lockdown restrictions by government advisor Dominic Cummings.

Figure 4a Confidence by age groups



Kauttonen et al (2020) found that online nutrition and health communication is more likely to be perceived as trustworthy if it is informative (i.e., contains useful information), neutral (i.e., no subjective opinions) and logical. Clarity (i.e., writing style) and sentiment (i.e., a positive tone) were also positively correlated with trustworthiness, but to a lesser degree. This suggests that communication should provide useful information about restrictions and recommended (positive) behaviours, be based on objective information (such as infection rates), logically justify the recommended behaviours and restrictions, be clear and easy to understand, and maintain a positive tone (for example, highlighting the positive/altruistic effects of recommended behaviours, and suggesting proactive ways to stay engaged despite the restrictions).

Health Beliefs

A number of health beliefs affect the likelihood that individuals will engage in recommended protective behaviours. Risk perceptions of a disease (Tooher et al, 2013; Wang, Wei & Shi, 2018) including the perceived severity of the disease (Bults et al, 2011; Cho & Lee, 2015; de Zwart et al, 2010; Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2011; Setbon et al, 2011) and the perceived personal susceptibility to catching the disease (Agüero et al, 2011; de Zwart et al, 2010; van der Weerd et al, 2011) increase the likelihood that an individual engages in protective behavioural measures.

Abbott et al (2020) report that most of the messaging about Covid-19 has emphasised that the majority of young adults are unlikely to experience severe symptoms from the virus, and that this is certain to reduce adherence to protective recommendations. However, they also highlight evidence that young adults could be motivated by the need to protect others. As such, they recommend that messaging emphasises the risk to significant others in young people's lives such as older family members or those with existing health conditions.

Kobayashi et al (2020) however highlight that although subjectively Covid-19 involves mild infections among the general population, the risk of death among young adults is higher than for seasonal influenza. Communicating more accurate levels of risk may increase adherence.

Psychological Factors

Psychological factors also influence individual's protective health behaviours. Individuals with higher self-efficacy- confidence in their ability to carry out a behaviour- and belief the behaviours will be effective (Agüero et al, 2011; Bults et al, 2011; Wang, Wei & Shi, 2018) are more likely to engage

in protective health behaviours (Bults et al, 2011; Cho & Lee, 2015; de Zwart et al, 2010; von Gottberg et al, 2016) as are individuals with higher perceived control- the degree to which individuals believe they control and are responsible for the things that happen in their lives (Cirakoglu, 2011; Karademas et al, 2013; Setbon et al, 2011). Beliefs about subjective norms- how individuals believe everyone else is behaving- also affect uptake of recommended health behaviours (Cho & Lee, 2015).

Abbott et al (2020) argue that often Covid-19 messaging has ignored the importance of efficacy, in particular self-efficacy and response efficacy. To gain social distancing self-efficacy, young people need to understand the various forms of social distancing that may be required of them, but they also require "how-to" information and information on how to overcome barriers to successful social distancing. To gain response efficacy, they need to be persuaded social distancing will work to slow the spread. There has been consistent messaging highlighting the recommended six-foot distance, but very little information has been circulated on how to maintain this distance in different settings frequented by young adults. Messaging strategies that could help build self-efficacy such as visuals of people engaging in the behaviour (social modelling) and providing words of encouragement have been largely absent. Very little information has been provided on how young adults can remain socially connected- a critical developmental need for this age group- while implementing the recommendations about physical distance. This is likely to be important as young adults are reporting significantly higher levels of boredom than other age groups, and boredom is associated with lower adherence to social distancing measures and increased likelihood of having contracted Covid-19 (Wolff et al, 2020). Therefore, communication may be more effective if it proactively recommends ways to stay socially engaged and reduce boredom within the rules of the restrictions.

While there has been messaging around social distancing slowing the spread of the virus, most individuals lack an advanced knowledge of transmission routes of respiratory illness or how contagious Covid-19 is. The messages have also not focused on the effectiveness of these measures to keep other at-risk individuals connected to the young adults safe from infection. Thus, general information on slowing the spread may not be perceived as information about social distancing's response efficacy.

Communication

Rosseau et al (2015) found that advocating for clear information and coordination between health authorities and the media promoted adherence to preventive behaviour- however, overexaggerating the risks and minimizing the population's agency may undermine health authority credibility.

Abbott et al (2020) recommend that messaging efforts aimed at young people need to meet them where they are in terms of messaging needs (what information they need), preferences (e.g., visual style), and considerations such as communication channels. To achieve this, messaging efforts often rely on extensive formative data and participatory approaches. However, they argue that, so far in this crisis, there is little evidence of meaningfully engaging young adults. When engaged meaningfully and effectively, young people are effective agents of change for themselves and their communities. Consulting and involving young people in the creation of messaging therefore may be the best way to effectively engage young adults in recommended behaviours. These authors conclude that as we continue to grapple with the presence of Covid-19 in our communities, effective mitigation is dependent on messaging to young adults that is developed by them, in partnership with them, is theory- based, tested, and rolled out through channels they define as meeting them where they are.

Similarly, Efuribe et al (2020) recommend that youths' passion to regain normalcy should be validated, while also encouraging, empowering, and engaging them in forming creative solutions for a new normal. They argue that authorities should proactively acknowledge the impact the current changes are having on young people today and include their voices when assembling stakeholders in strategic plans for restructuring policies, systems, workflows, and communities affected by Covid-19.

Recommendations

Any communication strategy must be based on trust and confidence in the source of the information. Every effort should be made to increase the trust and confidence of young people in the government, including role modelling recommended behaviours and providing clear, consistent and reliable information. Communication strategies for young adults should be constructed in partnership with young

people, to accurately address their needs (e.g. informational needs) and engage them in a meaningful way.

Based on the above literature, a suggested communication strategy should:

1. Recognise and validate the experience and sacrifice of young people
2. Contain clear and useful information on how to abide by the restrictions in a variety of contexts particularly relevant to young people
3. Clearly and logically justify the recommendations and restrictions using objective data
4. Emphasise the importance and effectiveness of their behaviours and how they can have a positive impact on the community and others at risk
5. Include proactive recommendations for what young adults can do to maintain their wellbeing, remain socially connected and reduce boredom whilst abiding by the restrictions

Supporting the UK to Celebrate Festive Occasions in the Context of the C-19 Pandemic

Context

What can we do to make festivities as meaningful and fulfilling as possible in the context of social distancing restrictions? What are the things that are important to people and how can we best enable them to still get that even during Covid-19 when we cannot gather physically (either in close proximity or in large numbers)? Due to the media interest surrounding Christmas we took this national festive period as our starting point. Many of the issues highlighted will translate to other religious festivals and focus should be directed at Diwali and Hanukkah as two other important upcoming religious festivals over the winter period.

What do festivities mean?

N.B. Although this following section considers Christmas specifically, please note that the discussions of rituals and family traditions and bonds is a human experience of kinship and within reason, a lot of this discussion is relevant to inform other festivities and celebrations (both religious and non-religious).

There is much consensus in the literature that Christmas has moved away from being a religious holiday, to more of a commercial and consumption driven event. Focus is not solely on Jesus' birth or religious understanding, but on the giving and receiving of gifts to share with family. Forbes (2007) explains that there is a religious Christmas and a cultural one. There is mention **of Christmas being a major kinship event** - a time to share food and be together with family (Mason and Muir, 2013), and a time to stop working, travel home and decorate cities and houses (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002).

Lowrey and Otnes (2003) explain that, due to fractured families and decreased leisure time, ideal Christmas celebrations (suggested in books and films) are hard to achieve. As Christmas has taken on a more secular meaning, it has become an **occasion to acknowledge important social bonds** (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002; Lowrey and Otnes, 2003). For extended families that live apart, Christmas time can become the only significant recognition of kinship ties to occur all year (Lowrey and Otnes, 2003; Petrelli et al, 2012). Therefore, Lowrey and Otnes (2003) argue that the risk of 'not doing Christmas right' outweighs any inconveniences or ill tempers that result from the holiday.

Academic literature suggests that this family ritual is a highly stylized cultural performance involving numerous family members that is repeated, has structure, and involves symbolic behaviour. **The experience encompasses ritual artefacts, scripts, performance roles and an audience. These are all within and personalised to each family.** These can be captured by thinking 'what do the members of our family normally do at Christmas?'. These behaviours can be seen as each family's traditions at Christmas. Because most people have experienced many Christmases prior to coronavirus, it is these traditions that they will be seeking to implement, as these are what makes Christmas, Christmas to that family (Petrelli et al, 2012). Mason and Muir (2013) explain conjuring up Christmas traditions creates a vivid and potent sense of personal family eras, atmospheres and styles. These are central to the joint legacies that families build together and draw on generational dynamics and personal family histories, it is also how memories are indexed in and through time. Mason and Muir (2013) explain **that traditions were created and *belonged* to that family** and they are passed on from childhood; women are often the keepers of traditions. We would suggest that **the creation of 'traditions' will also exist for other religious festivals with similar impacts. So the challenge in the context of Covid-19 is how to encourage families across the UK to identify:**

1) What are the rituals and traditions that are created and belong to your family

2) What makes this festive period special to your family?

3) How can your family maintain their rituals and traditions within the projected Covid restrictions (physical distancing, using technology for virtual gatherings)?

Academics (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002) who have researched what people found satisfactory/stressful/emotional during Christmas, and their experiences, use of money and consumption behaviours found that more happiness was reported when family and religious experiences were significant or special, and lower well-being occurred when spending money and receiving gifts predominated. Additionally, engaging in environmentally conscious consumption practices also predicted happier holidays – as did being older and male. They conclude, explaining that the materialistic aspects of modern Christmas celebrations may undermine well-being, **whilst family and spiritual activities may help people feel more satisfied.** Mason and Muir (2013) agree, **explaining that Christmas has become the exemplary time of family togetherness. Although this is positive for those facing financial difficulty, as it is the togetherness that matters not the expense, it poses an issue during the coronavirus pandemic, because it focuses on family being together and undertaking joint activities.**

The family rituals and traditions are activities that benefit families at Christmas, according to research, women are most often the keepers of traditions, and as they are traditions they are very hard to change ad hoc. The desires of partners, children and wider family were key, and the responsibility for how Christmas is experienced was a key element in considering which traditions were successful. It is predominantly women who take on responsibilities for cooking, cleaning, wrapping and shopping which leads to them reporting lower well-being at Christmas. This suggests there **may be extra burden and pressure on women during the holiday period. It also means that messaging should be supportive of women adapting traditions and encouraging those around them to share the burden and to be supportive of any alterations to adapt for Covid-19 restrictions.**

Academic research suggests that Christmas, **combined with New Year, and the shared holiday period provides people with a natural point in the year to reflect on their year and contemplate their future**. However other pressures during Christmas include economic pressure, fatigue, overindulgence of food and alcohol, and a pressure to socialise and interact with family/friends/colleagues in an atmosphere of intimacy which may not exist any other time of the year. Evidence suggests that distressing feelings are normal at Christmas – grief, sadness, poignancy, nostalgia, loneliness and sometimes despair. Some research suggests that Christmas can evoke feelings of happiness or distress depending on our present circumstances and past experiences of the season. Therefore, the emotional impact of a festival occurring during Covid-19 restrictions should be considered by those in positions of local decision-making and resource planning for sources of support.

What might affect usual practice

Physical Distancing

There is likely to be limited contact with friends and family which may cause an increase in isolation and loneliness (Salonen, 2014); this is already prevalent during Christmas periods and may be exacerbated. There were many suggestions in the public domain for people celebrating Eid to do so socially distanced. This included; sending presents online, scheduling meals at the same time and using technology to have virtual togetherness, attend religious services virtually, speak with friends and family via phone or video call, consider creating a blessed and celebratory atmosphere at home and give to others. Some mosques around the world did open to allow 30 people in, but 'open house' traditions where people attend for a feast were cancelled. Whilst many reported that they were sad and frustrated that their plans could not go ahead, people found comfort in doing some of the traditional things, such as preparing traditional food and wearing selected clothes. Many people spent Eid with just their immediate family as opposed to seeing their extended family, despite the tradition to see the wider family.

Financial circumstances

Salonen (2014) explains that people who seek food assistance regularly continue to do so at Christmas, but people with limited resources who don't necessarily obtain food assistance on a regular basis are more likely to do so at Christmas. Whilst there can be an abundance of food at Christmas (because people want to give) **those who need the food assistance also crave social gatherings and**

opportunities to celebrate in ways that are customary for their culture, as they are often excluded.

Choosing a tree

This may become a ticketed/time slot event to prevent people gathering.

Gift Giving

The work of the NTU C19 National Foresight Group has explored at length the financial and economic impacts Covid-19 is having on families around the UK. It was therefore considered that standard gift giving, or that which has been demonstrated by people in previous years, may be difficult to achieve this year. Therefore, the act of gift giving has been explored within this section.

Ward and Chan (2015) explain **that gift giving provides relationship maintenance rites such as reciprocity, expression of appreciation and it reinforces established relationships**; giving gifts is a fundamental role in human interaction that is deeply embedded in our cultural norms and values. Reciprocity in giving and receiving gifts means relationships are regularly reaffirmed, and gifters are often deeply invested in the process. Although gift giving has known importance, Flynn and Adams (2009) researched the unequal beliefs about gift price and feelings of appreciation. When we buy a more expensive gift, we expect levels of appreciation to be higher, however, this was not what they found; people were appreciative of the gift regardless of the cost. Whilst this is positive in terms of saving money, Kasser and Sheldon (2002) found that people tried to limit their spending at Christmas experienced stress.

The importance of giving children branded gifts to children between 3-8 years old (Clarke, 2006) established no significant relationship between involvement in giving gifts, and involvement in giving brands as gifts. This suggests that although it is important for parents to give gifts, they do not have to give popular brand name gifts. This links with Forbes (2007), who states that children want four things at Christmas; a relaxed and loving time with family, realistic expectations about gifts, an evenly paced holiday season, and reliable family traditions.

Research suggests that well-being at Christmas is low when materialistic values and experiences a central to peoples' lives; people who focus on the materialistic aspects of the season are often less involved with the family or with experiences that could bring them greater joy. Kasser and Sheldon (2002) explain that **whilst materialism benefits the economy, it distracts people from the 'true meaning' of the season.**

Finally, gift giving at Christmas often follows a number of traditions which differ for each family. For example, participants within Mason and Muir's (2013) study explained one of their traditions was that gifts could not be opened until everyone was present. Other participants shared that their traditions were that people had their own corners to open their presents in so items were not confused. Encouraging families to identify and recognise their traditions, and to find ways to preserve them through Covid restrictions is key to achieving a fulfilling festive period.

Christmas meal

It was seen earlier in the year that farmers could not harvest their crop as swiftly without workers, and it must be considered whether this is now resolved for winter crops. Additionally, as seen with the essential items, people may start to stockpile items if they believe there could be a shortage.

How can this be overcome?

Options that can move online:

Carolling	Christmas shopping	Going ice skating (Bell, 2007)
Midnight mass/attending a service	Carolling (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002)	Children's nativities
Family meal	Visiting Santa	Christmas meal – family being

		together
Boxing day sales	Santa tracker – online websites to see where he is around the world	Community Christmas spirit
Secret Santa/ work drinks	Dear Santa app (and others that are similar)	Christmas shopping
Helping others (donating money)	Local area services have already started to prepare to socially distance Santa sleigh/float visits this year.	Simplifying Christmas

Forbes (2007) explains that if we want things to change from a hectic Christmas, **we need to sit down before the season starts and *choose* what kind of Christmas we would like to have, this is more important this year than most,** rather than just letting it happen. Conscious decision making about what adds value to the family Christmas needs to occur before the festive period. Academics suggest that it is not wise to impose one type of ideal Christmas on everyone, because values change for each person.

Finally, perhaps it is the types of activities that people can still do, or choose to develop, based within the home or remotely, that should be focussed upon when discussing Christmas. The importance of continuing with traditions and creating new traditions, spending time as a family, and experiencing a slower pace builds positive feelings around Christmas. For example some communities are already planning a window advent event, where each night a different household puts a display in their window, so eventually 24 houses are participating around a locality. So children can walk around the streets at a safe distance each night and see something different. This is similar to the New Zealand teddy bears picnic concept from the initial lockdown there. Establishing new traditions and the opportunity to create community based cohesion through a joint community celebratory venture should not be overlooked this year.

Demographic differences

In Kasser and Sheldon's (2002) study, older individuals and males reported greater happiness at Christmas.

Christmas for non-Christian's

For people who do not celebrate Christmas, research suggests that they can often feel like outsiders not included in to the culture. Explaining to children of different religions and cultures that they do not celebrate Christmas is often a difficult conversation, in the context of Covid-19 it is more important to support these conversations and to consider those in society who do not celebrate Christmas. For these individuals the festive period can be challenging enough, with Covid restrictions this is likely to be more challenging and policies or solutions should consider this group.

Considering how religious events can be socially distanced

This section of the briefing explores ways of managing religious events during Covid-19.

It is known that religious celebration and events bring people of all religions together at different points throughout the year. Whilst some of the celebrations have passed, more will occur and also during the winter months where the risk of other illness, such as flu, is higher. This section of the document looks to understand what some of the main religious celebrations mean to people who follow that religion, to seek ways to ensure people's safety whilst they celebrate. The religious events chosen to be featured within this briefing have been selected through the Open University's guide to religious events which identifies where festivals must be considered before planning working or learning. These are divided into

Red events (no learning to be conducted) and Amber events (limited teaching and considerations made). The briefing used these as a guide but included Diwali and Ramadan in our more detailed briefing below.

Vierlboeck, Nilchiani and Edwards (2020) completed research that ran multiple simulation scenarios for Passover and Easter holidays, evaluating 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% temporary increases in contact rates.

Their first general finding was that singular events of increased visits/contacts amplify each other disproportionately if they are happening in close proximity (time intervals) together. Their second observation is that contact rate spikes leave a permanently increased infection rate behind – even after contact rate returns to the reduced amount. In case of a temporary sustained increase of contact rate for just three consecutive days results in an increase of infection rate up to 40%, which arguably could double the fatality in the long term. They argue that from data seen in Germany for the Easter weekend, increases of 25% and 50% seem likely. For a temporary 25% surge in contact rate, the total cases grew by 215,880. For a temporary surge of 50%, the number of cases rose by 461,090 in NYC.

They conclude, explaining that **even very short, temporary increases in contact rates can have disproportionate effects and result in significant** impacts on hospital admissions. This data should be considered for upcoming festivals.

Diwali (14 November 2020)

What is it about?

Diwali is a Hindu festival of lights, also celebrated by Jains and Sikhs (BBC, 2020). Whilst the reason for celebration is different for someone of Sikh or Jain faith, the celebratory acts remain the same (BBC, 2020). Diwali is known as the festival of lights because the windows and doorways of houses, shops and public places are decorated with lamps or lights, to guide the goddess Lakshmi into people's homes. The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali is also used to celebrate a successful harvest. National Geographic (2020) explain that Diwali is as important to Hindus as Christmas is to Christians.

The Times of India shares the modern meaning of Diwali: "regarding of the mythological explanation one prefers, what the festival of lights really stands for today is a reaffirmation of hope, a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill, and a religiously sanctioned celebration of the simple – and some not so simple – joys of life" (BBC, 2020).

How is it celebrated?

Traditional Diwali celebrations extends over five days and involves lights, fireworks and sweets. National geographic (2020) details what each day entails:

1. People clean their homes and shop for gold or kitchen utensils to help bring good fortune
2. People decorate their homes with clay lamps and create design patterns called rangoli on the floor, using coloured powders or sand
3. On the main day of the festival, families gather together for Lakshmi Puja – a prayed to Goddess Lakshmi, followed by feasts and firework festivities.
4. This is the first day of the new year, when friends and relatives visit with gifts and best wishes for the season.
5. Brothers visit their married sisters, who welcome them with love and a lavish meal.

The festival is a time to thoroughly clean the home, redecorate the home, buy and wear new clothes and decorate buildings with lots of lights. Leicester is noted for its Diwali celebrations (BBC, 2020).

Many Indians see Diwali as a time to gamble, as the goddess Parvati played dice with her husband on this day, and it is believed anyone who gambled on Diwali would do well (BBC, 2020).

Diwali is very much a time for buying and exchanging gifts; sweets and dried fruits are traditional, but it has become more commercialised (BBC, 2020).

The Independent (2019) explains that people attend firework displays, prayer services and festive events to celebrate Diwali. The city of London also organises a major celebration, which dance shows and live music to Indian food stalls and fire work displays.

The City of Leicester celebrations last for over two weeks, with a 110ft Ferris wheel – the wheel of light – as the centrepiece to their festivities. The Leicester Mercury (2019) report that there is also a 'Diwali light switch on' event that features traditional dance and music programmes with a firework finale; Diwali themed activities at pop-up shops; an exhibition of the history of the festival; art workshops; Diwali storying telling and crafts at libraries; a column of light laser installation visible up to 7 miles away; an evening of Indian classic music and other music events; Diwali fairs; Indian dance shows.

What can still happen?

Activities in the first two days – cleaning home, shopping (perhaps online if necessary), decorating homes with lights and Rangoli, as well as redecorating, buying and wearing new clothes, buying gifts (perhaps bought online and delivered to the recipient's house – Diwali hampers have popped up a lot), online gambling could continue. Individual families may put on their own fireworks shows, and pray with their immediate family rather than those visiting.

Whilst the previously established city celebrations could not proceed as usual, families can undertake Diwali inspired crafts, listen to traditional music and watch traditional dance at home. Additionally, the museums could work to put their exhibitions online – at the start of the first lockdown many museums offered virtual tours.

What are the issues we might face?

Days three to five of celebrations include seeing and meeting wider friends and family to eat feasts, pray and share love. Additionally, many localities arrange a festival of lights celebration that occur over a 14- 20-day period, all around the city with numerous activities that will not be able to go ahead.

How can they be overcome?

The Hindu Council UK have not yet shared any advice about how to celebrate Diwali whilst distancing. Prayers may need to move to online services as has been seen previously. As with Eid and Christmas suggestions, families may need to plan their feasts to be at the same time as one another and video call to be able to feast together. Additionally, visiting friends and family may need to occur via video call, or in a socially distanced manner. Planning will be necessary to ensure gifts are with friends/family for the fourth day, to avoid needing to drop the items off. Additionally, to bring a sense of a communal feast, family could prepare food and safely drop this to another family member – or they could swap dishes etc.

New Zealand are planning on making their usual two day celebrations spread across three weeks, so as to avoid mass gatherings, and instead encourage small community events, so as to abide by their security/threat level (Auckland NZ, 2020).

Conclusion

Whilst Diwali, festival of light, **celebrations are cemented as an important part of the British year**, the true meaning of Diwali is about good over evil, light over dark, reaffirmation of hope and a renewed commitment to friendship and goodwill. Togetherness is an important aspect of celebrating Diwali, but most of the underlying values can still be achieved in adjusted, socially distanced ways as discussed above. A potential difficulty to be faced may be from those who do not celebrate Diwali from a religious viewpoint, but still enjoy the festivities it brings, as they are not guided by the same values and motives for taking part in the celebrations.

Pesach (27 March - 3 April 2021)

What is it about?

Pesach is the Hebrew word for Passover, which celebrates the liberation of Jews from Egypt, known as the Exodus. Passover is considered to be one of the most important religious festivals in the Jewish calendar (BBC, 2009). Passover is also known as the Festival of Freedom and it celebrates freedom – Jews believe freedom to be one of the basic human rights.

How is it celebrated?

Passover started as a ceremony within the home, however, once settled in Jerusalem Jews constructed the Temple and celebrations moved there. Present day celebrations have returned to the home, with families travelling great distances to be together at Passover (Independent, 2020).

Before celebrations begin, the house must be cleaned from top to bottom to remove any Leaven from the home, and also arrogance/pride from their souls. The day before Passover, there is a ritual search for Chametz (leaven) in every home which children enjoy (BBC, 2009).

Celebrations last for 7-8 days depending on location. In Israel the first and seventh days are observed as full days of rest, the middle five days are intermediate holidays. Outside of Israel, Passover lasts 8 days and the first two and last two days are observed as full rest days (BBC, 2009).

There are many traditions for Passover: using crockery set aside for Passover; unleavened bread called Matzah is eaten; a Seder (meaning order) plate takes place over a family meal on the first two nights and consists of a lamb bone, a roasted egg, a green vegetable, bitter herbs, charoset and romaine lettuce. Everything is done in a particular order, following instructions from the Haggadah. Matzah is included in this meal, and once the middle Matzah is broken, the biggest bit is hidden for children to find
– the one who finds it gets a small prize; four glasses of wine represent the four expressions of freedom and an additional cup is left for the prophet Elijah; the story of how Israelites fled from Egypt is retold, and everyone has a cushion to lean on – to remind Jews they are free people and no longer slaves; songs and stories are told and each person must imagine themselves as if they were redeemed from Egypt (BBC, 2020). These events take place at home, with friends and wider family present.

What are the issues we might face?

Families travel great distance to be together at Passover. Food items for the Seder plate are specific and have individual meaning, there could be an issue if these items are not available.

How can they be overcome?

Religion News (2020) explain that this will not be the first socially distanced Passover that Jews have experienced, as in 1831 Jews minimised social contact to prevent the spread of Cholera, additionally, due to scrupulous hygiene standards and following the advice and guidance of medal experts to the letter, it is reported Jews have also historically avoided contracting the contagious diseases including the Black Death. Cleanliness is consistently connected to spiritual purity (Religion News, 2020).

Some activities may need to take place by individual families rather than grouped families– such as children searching the home for leaven. Planning video calls to be with families during the main Seder plate meals may create a sense of togetherness, as may using video calls to tell stories together, and singing songs.

Additionally, in an interview, a Rabbi explained she was getting used to the idea of spending Passover alone; this suggests considerations and adaptions are already being made (WFAE, 2020). She also suggested the use of video calling (WFAE, 2020), although some are concerned that too much technology is being used, which can undermine the values of Jewish religious life by taking time and space away from reflection and privacy (Religion news, 2020).

Conclusion

Whilst many Jewish celebrations include meeting and being with family, and developing collective understanding, the underlying values and ethos of Judaism support the strict adherence to medical advice about socially distancing and personal hygiene. Through reading religious advice from Rabbi's for this piece of work, it appears that many Jewish people will celebrate such events in ways that are adapted to ensure their safety – even if they are not the traditional ways.

Good Friday/Easter Sunday (2 & 4 April 2021)

What is it about?

Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar as it celebrates Jesus rising from the dead, three days after being executed. The week leading up to Easter is called Holy Week.

Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Easter Sunday, which is the first day of the Holy Week and celebrates Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter Day, it is a day to remember when Jesus ate the Passover meal referred to as the Last Supper. Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday, and it commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. Easter Sunday marks Jesus' resurrection (BBC, 2020).

Children often enjoy hearing about the Easter bunny, who lays/decorates/hides eggs – which are a symbol of new life.

How is it celebrated?

Many Christians remember the Last Supper by sharing bread and wine together at a church service called the Holy Communion, Eucharist or Mass. Good Friday is a day of mourning in church, and there are often special Good Friday services to remember Jesus' suffering on the cross (BBC, 2020). Christians also reflect on the meaning of the crucifixion and the central message of Christianity; Jesus atoning for the sins of mankind. Many families and friends get together for a special meal at Easter time (BBC newsround, 2020)

Easter Eggs are used as a symbol for the resurrection of Jesus. Easter egg hunts remain popular with both Christian and non-Christian children (BBC, 2020).

As the UK is a predominantly Christian nation, schools and public holidays are often based around Christian festivals. Around Good Friday and Easter Monday, most schools have a break for two weeks; these breaks were originally for religious observance, but this is not the case anymore (BBC, 2020).

National Trust (2020) shares that an Easter tradition is to eat lamb, chocolate eggs, simnel cakes and hot cross buns. Easter bonnets are also made, often by children, as a way to celebrate Easter. Maypole dancing and Morris dancing are also other Easter tradition within Britain.

What are the issues we might face?

Sharing wine and bread together for the Last Supper. Church services for Good Friday. Maypole/Morris dancing. Getting together with family and friends.

How can they be overcome?

As one Easter celebration has already occurred under lockdown measures, previous learning should be drawn upon. There are reports that some clergy have been preaching to cameras to video conference their services on Easter Sunday, whilst some continued in the church wearing masks and socially distancing (BBC News, 2020). BBC NewsRound (2020) reported that churches were closed due to coronavirus, so sermons were live streamed and families got together via video call instead of in person.

Ramadan / Eid-ul-Fitr (12 April – 11 May 2021)

What is it about?

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims won't eat or drink during daylight hours – they fast. Ramadan remembers the month the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Eid-Ul-Fitr falls at the end of the month of Ramadan and lasts approximately three days; it is a time of focused and careful prayer, and the season of month-long fasting during daylight hours (Muslim Aid, 2019). Eid-Ul-Fitr marks celebrating the end of fasting and thanking Allah for the strength he gave to them through the previous month. Additional material on impact of Covid-19 on Eid can be found in Annex C.

How is it celebrated?

Healthy Muslims fast between dawn and sunset during Ramadan, to allow them to devote themselves to their faith; it teaches self-discipline and reminds them of the suffering of the poor. Most people eat one meal before sunrise and another after sunset. Almost all Muslims try to give up bad habits during Ramadan; it is a time for prayer and good deeds so they try to spend time with family and help people in need (Muslim Aid, 2019).

For Eid-Ul-Fitr, a typical day involves the following: waking up early and greeting family; performing prayers (Salah) and ablution (ghusl); preparing clothes (often new) and getting ready for the day; sitting down for breakfast with family and friends; ensuring Zakat-ul-Fitr (food to the less fortunate) is paid prior to Eid Salah; performing Eid Salah in congregation; greeting all fellow Muslims and wishing them a blessed Eid; visiting family and friends and celebrating. Festivities are characterised by thanking Allah for his help and blessings through the successful completion of the month, or if they did not fast, thanking Allah for his mercies in providing Fidya and Kaffarah (Muslim Aid, 2019).

Mosques hold special services during Eid-Ul-Fitr and a special meal is eaten during the day time. Gifts are given to children, time is spent with friends and family and money is given to charity (BBC, 2020). Sometimes homes are decorated, and there are special services out of doors (BBC, 2011). Eid is also a time for forgiveness and making amends.

What can still happen?

Ramadan and fasting can occur from home.

Most of the activities for Eid-Ul-Fitr can still happen; waking up, prayers and ablution, new clothes, eating breakfast with (immediate) family, giving to charity, giving gifts to children, and decorating homes.

What are the issues we might face?

Ramadan appears to be adhered to within individual homes which limits concern, but it is during Eid-Ul- Fitr that family and friends join together in celebration and eat food or attend congregation/services.

There may be difficulty for Muslims who contract coronavirus as their ability to fast may lessen.

How can they be overcome?

The special services held by mosques to mark the end of Ramadan, on Eid-Ul-Fitr, could potentially be livestreamed for many people to watch – building a sense of togetherness and community.

Families that want to get together with their wider family, friends and community may need to arrange meal times and video call one another.

Eid-Ul-Adha (19 – 23 July 2021)

What is it about?

Eid-Ul-Adha, also known as the festival of sacrifice, is one of the most important festivals in the Muslim calendar as it is a celebration that comes at the end of the time linked to the annual pilgrimage to the Hajj. The purpose is to celebrate, remember and venerate the devotion and submission of the Prophet Ibrahim to Allah, which comes in the forms of sacrificing an animal in the name of Allah (called Qurbani) (Muslim Aid, 2019; BBC, 2020).

The importance of both Eid's is linked by the importance of charity. Many Muslims around the world choose to give their Qurbani in the form of a financial donation, which is used to pay for the provision of a sacrificial animal in a more poverty-stricken part of the world (Muslim Aid, 2019).

How is it celebrated?

Eid usually starts with Muslims going to the Mosque for prayers, dressed in their best clothes, to thank Allah for all the blessings they have received (BBC, 2020). Traditionally, Muslims spending the day celebrating and visiting family and friends, giving gifts to friends and money to charity (BBC, 2020; Muslim Aid 2016). All Muslims who are fit and able should make the visit to Makkah at least once in their lives.

Celebrations, depending on location, can last between 2-4 days.

What are the issues we might face?

Not able to attend the mosque for prayers. Not able to spend the day with their friends and family. Not able to go to Makkah this year.

How can they be overcome?
Services may be able to be streamed at home, and video calls set up with friends and family to enjoy their feast and celebrations together.

Rosh Hashanah / Yom Kippur (27 – 28 September 2020)

What is it about?
Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival that lasts two days and commemorates the creation of the world. It is also a judgement day, when Jews believe that God considers a persons good and bad deeds over the last year, and decides what the next will be like for them. The festival is a time for asking forgiveness of sins. God decides on the first day who will be forgiven, so they apologise to everyone they have been unkind to through the past year. God makes his final judgement on Yom Kippur – which means Day of Atonement (BBC, 2020).

How is it celebrated?
Jews ask questions and reflect on their actions throughout the year e.g. – what is the most meaningful thing in my life, who means the most to me and how often do I left them know?

Time is spent in the synagogue, with one of the most sacred rituals being to blow the Shofar – a ram's horn trumpet. 100 notes are sounded in a special rhythm, which starts a 10-day period known as the Days of Awe, which ends with Yom Kippur. After this service, a special meal is eaten at home that includes: apple dipped in honey; sweet carrot stew; challah bread; and pomegranate (BBC, 2020).

Yom Kippur is marked by Jewish people in a number of ways: some wear white; no food or drink is consumed for 25 hours, no make-up or perfume is worn, no sexual intercourse; no bathing; no leather shoes are worn (BBC, 2020).

The most important part of Yom Kippur is the time spent in the synagogue. The day is spent in continuous prayer for forgiveness, and the festival is a time for reflection (BBC, 2020)

What are the issues we might face?
Attendance at synagogues is of the utmost importance during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Additionally, if it is safe and appropriate for people to socially distance visit the synagogue, the blowing of the ram's horn could risk the spread of coronavirus, and so alternative arrangements may need to be made.

Synagogue services may need to be live streamed, or socially distanced, using masks and with limited numbers. The food has specific meaning and could cause issue if it is not available.

How can they be overcome?
Local support services (L'Chaim Chabad in Manchester) have sought ways to ensure the Shofar can still be blown/heard during Rosh Hashanah, and they have arranged food parcels to support people's celebrations. Their mission is to make Rosh Hashanah as similar as possible, but also as positively unique and unforgettable as possible by reaching out to every single person so no one is left out (Jewish news, 2020).

It appears that many preparations have been made to ensure Jewish holiday's can still be celebrated in a meaningful and community-spirited way.

Conclusion

This document shares that whilst each religious event has different meanings for different people, and they are undertaken for different reasons, there are many commonalities within each celebration. It must be stated, however, that this document has not considered each and every religious event for every religion and so it is not a true and accurate reflection of all religious events. It was also considered specifically in relation to how these events are engaged with and undertaken within the UK, rather than reflective of the global experience.

Often, **people are given time to reflect on their life/year/behaviour and encouraged to think of this in relation to the religious event that has occurred**. They are also asked to show their commitment to their faith. These practices can often occur within the home, however, followers are also encouraged and supported in this practice by attending services at their place of worship. This has still been able to occur, as many different religions have already taken the steps to ensure their services can be streamed online.

Food, family and togetherness are another common theme of most of the religious events discussed, and an important consideration during coronavirus. People wish to be together, and when it is safe and appropriate, socially distanced meetings can replace large gatherings. From reviewing the events that have already passed, **we have learnt that most people achieved this sense of community through arranging the celebration through alternative means.**

Annex A: What does Christmas entail?

Christmas Spirit

Clarke (2007) explains that goodwill, generosity, altruism and giving are the terms used to generally describe the concept of Christmas Spirit in the academic literature. Christmas spirit is often given as the reason for the Christmas season and its intrinsic consumption activities; gift giving is a strong feature of Christmas, and it is considered the peak of the consumption occasion in Western culture as well as a Christmas ritual. People spend freely on preparations (gifts, decorations, food) and enjoyment (activities) of the Christmas period (Clarke, 2007). Christmas is therefore important to the people buying the items, but also those selling the items.

Clarke (2007) explains that Christmas spirit genuinely influences the conduct of Christmas activities in a happy and cheerful manner. Generally, people locate their feelings toward Christmas along a positive – negative continuum; not everyone considers Christmas positively.

Christmas traditions

Traditions differ from family to family and area to area; however, some are fairly universal. Some are able to continue without interference from Covid-19, as they often occur within the home or with few other people:

sending and receiving cards (Forbes, 2007	decorating the home (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002),
watching Christmas films,	a meal with family that has crackers/hats/gifts (Mason and Muir, 2013),
Choosing/decorating the tree (Petrelli et al, 2012),	advent calendars/traditions (Forbes, 2007; Petrelli et al, 2012),
listening to Christmas songs (Forbes, 2007),	watching the Queen's speech.

Additional popular UK traditions that are likely to be affected by coronavirus and restrictions include;

Carolling (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002)	Visiting Santa Claus and writing him a letter (Forbes, 2007)
Children's nativities	Midnight mass/ attending a service (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002)
Christmas parties with friends or work colleagues (Forbes, 2007) and secret santa	Helping others (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002; Clarke, 2007)

Boxing day sales (Barker- Financial Times, 2019).	Christmas meal – family (being together) (Kasser and Sheldon, 2002; Mason and Muir, 2013)
Christmas shopping	Going ice skating (Bell, 2007)

Christmas markets

Both within the UK and as a travel destination. Christmas markets are often held within city centres, bringing food and wares from different countries. People also often travel on short breaks to European countries to visit different Christmas markets (Broeckerhoff and Galalae, 2020.) Many localities have gatherings/events to turn on the Christmas lights, and extend shopping hours one evening a week to accommodate shoppers. Concerns around hoarding/enough Christmas food may arise.

Annex B – Additional religious events and how they can be socially distanced

This section in the collection of managing religious events during the Covid-19 pandemic considers the physical distancing requirements to achieve socially distanced guidelines. These events were highlighted as secondary or Amber events by the OU guidance discussed above.

The celebrations have been grouped by religion; italicised text indicates an activity that is likely to be affected by the pandemic, and narration of how this may be mitigated. These events are not as high profile as other events within each religion, but communities do mark these events and so they should be supported to explore ways in which the celebration can go ahead, but with the Covid-19 transmission risk mitigated.

Sikhism

Vaisakhi/Baisakhi – Sikh holiday

BBC Bitesize (2020) says:

- The festival celebrates the founding of the Sikh community in 1699.
- On Vaisakhi Sikhs go to Gurdwara in the morning for service. *After, they have a procession through the streets with singing, chanting and colourful clothes.* A book is carried in the processions in a place of honour.
- Many Sikhs choose Vaisakhi as the day to be baptised into the Khalsa Brotherhood.
- In the evening, a *special meal is held with family and friends.*
- *It may be unlikely that baptisms will be able to go ahead in the same traditional manner during the pandemic, and so this practice will need to be carefully considered.*

BBC Bitesize (2020) explains Gurpurbs are festivals that celebrate the anniversary of births or deaths of Gurus in the Sikh faith. The four gurpurbs that are celebrated most widely are:

- The birthday of Guru Nanak
- The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh
- The martyrdom of Guru Arjan
- The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Gurpubs allow Sikhs to celebrate their history and remember the religions key beliefs and values. Gurpubs helps Sikhs to strengthen their faith and remind them of the sacrifices Gurus made; they enable Sikhs to share their faith with the wider community.

Gurpubs are celebrated in many ways:

- Celebration cards
- Local competitions
- Special meals
- Processions with floats

- Many people then visit the Gurdwara – Sikh house of worship – and listen to a reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.
- They perform Kirtan (hymns) and offer karah Parshad. https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zm848mn/revision/8#:~:text=The%20celebration%20of%20the%20martyrdom,stop%20preaching%20Guru%20Nanak's%20message.

Guru Nanak's birthday

BBC Bitesize (2020) explain this is the most important gurpub.

- The Akand Path is the central event of the celebration, and the reading takes about 48 hours.
- Lights and candles are often lit in the Gurdawra and homes.
- Firework displays are held, and children are bought new clothes.

Guru Gobind Singh's birthday – Sikh holiday

The Times of India (2020) say that to celebrate:

- Guru Gobind Singh is the 10th Guru and he is believed to have made the Sikh religion what it is today; his teachings form the core of the religion.
- *Sikhs go to Gurdwara – the Sikh house of worship – where special prayer meetings are organised for the day.* Guru Gobind's life and teachings are spoken about, and his poems are recited. Special food dishes are prepared.
- *In some locations, large processions of people spread cheer by walking through markets* signing songs and distributing sweets and drinks amongst everyone.
- Families honour the day at home by holding kirtans (hymns), singing songs and doing seva – charitable behaviour. Food is prepared and shared with those in need.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan – Sikh

BBC (2009) says:

- Guru Arjan was the 5th Sikh guru and the first Sikh martyr. His greatest contribution was to compile all of the past Guru's writings into one book, now the holy scripture.
- Celebrations include a detailed cover-to-cover reading of the sacred scripture. The celebration finishes with Hymns and lectures on Sikhism. After, sweets are offered outside the gurdwaras and sometimes huge processions take place outside the gurdwaras.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

BBC (2020) and A Global World (2020) explains:

- It is celebrated to remember the ninth Guru who was killed while standing up for the rights of Hindus.
- As with other gurpubs, there is often a procession that is followed by musicians, dancers and gatka teams performing martial arts.
- Passages from Holy Scriptures are read out loud during the day, and lectures are held to preach and teach the scriptures. Hymns are sung whilst people dance. People attend Gurdwaras for worship. Food is served and everyone joins in prayers and singing.

Conclusion

Many of the Sikh festivals, especially the gurpubs, are based upon sharing faith within their communities. Celebratory acts include attending their place of worship (which could be live streamed), listening to readings and lectures (also live streamed), sharing food (which probably couldn't be safely managed), and a large procession (which could not happen as traditionally expected – potentially it could be on a much smaller scale, socially distanced, with strict conditions – if the measures at the time allowed).

Buddhism

Wesak - Buddhism

BBC Bitesize (2020) says that

- Wesak is the most important Buddhist festival because it celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and also marks his enlightenment and death.
- Buddhists make gifts for the temple, celebrate communally and provides an opportunity to learn more about the Buddhist teachings.

- To celebrate Wesak, Buddhist's may: *visit the local temple for service and teaching*; observe extra precepts (code of conducts/rules); wear white clothes or look smart; give offerings of money, candles or flowers to monks; take part in processions; decorate shrines; chant and pray; clean and decorate their homes.
- Wesak is a time for reflection – considering what Buddhists can learn about Buddha's life and teachings. *Celebrations often occur with other Buddhists.*
- *As with many of the celebrations, visiting a place of worship and gathering with friends and family is likely not permitted – depending on restrictions at the time – and so will need to be reconsidered. These could potentially be undertaken via video call.*

Judaism

Shavuot – Judaism

BBC (2010), and Chabad (2020) says:

- Shavuot is one of the Jewish harvest festivals that marks the start of the wheat harvest and the end of the barley harvest. It also marks when Jews were given the Torah on Mount Sinai. It is a two-day festival. It is a pilgrimage holiday and so it often focuses on the community.
- Prayers are said on Shavuot to thank God for the five books of Moses (collectively known as the Torah) and for his law. Some people spend the first night studying the Torah.
- Celebration centres on the synagogue and its rituals. Synagogues are decorated with flowers and plants. *All men, women and children should go to the synagogue to hear the reading of the 10 commandments on the first day of Shavuot.*
- Dairy products are eaten during Shavuot. Special meals are eaten, and no work may be performed.
- On the second day of Shavuot, the Yizkor memorial is recited.
- *Attending the synagogue is likely not feasible, so the possibility of live streaming services should be considered.*

Sukkot/ Shemini Atzeret/ Simchat Torah

BBC (2004), Chabad (2020) and Judaism 1010 (2020) explain that:

- Sukkot commemorates the years that Jews spent in the desert on the way to the Promised Land and celebrates how God protected them. The holiday lasts for seven days. The first two days are Sukkot, and the final two days are Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah.
- For Sukkot: Every Jewish family will build an open-air structure (Sukkah) in which to live during the holiday; it should have a roof of branches and leaves so you can see the sky. This gives the experience of living exposed to the world without a comfortable shell around them – it reminds them God is the only source of security and protection. They must eat all their meals in the Sukkah and spend as much time as possible in there.
- The Sukkot ritual is to take 4 types of branches and rejoice with them – by waving/shaking them about. Psalms are also said.
- Simchat Torah marks the final day of reading the Torah, and It is customary to begin the annual cycle of Torah reading again, reminding that the Torah is a circle that never ends.
- *For Shemini Atzeret, there is a prayer for rain and the Yizkor prayer, and they continue to eat in the Sukkah. The highlight of the holiday is boisterous singing and dancing at the synagogue, as Torah scrolls are paraded in circles around the bimah. This holiday is characterised by utterly unbridled joy. Work is prohibited.*

Shabbat

BBC (2009) explain:

- Every week religious Jews observe the Shabbat (Sabbath), the Jewish Holy day, and keep its laws and customs. Sabbath begins at nightfall on Friday and lasts until nightfall on Saturday. It is a day of rest that comes from the bible to celebrate and remind of the Covenant/rejoice in God's kept promises.
- Jews are not allowed to watch TV, the phone or have a schedule. People do not think about work, or stressful things – they are still and calm.
- Sabbath is a time when families come together in the presence of God in their own home – singles or people with no family may form a group to celebrate together.

- A number of rituals are performed – all chores done before sunset, candles lit, families will drink wine from a special goblet, Challah is eaten, as well as three meals, prayers are shared. Families often go to the synagogue on the Saturday for a service, and to tread the Torah. Time is spent together praying, socialising and reading.
- *This celebration is mostly kept within the family, apart from those who are single forming a group to celebrate together and visiting the synagogue on Saturday. It may be that those grouping together are in a 'support bubble' and can continue alongside government guidance at this time. Whilst it could be suggested for synagogue services to be live streamed, an important part of the Sabbath is to not be on phone or watching TV, and so this may cause difficulty.*

Islam

Ashura

Learn religions (2020) says that:

- Ashura is a day of remembrance in the Islamic calendar that is marked every year. It is recognised in different ways by Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.
- For Sunni Muslims, Ashura is a quiet celebration that is not marked by any outward display or public events. There may be fasting, but this is optional. Ashura is a day for reflection, respect and gratitude. Donations should be given to charity.
- *There appears to be no impact of social distancing on Ashura for Sunni Muslims*.
- For Shi'a Muslims, Ashura is a day of mourning for Hussein ibn Ali to remember his martyrdom. Re-enactments and plays are performed in an effort to relive the tragedy and keep the lessons alive.
- Some Shi'a Muslims beat and flog themselves in parades as an expression of their grief, and to re-enact the pain Hussein suffered.
- *Re-enactments plays and parades will be affected by social distancing and will need to be re-considered. Families could share stories and speak of Hussein rather than attend parades.*

Milad un-Nabi

The Islamic Supreme Council of Canada (200) explains

- Eid-Milad-un-Nabi means the birthday of the Prophet. To celebrate, they organise gathering in which Muslims discuss the birth, life and message of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims remind themselves to love and follow Allah's last messenger.
- Families gather together and prepare a feast; food is donated to the poor. Donating to charity is considered an important aspect. They read the Qur'an and learn from Qur'an scholars. They praise Muhammad and sing poems and rhymes. They reach out to non-Muslims to inform them about Islam. The day is celebrated with purely religious and spiritual aspects of an Islamic life.
- Houses are decorated and mosques illuminated, many traditional dishes are made.
- Eid-Milad-un-Nabi is like any other religious get-together of Muslims for the remembrance of Allah and his Messenger.
- *Milad-un-Nabi appears to be a communally gathered celebration, where families join to take part in numerous activities. Many of the activities listed (discussing the birth, life and message of the Prophet, donating food and money to charity, reading and learning from the Qur'an, singing and reciting poems and decorating homes) can continue mostly unaffected by social distancing, however, gatherings of family cannot continue nor attending mosques. These again may need to happen via video call.*

Hinduism

Krishna Janmashtami

BBC (2011) explains

- Krishna Janmashtami festival marks the birth of Krishna, one of the most popular Gods in the Hindu pantheon. Celebrations are spread over two days.
- During these 48 hours, Hindus are likely to go without sleep, instead singing traditional Hindu songs. It is believed Krishna was born at midnight and so this is the time that true festivities commence.

- Food is prepared from milk and curds, some Hindus choose to fast for the first day – eating only after the midnight celebrations.
- At the temple, images of Krishna are bathed and placed in cradles whilst a conch shell is played, and bells are rung. Holy mantras are chanted. People gather in large numbers at the temple and participate in festivities that last all day. Dances and songs are used to remember Krishna. Plays are also carried out, re-enacting scenes from Krishna's life.
- *Krishna Janmashtami is celebrated as a community and a time when people come together; this celebration occurs in August, however, so there is potential learning to draw on for the upcoming year's celebrations.*

Annex C: Covid-19 and Eid

There are concerns (authors) that a part of Eid Celebrations is to slaughter animals, and that the virus will therefore spread if not done so safely.

Religious tourism and mass religious gatherings — The potential link in the spread of COVID-19. Current perspective and future implications https://publons.com/publon/32497959/

Pandemics and prayer: The impact of cattle markets and animal sacrifices during the Muslim Eid festival on COVID-19 transmission and public health https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/hpm.3040

Potential of Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever outbreak during Eid-Ul-Adha Islamic festival and COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jmv.26285

Risks of Zoonotic Transmission of COVID-19 During Eid-Ul-Adha in Pakistan
https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/disaster-medicine-and-public-health-preparedness/article/risks-of-zoonotic-transmission-of-covid19-during-eiduladha-in-pakistan/E626B9E3E2DAB5E5CE82418298DAFCA3

Economic impact of a religious and tourist event: A Holy Week celebration
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354816616675996

What we do in this analysis, how and why (caution when interpreting)

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Data related to Covid-19 UK social and economic trends is reviewed to inform, guide and help prioritise discussions at national and local decision-making level (LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group are keen to ensure that the data included has been ethically governed and structured to adhere to open access, data protection and GDPR regulations and principles. For example, the data is to be manipulated in an ethical manner, and the content and context is to be fit for purpose in terms of the audience and decision timeframe in question.

Activity Completed

The following findings are based on a review of multiple data sources exploring Social, Economic, Psychological, Community aspects of Covid-19 in the UK. These could include:

- ONS: covers wellbeing, perceived financial precarity, objective indicators of UK economy, household financial pressures, perceived impact on work life
- OfCom: Public perceptions of information to help manage Covid-19, perceptions of preparedness and action
- ONS: Deaths from Covid-19
- Gov UK: Relevant contextual information
- Census and geographical data: Geographical/location specifics
- IMD: Socio economic trends associated with spread or primary/secondary impacts
- LG Inform: Population, social, demographic, lifestyle and health data
- You Gov: Public mood
- NTU's own analysis of open source data (lead by Dr. Lucy Justice and Sally Andrews)
- Other academic survey work published within the last week

Limitations for Consideration: The National Foresight Group have been keen to quality assure the data assumptions, including the equity and representation of participants.

Internet use data indicates representational issues in older adults

Almost all of the data sets draw from online surveys. With this in mind the statistics behind online access were explored. The following is to be considered in the assumptions taken from the data sets.

The table below shows the estimated number of people who have never used the internet. The data are drawn from ONS 2019 Internet users:

Table 1: estimated number of people who have never used the internet

Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet	Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet
16-24	20,000	55-64	389,000
25-34	28,000	65-74	869,000
35-44	46,000	75+	2,482,000
45-54	158,000	Equality Act Disabled Not Equality Act Disabled	2,336,000 1,657,000

Table 1 shows that caution should be applied when considering the inferences made in the rest of the document as older adults could be underrepresented in the samples. The estimated numbers of those that have never used the internet begins to increase around age group category 35-44, the subsequent age categories increase by approximately twice as many non-users as the age category that precedes it. The numbers of 'over 75s' (2,482,000) for example not using the internet equates to almost a million more than the total of the other age group categories (1,510,000).

The interpretation of data should also consider the proportion of people known to be disabled by government agencies who do and do not meet the Act's criteria. These numbers make up 3,993,000 of the population, so this should be considered in the representativeness of the data.

END.

Contact us: If you have any questions about this output please email: C19foresight@ntu.ac.uk
Corresponding editing author Dr Rowena Hill is seconded full time to provide academic representation on the C19 National Foresight Group, and works at Nottingham Trent University.