

Your health and well-being during the COVID-19 crisis

Draft Survey Report - 8 May 2020

Note: this is an interim report and we continue to collect responses.

If you are a Newham resident, we would appreciate it if you could take around 10 minutes to share your views. The survey is anonymous.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HealthwatchCovid>

Thank you

Summary

Healthwatch Newham launched an online survey at the end of April in partnership with Healthwatch Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest which has so far received 114 responses from Newham residents.

Below is an analysis of the responses from Newham residents so far.

Health

1. 70% of respondents do not have any Covid-19 symptoms and 25% think they may have experienced symptoms, but they were not tested. 20% reported being in fairly or very poor health.
2. 56% of the 114 respondents reported having a disability or long-term condition. Over a third reported suffering from Asthma and a further third reported suffering from other long-term conditions or disability including: Colitis, inflammatory arthritis, Parkinson's, prostate problem, Lupus, high blood pressure, Fibromyalgia, Osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, tendonitis, breast cancer, Autism, Prosthetic limb, Multiple Sclerosis, Hypothyroidism.

Access to Information

3. While over 60% found it easy to find information about keeping safe, around 30% of respondents found the process somewhat or not at all easy.

We must bear in mind that, as an online survey, participants will be more acquainted with social media, websites, and online information access, therefore the percentage of people having difficulties is likely to be higher if a wider community is considered.

- Those that responded no or somewhat to their ability to find information have raised concerns around:
 - lack of information in other languages.
 - Lack of communication from specialist support (e.g. HIV clinic) on how to manage their condition during the pandemic.
 - Conflicting messages around whether to wear masks in public.
 - some have praised letters, calls and communication from the government, council, and their local NHS, while a few have said that despite their long-term conditions none of the information they had come from these sources.

- The main sources of information were: WHO and local NHS websites, NHS letters received, and contact from GP/doctor regarding shielding and government briefings.

Effect on Mental Health

4. 88% of participants have experienced some form of concern or anxiety about work and health for themselves and their family and friends. As service delivery across health and social care has changed, been reduced or suspended, to cope with the new Covid-19 demand, some residents are feeling lost, as they struggle to access services and cope with their conditions during the lockdown. This said, people have praised the communication they have had from their GP or the hospital follow up on cancelled/postponed appointments.

“I feel it’s [the lockdown] the right thing to do to keep this virus from spreading. I have been very ill with it and now my family are doing all my care needs, I can hardly walk. Due to covid I developed a blood clot to the lung.”

“An anxious atmosphere at home affecting spouse and kids.”

“My son has SEN and I’ve had no support from school.”

“I’m worried for my own physical safety.”

“Worried about learning disabled relative living alone who can’t self-care and doesn’t get help.”

“I do feel boxed in but accept the situation and have a routine.”

- 70% of respondents feel they do not need support with their mental health despite feeling down or anxious. However, of those that feel they may need help, there is an evident confusion as to where to go and how to seek help.

“I don’t know what services I can access and how. need help with interpreting and guidance.”

“Have mental health issues but **not sure what help is available** or how to get it.”

“I think I do need it but **don't know where to start.**”

“We need mental health support for our child but **unable to access it.**”

“I had accessed Newham Talking Therapies service before Covid-19, but they focused on coping strategies instead of listening or understanding my concerns.”

“The Social Prescriber at my GP surgery gave me information about local support and today I rang Newham Cares for the first time. I think it can be **difficult to know exactly where to look for practical support.**”

“The community has been hugely supportive, Newham council however not so much.”

5. Food deliveries and hygiene are also creating concerns. This is particularly true for people with disability or long-term conditions who do not fall in the shielded category and are therefore experiencing issues with food delivery and other support which they were receiving before the pandemic.

“I have been housebound for more than 12 years, my life under lock-down is not that different than before, except for one important bit: **it is much more difficult to get deliveries!** It has been very stressful to continue to live an independent life. I feel stressed. I worry about running out of food and other essential things. I am not on the ‘shielding’ list as I don’t have the right type of diagnoses, but I am totally dependent on everything being delivered to my house.”

“I am housebound but **getting groceries and other deliveries has been very stressful!** Inflated prices, out of stock items and difficult to get delivery slots. **Every time I get a parcel or food delivery, I feel stressed.** I have quarantined food items for 3 days, cleaned items and throw away packaging - but don’t know if I have done enough to protect myself against getting infected.”

“Getting food safely is by far my biggest worry. **I cannot get a priority supermarket delivery slot despite being in the shielding category.**”

“I found the **delay in getting an official letter from NHS England confirming that I am in the shielding category very difficult** to deal with. My GP confirmed I am in this category on 10 April, but I still do not have an official letter and Sainsbury's don't recognise me as vulnerable, so I cannot register for a delivery slot.”

Access to Healthcare for other conditions

6. Over 50% of respondents felt that Covid-19 has affected their access to healthcare for other conditions. This includes not being able to attend cancer treatment, HIV clinic, dental appointments or having their surgery postponed. This has led to physical and emotional distress including some patients being in pain following their postponed treatment. Although there is an overarching sense that people do understand the reason for the delays and appreciate the very exceptional circumstances; as stress and sometimes physical pain increase, people are looking for some certainties and a clear plan on when their treatments can be resumed.

“If I develop something, I feel concerned that **Covid-19 overrides any other conditions.**”

“I haven't needed any medical treatment, but I am worried about my access to it if I do need it. I don't feel it's right to shut down the NHS to other illnesses. Cancer etc won't go away and cancelling routine smear tests (for example) could be lethal.”

“I found the council to be very unresponsive and I’ve had no information from them about how to deal with my direct payments. I was about to have a panic alarm installed in my home the week before I went into isolation.”

Access to Social Care and care in the home

7. 21 people (18% for total surveyed) said they receive care at home from a care worker, a friend or family member. These residents have been affected by the lockdown as their carers are no longer able to visit them during the lockdown. Commenting on how Covid-19 has affected their experience of social care, some stated that:

“My care at home has had to stop.”

“**My care workers do not receive PPE.** I try to buy them gloves face masks and sanitisers, but these are difficult to procure now.”

“No access to social care. my wife is my main carer.”

“I’m made worse by having to shop and trying to eat well when can’t chop veg etc and **risk burns cooking things like pasta** (burnt by foot last week when spilled water).”

“Usually have a cleaner due to disability and friends who help me.”

“It means **pain levels increased** and I have some days when I can’t function.”

“Visits have been cancelled and curtailed”

“Can’t get any help due to the risk re virus and lockdown rules.

Recommendations

LBN: Provided simple and easy to read information on who to contact and where to go to access support. This is particularly important for the section of the population without access to internet and social media and who are isolated due socio-economic factors, age and language barriers.

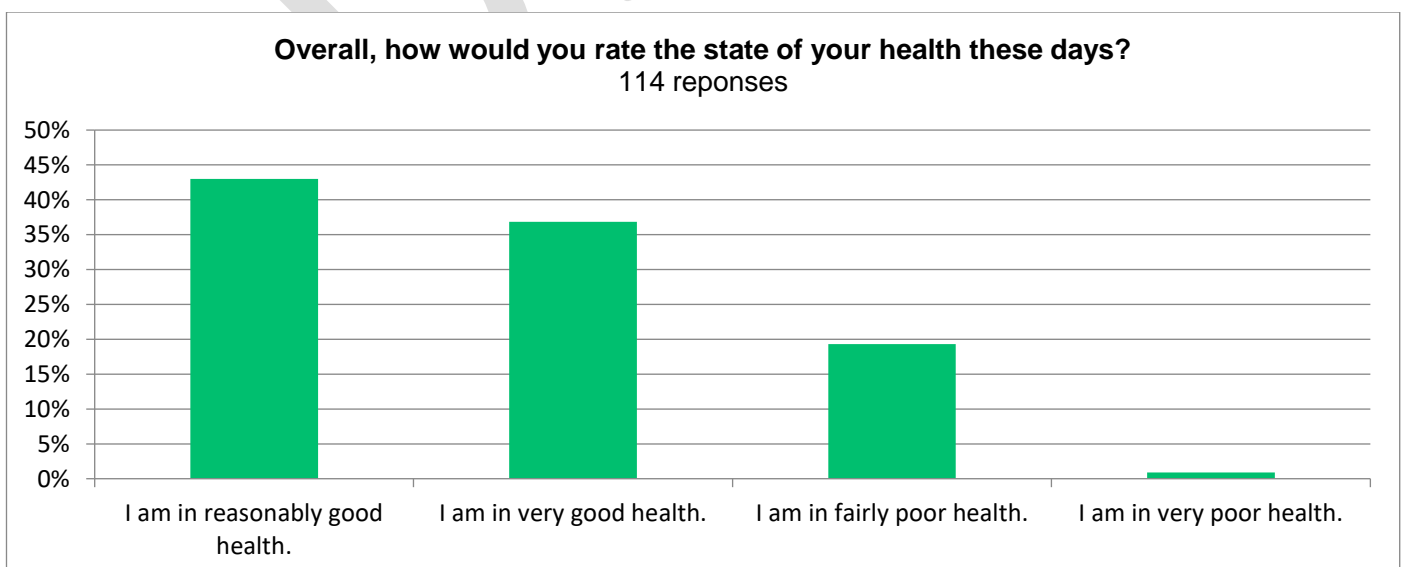
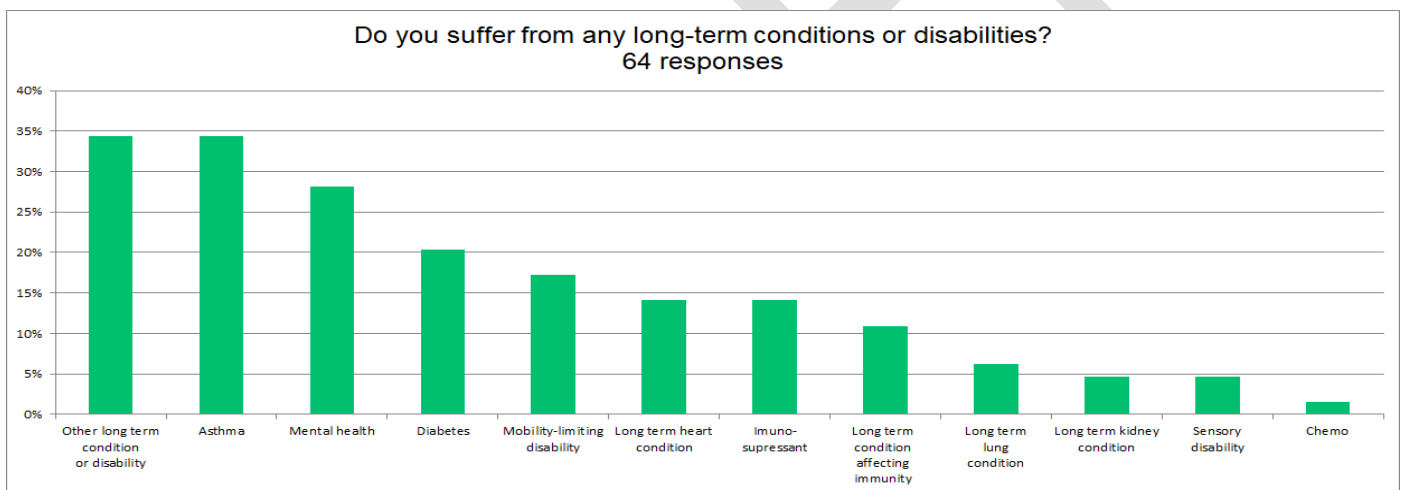
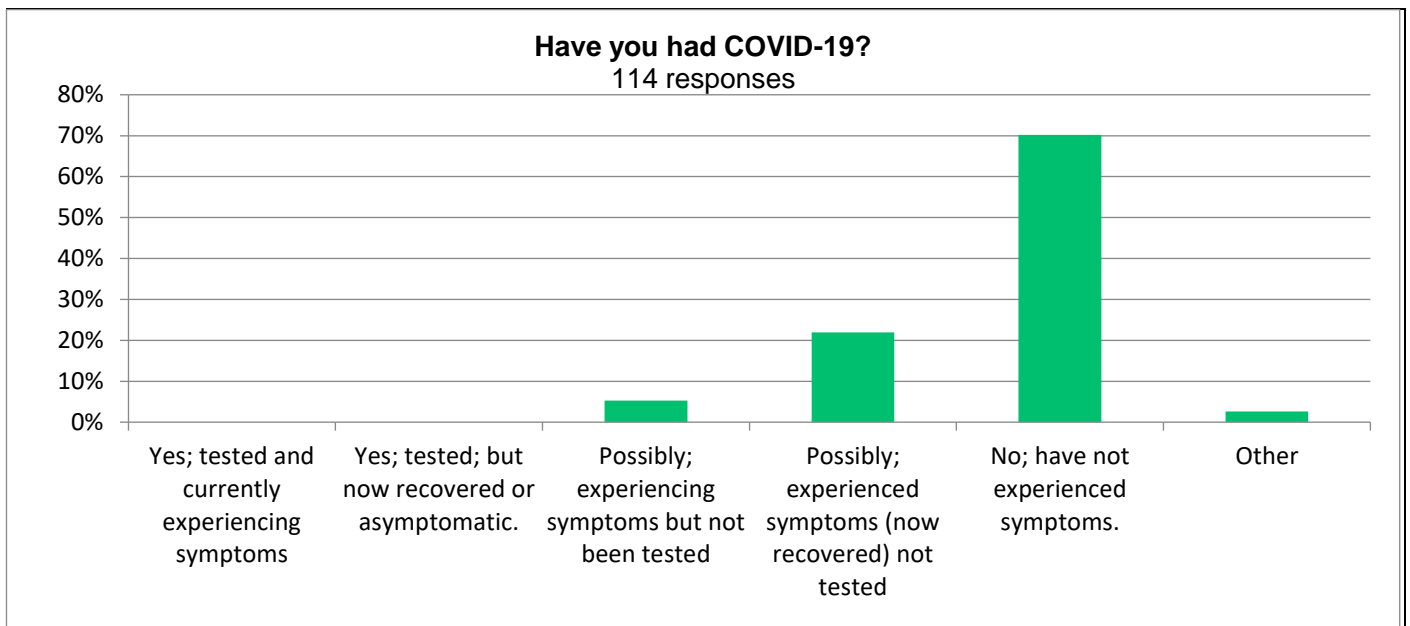
Mental Health Services: Provide information for the wider public to ensure non-traditional service users have better access to services and social prescribing available to them. This is particularly relevant for those residents whom, under normal conditions, may have not needed support with their mental health, but are now experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety due to Covid-19.

Social Care: Contact residents who are known to have a disability, long-term health condition or other limiting circumstances to check how they are coping with the lockdown, whether and how the current limitations to the support they would have received from friends, family and services is impacting on their lives, and therefore arrange support opportunities for residents in difficulty. This could include putting them in contact with local community support groups for instance to do and delivery their shopping and prescriptions.

LBN/Public Health: Provide guidance and an indication for residents as to when health and social care services could resume (subject to government advice) and, in the meantime, provide information on where to go and how to follow up on health and social care concerns; particularly for residents that had their support or treatment suspended or postponed and feel that the service/support is essential for their well-being.

Survey Data

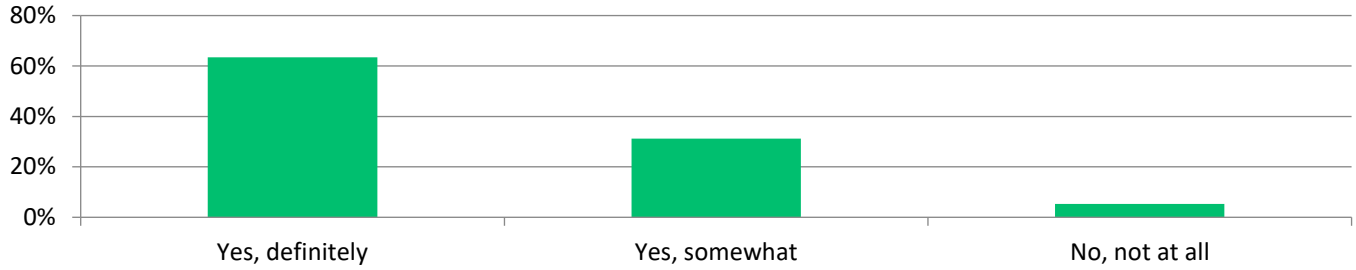
Health Status



Access to Information

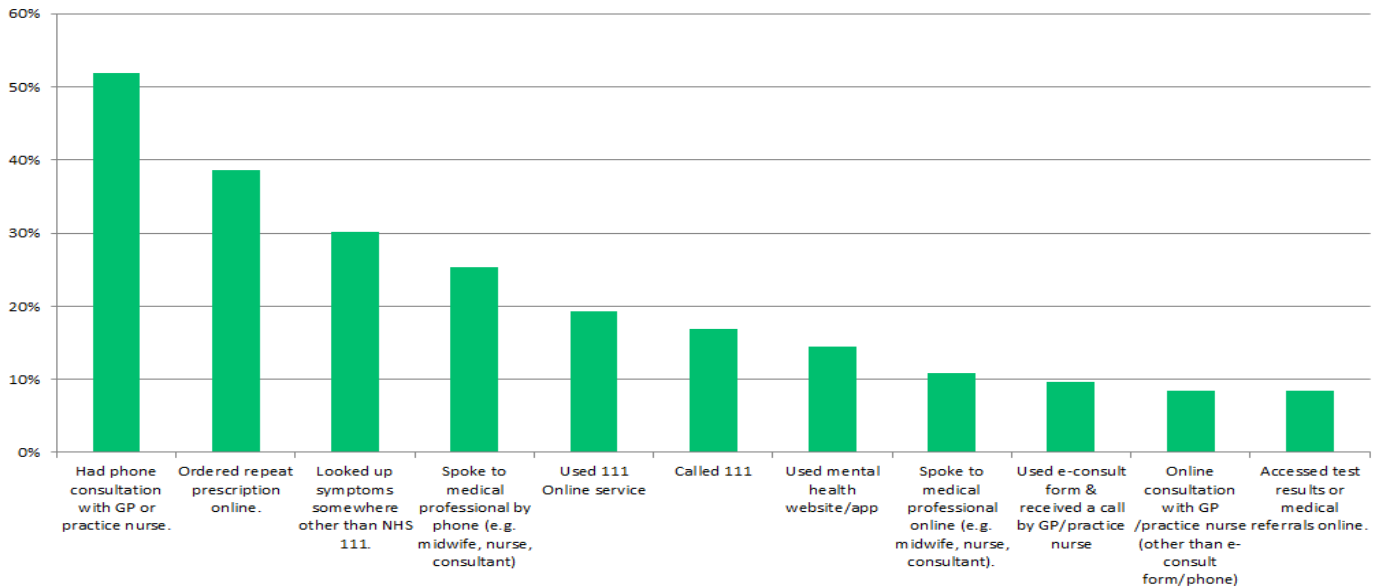
Have you found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep yourself and others safe during COVID-19 pandemic?

112 responses

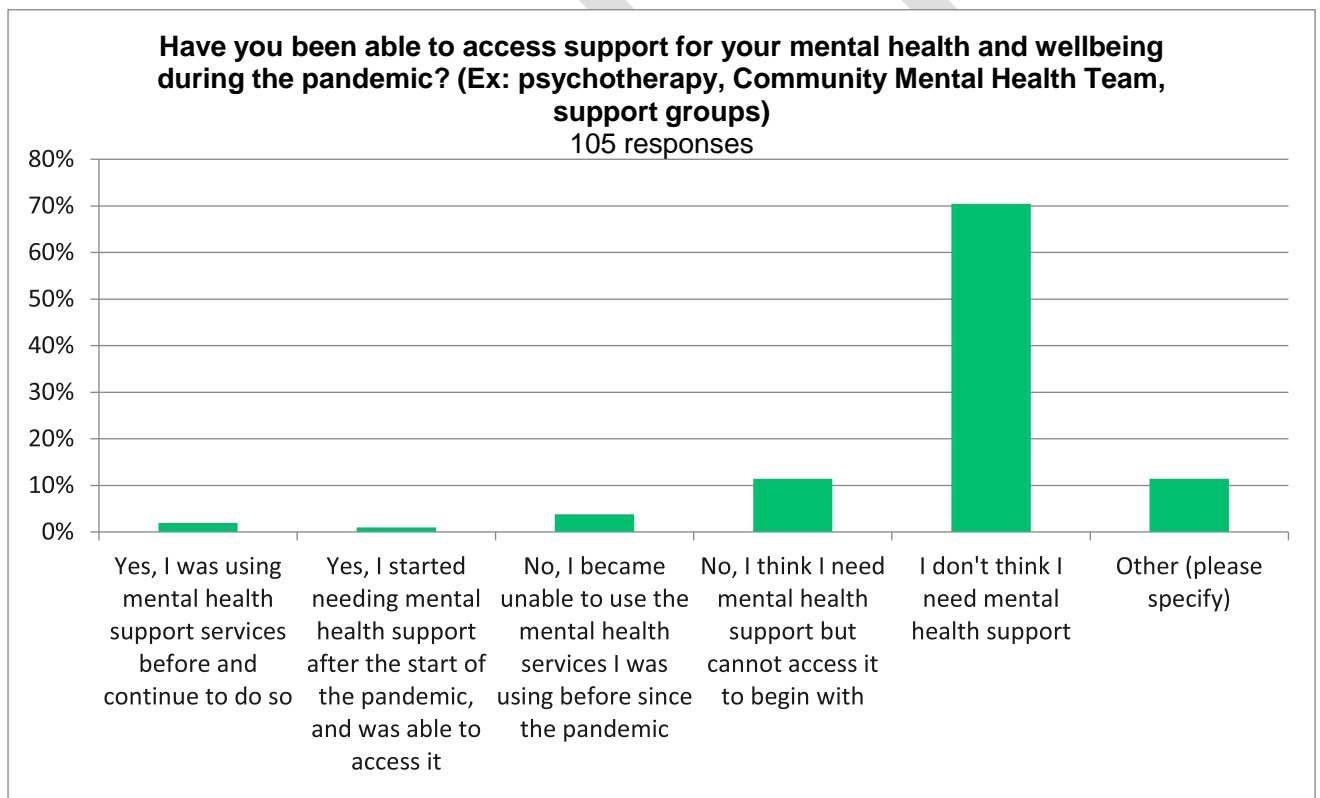
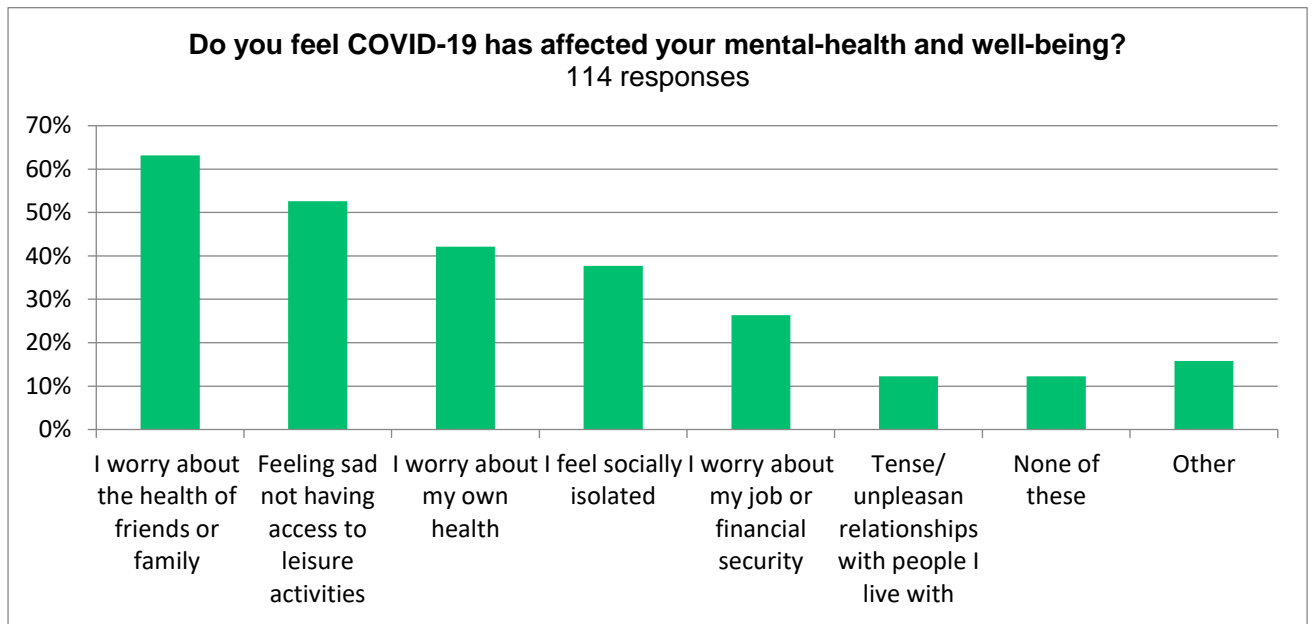


Since the start of the pandemic, have you done any of the following?

83 responses



Mental Health



Covid-19 and lockdown effects on lives and well-being:

“I isolated but still caught Covid-19. Now home from Hospital for the second time, I’m very depressed due to the illness, the way it’s left me. My family are good. I’m now on blood thinners and can phone them if any problems. **I feel there should be a call to you to check on and advise you. Once discharge from hospital you feel alone.**”

“I found it very difficult at first and felt less concerned when the lockdown was introduced. I am concerned that this will be lifted far too soon. I have some days when I feel sad, but on the whole, I am a positive person and keep busy and in touch via phone and internet.”

“As a single person with impairments **I rely on friends and family for going out and meals for good mental wellbeing.** Not being able to go swimming is hard. I can’t drive to nice places to get air and walk without breaking the rules but having asthma as well as disabilities I need some fresh air but parks have runners and young people on the paths and they don’t distance.”

“I am not sleeping as well. My mind feels overactive. My teenage son is struggling with technology to work from home. My daughter in-law is expecting soon. I worry about my middle son, he has Crohn's and is on medication, that makes him high risk. My husband had Covid-19 at home. He is recovering but very fatigued. **I'm still working as a charity front line...and organise support for others.**”

“I started social distancing long before we were officially told to do so. I haven’t hugged my son (aged 34) since last week of February and he has not been in my house, only on my doorstep a few times to deliver some shopping. I miss hugging him. He is the only family I have.”

“I am in temporary accommodation arranged by insurers due to a leak in my flat. It’s adding another layer of stress!”

“**I worry because I work in a school with key worker’s children with no protection.** And my son has autism so hard to stay in and him to understand to keep his distance.”

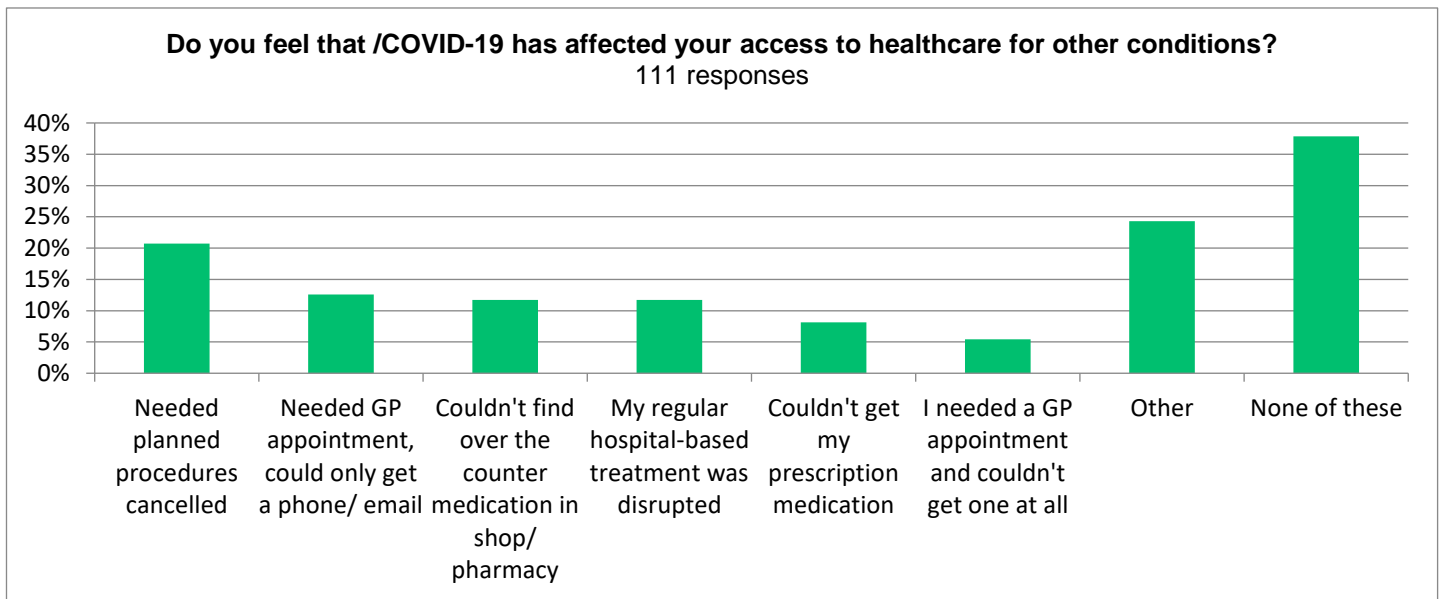
“I am living with ex-boyfriend who now cannot leave. He lost his job and not entitled to furlough. As he is French, he's not sure he can get universal credit, so I am now paying for everything for him.”

“My housemate lost her job so may not continue to have rent money for long.”

“My dad died on 2/4/2020, my mum’s brother on the 10/4/2020, my brother-in-law is dying in ICU. All from Covid-19”

Other comments and concerns included: feelings of anxiety, sadness and depression, restlessness, missing loved ones and feeling lonely, fatigue, lack of sleep, feelings of being useless and hopeless, difficulty to concentrate, feeling claustrophobic at home, concerns about getting essential medication and food supplies, difficulty maintaining a routine, fear of leaving the house.

Access to Healthcare for other conditions



Other concerns

“Nightingale has been a worry bringing more infection and traffic to Newham.”

“I'm just terrified by the thought of being in GP surgeries and hospitals at present.”

“I feel family and I are **left to cope after Covid-19 with no real advice**. Blood clots swelling, is that normal? Not enough support.”

“I had to go to an emergency dentist who prescribed antibiotics.”

“**Not been able to attend my cancer and neurology clinics** or get my toenails cut and other foot care, due to the virus.”

“The local HIV clinic has closed and not sure if they are even in the hospital as no info sent to us.”

“My dental work was cancelled now I have half a tooth missing, **agony every day and cannot sleep**.”

“I have had to provide PPE for one month for my carers by buying it off the internet.”

- Other concerns included: Hospital, voice therapy, physiotherapy, blood tests, breast cancer test, dental, Diabetes Specialist Nurse appointments and surgery being cancelled or postponed due to the outbreak, leaving some patients in pain or discomfort. Experienced delays in receiving their prescription. Some appointments have, however, been carried out over the phone.

Positive feedback

“I was really **pleased to have my regular hospital appointment by phone** and very happy that my GP surgery already used telephone triage as it saves time. They even opened on Good Friday and Easter Monday.”

“I have now used my GP triage service for advice, and **I know someone will get back to me**. If not, I will ring for a GP call back. We are monitoring blood pressure at home ourselves.”

“My secondary care physical health **appointments have switched the telephone which has worked well**. This has been responsive to the fact that I cannot go out whilst enabling me to maintain some kind of service.”

“It’s been **great to still be able to speak to GPs** online/over the phone. I received the care I needed despite not being able to go into the clinic.”

“My weekly **appointments with clinical psychologists have changed to telephone which has worked well**. We changed what we have been working on to make sure it’s more focused on supporting me through the pandemic, whilst I am shielding. If it wasn’t for the support I would’ve really struggled.”

“I’m continuing to get class C medication through secondary care services. Normally this is a very difficult process, but **the system has been working more efficiently** because the geographical boundaries of the team have been dropped. They seem to be working in a much more flexible and integrated way and I hope this continues after the pandemic.”

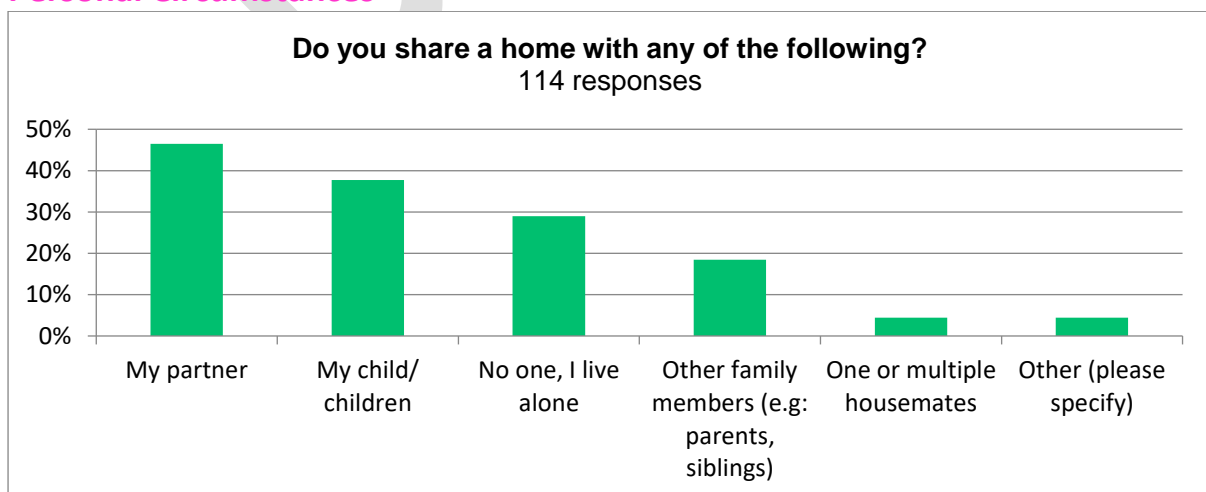
“My psychiatrist phoned me at an unplanned time to check something about my medication and how I was doing. This **felt very nice and caring** and we were able to quickly sort something out. My regular outpatient appointment has now been cancelled but I suspect that from that assessment and from my clinical psychologist they can see that I am low priority.”

“Retired and difficult to get online shopping slots but health wise no problem. Had a call from LBN in first week to check if I needed anything. **Very efficient I thought.**”

“Through my personal budget I have been able to employ the services of a local mental health charity who can give me support door-to-door. Even able to collect my medication and dispense it weekly to keep me safe. When I had a crisis the other week, they were able to quickly respond with doorstep visit which is more helpful than trying to get to the standard crisis helpline. **They have been able to give me tailored support** recognising that things are very different for me whilst shielding.”

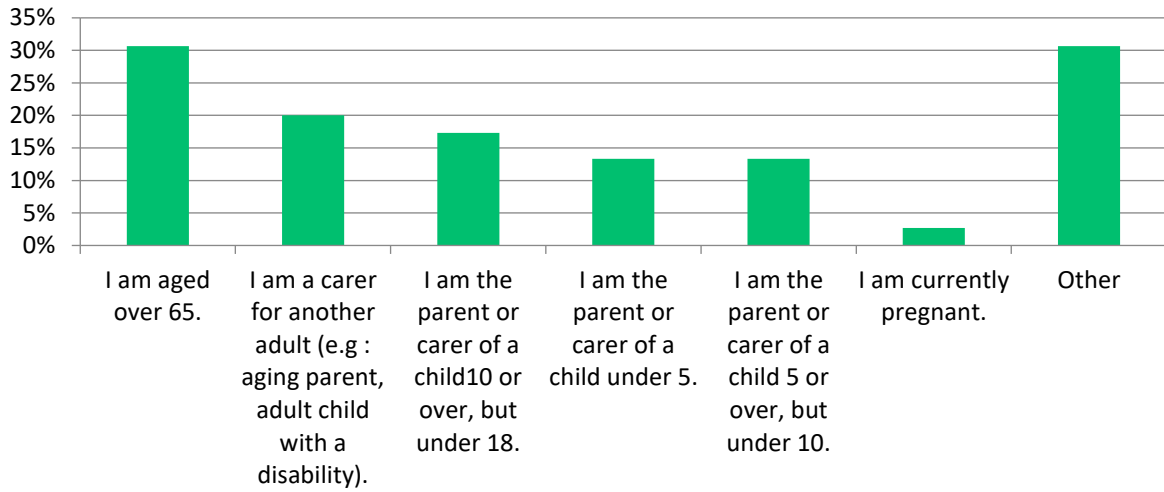
“My job has changed from teaching in a classroom to teaching online. I have had to learn a lot of new things which has been stressful and tiring, but now **I'm feeling good about doing this new stuff.**”

Personal Circumstances



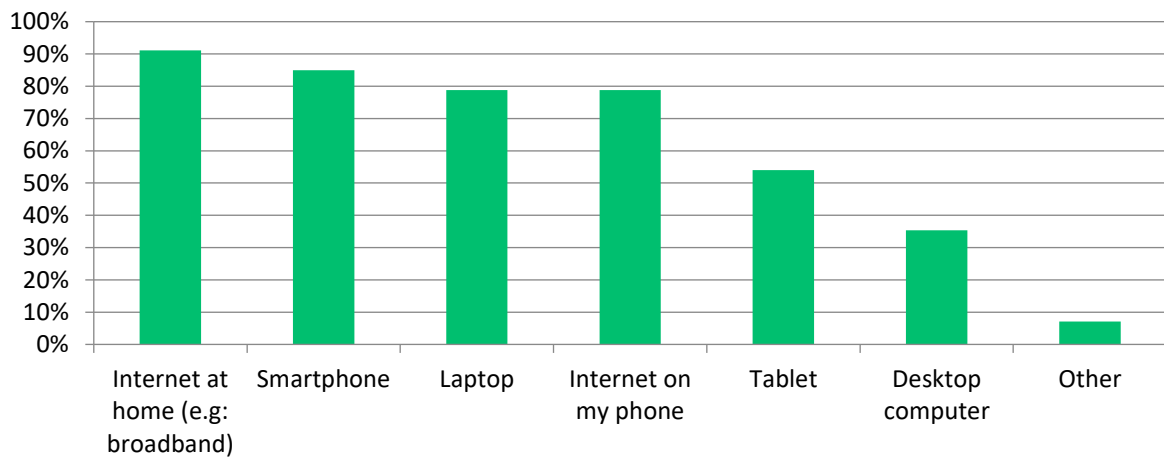
Do any of these describe you?

75 responses



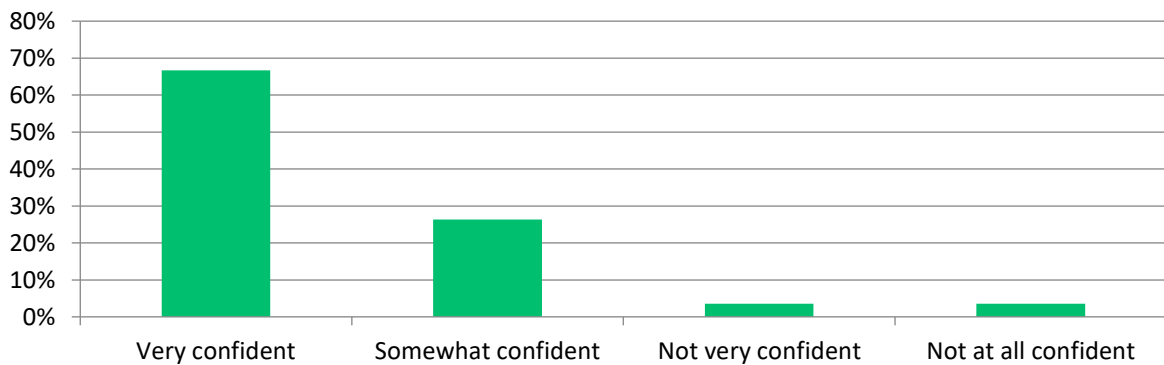
Do you have access to any of the following at home?

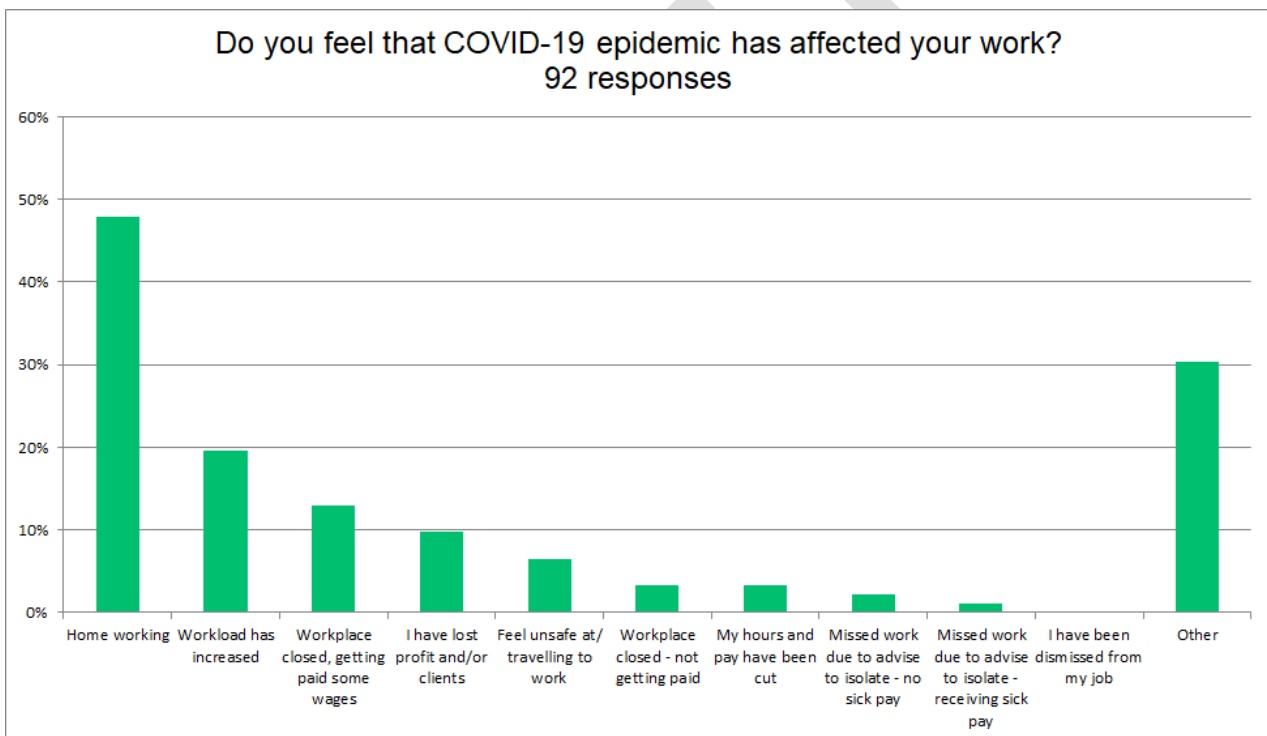
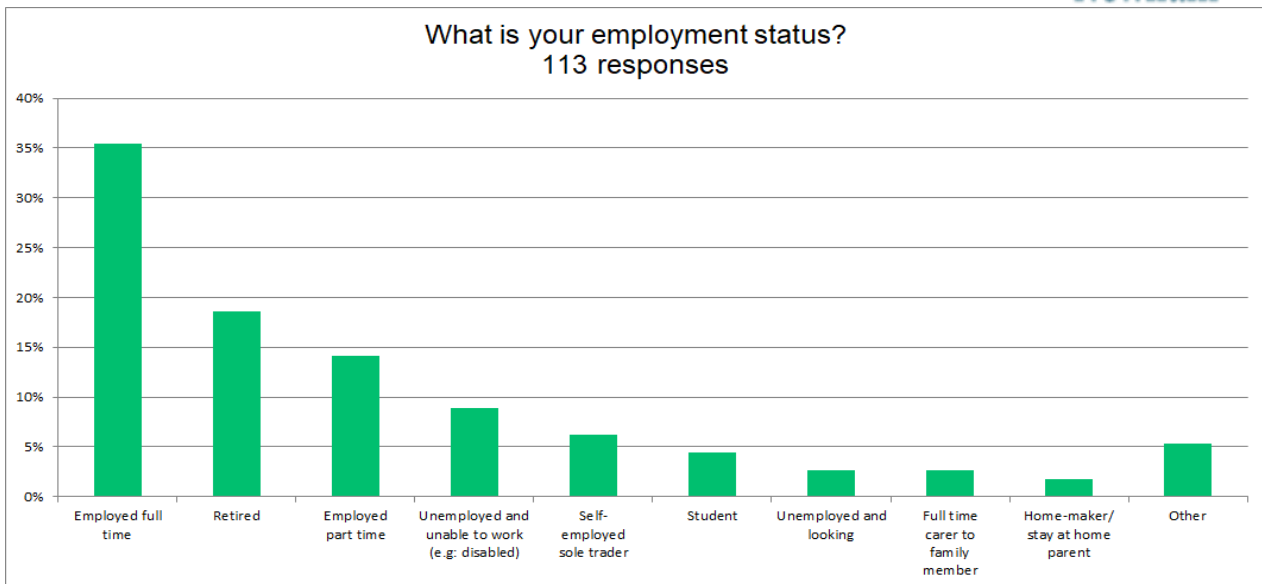
113 responses



How confident do you feel using a computer, tablet or smartphone?

114 responses





“I work on short-term contracts which have been cancelled. **I have no work in the pipeline** and won't know until September if I'll have any more at all.”

“My husband was main earner but self-employed so no wage from him. I have a small pension and my daughter helps us, but it **makes you feel your independence has gone.**”

“**I cannot get an interview** as nobody is hiring at the present moment.”

“My disabled **child was left with no support** from school and council. I struggle to keep her safe.”

“**Unpaid leave has reduced my salary.** Son's nursery is closed so I struggle to work as I care for him. My husband is also working from home. We are both trying to work and care for our son.”

“I am retired and stuck at home, mostly in my armchair instead of moving about for my voluntary work. I’m **missing the mental stimulation** from this and my social interactions.”

“Unable to continue with voluntary work in local community garden.”

“**Increase in demand for support can feel overwhelming.** Setting up online and remote support. Seeing positive generosity, but also sad by people exploiting the situation for free food.”

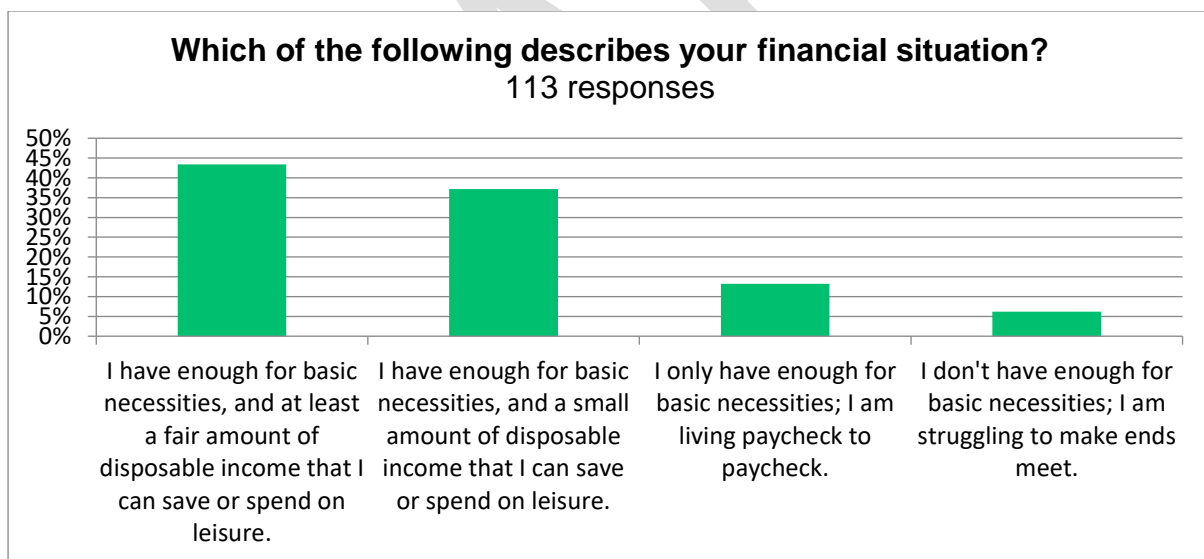
“I have **lost all my income.**”

“As I am high risk, I am unable to go to work. As I have only been self-employed since July 2019, I am not eligible for the grant. I **had to sign on to universal credit which is an extremely low amount.** This is restricting me from preparing for my baby.”

“Our whole family is affected by our child's anxiety that she gets no support for. I have a lot of trouble getting repeat prescriptions for my SSRI medication.”

“My work is harder as I work with vulnerable young mums in mental distress. Providing therapy by phone, text or zoom is much harder. I have required some urgent training, and as the client group is very badly impacted, they require more liaison, support, referrals and emergency contact.”

“As my health is being impacted, my workload has gone up. I cannot just ignore this as risk to life.”



Community Engagement

Since the start of the pandemic, have you done any of the following?

103 responses

Answer Choices	Responses	
Joined a local COVID-19 mutual support group on social media (such as a Facebook or WhatsApp group).	59.22%	61
Helped a friend, family member or neighbour you had met before the crisis with shopping, errands or other needs.	56.31%	58
Donated money or goods to a local or national charity to help the COVID-19 crisis response.	51.46%	53
Asked a friend, family member or neighbour you had met before the crisis to help you with shopping, errands or other needs.	31.07%	32

Given information or advice to someone in an online COVID-19 mutual support group.	21.36%	22
Helped someone from an online COVID-19 mutual support group with shopping, errands or other needs.	20.39%	21
Volunteered for a local or national charity to help the COVID-19 crisis response.	19.42%	20
Asked members of an online COVID-19 mutual support group for information and advice.	11.65%	12
Contacted a local or national charity to ask for advice and information.	10.68%	11
Asked members of an online COVID-19 mutual support group to help you with shopping, errands or other needs.	7.77%	8
Contacted a local or national charity to ask for practical or material help (e.g. food bank, help with shopping).	4.85%	5

“Offer online phone support to NHS Royal Voluntary Service; to Mutual Aid; a psychosis project. Am setting up a peer support online group for my neighbourhood.”

“NHS volunteer programme still not giving referrals to those signed up.”

“Signed up to be NHS volunteer. Received no referrals. “

“It was very helpful to have the support of Newham Chinese Association volunteer, who helped me interpreted several letters re: hospital appointments being postponed/ cancelled.”

“At the beginning food was difficult to get, and I was self-isolating, so a friend got shopping for me.”

“I live in a council close of bungalows for elderly and disabled. We keep an eye out for each other. I am the youngest and the only one shopping online. Since Covid-19 I have been adding shopping for my neighbours to my online shop.”

“Everyone has been more than helpful. I've had a number of people volunteer to do errands for me. I'm glad they check in with me ever so often as I hate asking them to do something.”

“My partner is totally isolating so we needed some neighbours to go to the shops for us. We didn't need the free food from the government, so I donated it to someone on our local mutual aid group.”

“We are unable to help physically, because of our serious health conditions but we do contribute by supporting Charities at this difficult time.”

Maintaining well-being

What do you do to maintain a good level of physical and mental well-being during the pandemic? 106 people responded to this question. The most popular ways of maintaining physical and mental well-being were:

- Walking, running, cycling, yoga, dog walking, chair-based exercise and other home exercise where people have mobility issues.
- Video, phone and online contact with friends and family
- Music, gardening (including on balconies), reading, TV and Jigsaw puzzles, online games, DIY and cooking

Few respondents said however they were not doing anything or not a lot, including sleeping most of the day, eating or playing/gaming on their PC.

What would help you maintain a better level of physical and mental well-being during the pandemic?

82 people responded to this question. The most common comments were:

- Better aftercare advice for those who had or think they had Covid-19, on what to do and how to look after oneself.
- Better short and long-term plans on what will happen next to reduce uncertainty.
- Better concise information and resources also available in paper form and other languages.
- Those living alone said that being able to see few close relatives or friends would help.
- Help with caring for friends and family (in reference to reduced access to social care).
- General desire for the lockdown to ease and being able to socialise, join activities and go out even if with limitation.
- Reassurance that once services resume, the waiting times for receiving services will not increase and being able to access planned surgery and other treatments soon.
- Being able to access supermarket delivery slots.
- Financial support including with income and childcare.

Demographics

