

# ONS social surveys response to Covid-19

United Kingdom

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**Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF)**

**Family Resources Survey (FRS)**

**Household Assets Survey (HAS)**

**Labour Force Survey (LFS)**

**Survey on Living Conditions (SLC)**



**Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)**

**International Passenger Survey (IPS)**

**National Survey for Wales (NSW)**

# Response to Covid-19 : adapt our surveys

30 senior leaders gathered for a planning workshop on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February

Face to face interviewing was paused on 17<sup>th</sup> of March

Telephone interviewing started in April for most surveys

- Protect our members of staff, in particular the field force
- Protect the respondents
- Continue our operations whenever possible (or pause operations when no other options available; e.g. International Passenger Survey)
- Collect new data to inform the public on the impact of the virus on UK society

# Response to Covid-19: lots of coordination required

- Review existing questionnaires
- Engage with our users
- Review sample sizes
- Assess the impact of changes on data quality and data processing
- Monitor response rates and develop strategies to improve it
- Review respondent-facing materials
- Review how to make contact with respondents
- Review incentives
- Make changes to the ONS website
- Enable 700 face-to-face interviewers and 200 office-based telephone interviewers to work from home: roll-out of Skype
- Review of resources , in particular field force
- Develop training material for interviewers

# Some of the key changes

Phase 1  
Development of a  
compliment slip  
and a chase letter

Questionnaires  
shortened

Questions using  
showcards were  
reworded

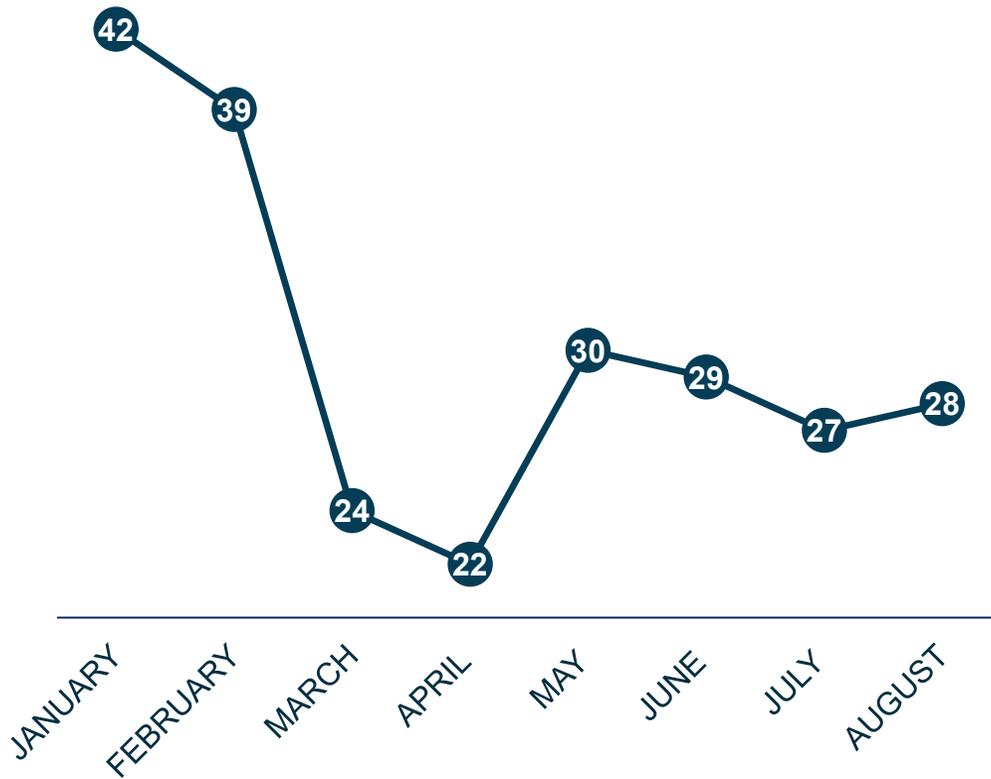
## Phase 2

- Changes to standard advance letter
- Use of standard wording by interviewers for text and answerphone messages
- Use of tele-matching of cases to a list of telephone numbers

New  
coronavirus  
questions  
developed

# Strategies following low response rates

Survey on Living Conditions (SLC)  
Response rates (%) at wave 1  
Year 2020



Development on an online portal, in which respondents enter their phone numbers



Use of incentives



Profile of social surveys raised through media presence and social medial campaign



Knock and nudge trial (currently under way for the SLC and other surveys)



Increase in sample sizes

# Understanding the impact of changes

## Potential response bias drivers:

- Interviewers haven't been able to visit households to get respondents phone numbers
- Change of mode
- Covid situation and its impact on people

Calibration weights under review  
to adjust for response bias

Early analysis of financial surveys (LCF, SLC, HAS) suggest:

- A change in the socio-demographic composition of respondents (age, marital status, employment status)
- A change in the household type and size

# Next steps: transforming surveys design

**November 2019 : first live mixed mode (online/phone) survey, the Opinions and Lifestyle survey (OPN).**

This enabled the ONS to respond quickly to Covid-19 and collect important information on the impact of Covid-19 on UK society on a weekly basis



**March 2020: launch of an online longitudinal Labour Market survey**

- Approximately 35,000 households a week are now being sampled (with a conditional incentive of £25 at wave 1 and £10 at subsequent waves)
- Response rates to online wave 1 is running at around a third of respondents
- A Covid-19 infection survey is being sub-sampled from wave 1 since April 2020: the purpose of the study is to monitor how many people in the population have or have already had Covid-19

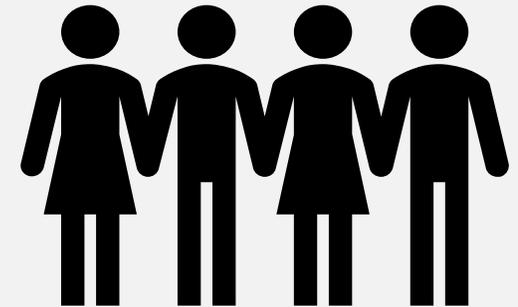
More information is available on the ONS website at  
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Thank you for your attention