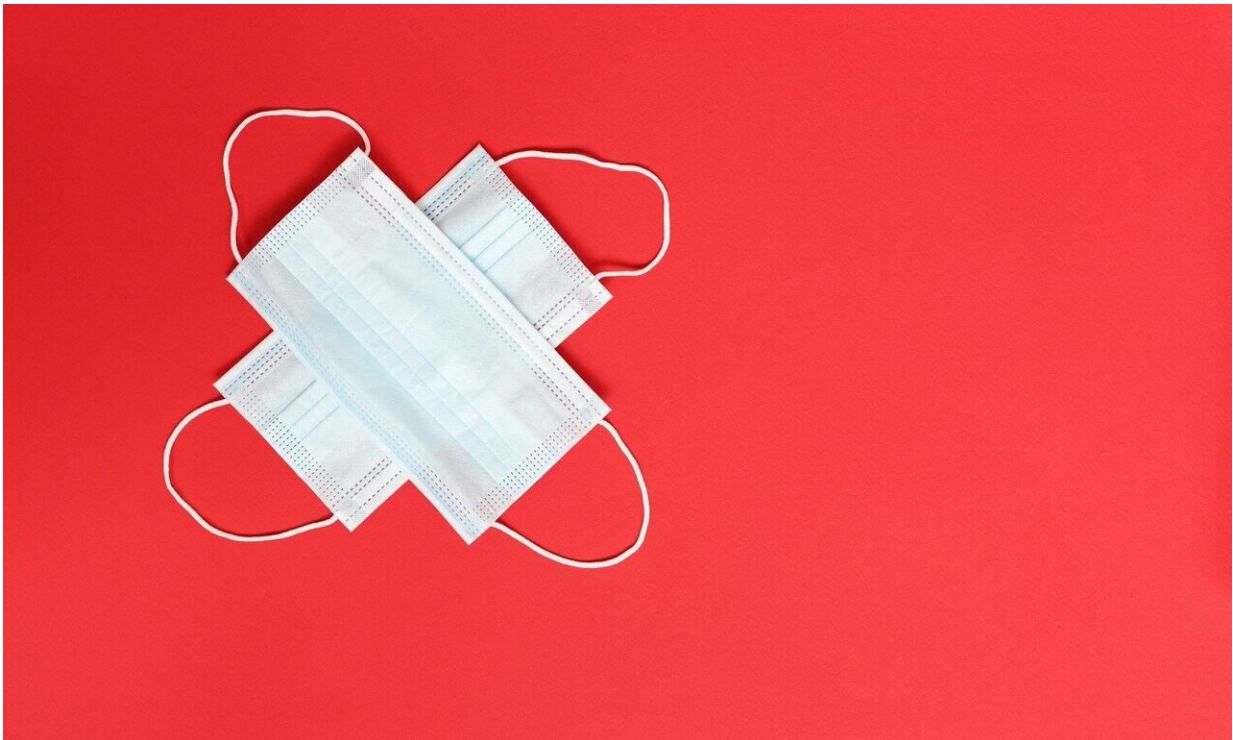


How the UK would be prepared to live if a COVID vaccine can't be found

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Large proportions of the UK public say they would accept most children being home-schooled, employees being able to choose whether they work from home, and bans on public events in front of live audiences being in place for the "very long term," if a vaccine or treatment that deals with the threat of COVID-19 cannot be found, according to a new

study.

The research, by King's College London and Ipsos MORI, looked at what the public say they'd find acceptable as very long-term options if it became clear over the next year or two that such a vaccine or treatment could not be produced.

Children's education

In such a scenario:

- Half the population (49%) think home-schooling most children long-term would be acceptable—virtually unchanged from May (51%).
- 2019 Labor voters (58%) are more likely than Lib Dems (48%) and Conservatives (38%) to say they'd accept this.
- Parents are slightly more likely than the public overall to say this would be acceptable: 56% of those with at least one child under 18 in their household say they'd be OK with it.
- 55% of the public say they'd accept parents having to send their children to school when the government says they have to, up from 41% in the third week of May.
- Acceptance of this is virtually the same among parents themselves (56%), and is highest among 2019 Conservative voters, with 71% saying it'd be OK, much higher than Lib Dem (56%) and Labor (45%) voters.
- But at the same time, 56% also say they'd accept parents being able to choose whether to send their child back to school or not, although this is down from 63% in May.
- Acceptance of this rises to 65% among parents themselves.
- 66% of 2019 Labor voters say they'd find this acceptable, compared with 54% of Lib Dem voters and 44% of Conservative voters.

- Significant minorities of the population appear to hold inconsistent views, with, for example, 25% saying it is acceptable to them that parents should be able to choose whether to send their child to school, and that it is acceptable that parents should have to follow government instructions on sending their child to school.

And in the nearer term, a majority of the public—and the same proportion of parents—say that, if a second wave of COVID-19 occurs, they support keeping schools closed for many months to reduce the risk of transmission to vulnerable adults.

Attitudes vary slightly depending on the information given: half the public were told: "If children catch [coronavirus](#), they are very unlikely to become seriously ill. Schools have shut mainly to reduce the likelihood of the virus spreading in the community and then affecting more vulnerable adults," and this group supported school closures by 54% to 21%. Among the half sample who weren't shown this statement, support for school closures was slightly higher at 61% to 17% opposing.

Support for this rises to 64% among those who say they don't trust government advice on when it's safe to resume aspects of normal life (combining the two split-samples together). This is compared with 51% of those who say they do trust the government on this issue.

The study is based on 2,237 interviews with UK residents aged 16-75, carried out online between 17 and 20 July 2020.

It finds the public also say they'd accept very long-term changes to ways of working and day-to-day life, if it becomes clear over the next couple of years that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot be found:

Work

- 86% say they would find it acceptable for employees to choose whether they work in an office or at home, compared with just 8% who say they would not.
- Support for this cuts across political lines, with 89% of 2019 Labor voters, 88% of Conservative voters and 87% of Lib Dem voters saying it'd be acceptable.
- People are more divided over whether employees should have to return to their workplace when the government tells them to, with 47% saying they'd accept this and 39% saying they would not.
- 60% of 2019 Conservative voters say they'd find this acceptable, compared with 44% of Lib Dem voters and 41% of Labor voters.

Day-to-day life

- 87% say they'd accept local lockdowns being imposed long-term, and virtually the same proportion—85% – say they'd accept their own local area being subject to these kinds of restrictions.
- 46% say [young people](#) should be subject to fewer restrictions due to their lower risk from coronavirus—down slightly, from 50% in May.
- 68% say they'd accept a ban on major sporting or cultural events with a live audience, while 52% say it'd be acceptable for people themselves to decide whether to attend such events.
- Those who identify with hedonistic values, such as excitement and risk-taking (62%), having a good time (58%) and seeking fun at every opportunity (57%), are more likely to accept the public making their own decisions on this.
- By contrast, those who identify more with values of conformity and security, such as rule-following (46%), wanting the state to protect them from threats (48%) and behaving properly (50%), are less likely to find this acceptable.

- People also hold inconsistent views on this question, with 31% saying it would be acceptable to them that major events are banned and that it would be acceptable for people themselves to decide whether to attend events.

Despite the prospect of the government's furlough scheme being wound down in the next couple of months, there has been little change in people's perceptions of their financial outlook.

Expectations of personally experiencing financial difficulties or job losses because of the coronavirus crisis are not far off what they were in May and, if anything, now reflect slightly less concern.

- 25% of workers now think they're certain or likely to lose their job, down from 29%, and 60% say they're not likely to, up from 56%.
- 29% of people say they're certain or likely to face significant financial difficulties, down from 34%, while 55% say they're unlikely to, similar to the 52% who said the same in May.

Professor Bobby Duffy, Director of the Policy Institute at King's College London, said, "There are signs that the public are becoming more comfortable with the idea of children returning to school when the government says they must, even as a long-term policy if we have to live without a COVID-19 vaccine or treatment. But at the same time, significant proportions still say they'd be prepared to keep children out of formal education in such a scenario, with half the population saying they'd accept long-term home-schooling—and this is unchanged from May, despite the pressures we know it has been putting on parents and families. More broadly, the government may have more to do if it's to convince people they should return to their workplace, with 86% saying they'd accept employees choosing where they work as a long-term option and the public relatively divided on employees having to follow official

instructions on when to go back. The public are more convinced of the need for local lockdowns, with nearly nine in 10 saying they'd accept them being imposed for the foreseeable future, including on their own local area, while seven in 10 would accept a similarly long ban on live events, reflecting the extent to which people are still prioritizing public health over the economy and their own social lives."

Gideon Skinner, research director at Ipsos MORI, said, "The research out today shows the significant impact that COVID-19 has had on our lives, with few Britons expecting a return to life as normal any time soon, and many prepared to undertake a wide range of measures over a longer period of time to reduce the risk of spread, if a vaccine or effective treatment cannot be found. Having said this, research also shows that public opinion is still not set in stone as the pandemic progresses, so future events may still have an impact, and younger generations in particular are worried about the financial implications."

Ipsos MORI interviewed a sample of 2,237 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom using its online *i:omnibus* between 17 and 20 July 2020. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age within gender, government office region, working status, social grade and education. All surveys are subject to a range of potential sources of error.

More information: The future under coronavirus: long-term changes and immediate expectations: [www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute ... nder-coronavirus.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute...nder-coronavirus.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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