

# **The impact of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health in Britain**

**Technical note for NatSal online – Wave 2**

May 2021

Ipsos MORI





# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Questionnaire and material design</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Sampling</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Data collection</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Fieldwork outcome and response.....	8
Device .....	9
<b>Data processing</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Weighting .....	9
Gender variables.....	10
Quality control measures .....	11

## Introduction

This technical report provides details of the second wave of the online survey exploring the impact of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health in Britain conducted by Ipsos MORI. The survey was conducted on behalf of the British National Survey for Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal) team at the University of Glasgow (UoG), working in collaboration with University College London (UCL) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

The survey was designed to collect information from members of the public about their sexual and reproductive health during the COVID-19 pandemic period, through a longitudinal study consisting of up to three waves. This report concerns wave 2, conducted in spring 2021.

## Questionnaire and material design

The questionnaire was designed by UoG (in collaboration with UCL and the LSHTM), based on the wave 1 questionnaire and previous NatSal questionnaires with additional and adapted questions to collect information on the COVID-19 pandemic, and supplied to Ipsos MORI for use in the survey. A number of amendments were made to the questionnaire to make sure it was compatible with Ipsos MORI's systems and in line with the intended completion length (20 minutes).

The questionnaire covered these topics:

- Sexual activity and relationships during the last five years, since the strict lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic (since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020) and in the last four weeks.
- Pregnancy and abortion.
- Unmet need for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and contraception during the strict lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic (since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020).
- Relationship or sexual difficulties during the strict lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic (since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020), including intimate partner violence.
- Impacts of the pandemic on other aspects of life and demographic questions.

The questionnaire contained a large amount of routing, with certain sections only applicable to a subset of participants so the content programmed was about 20 minutes or slightly longer but the length for participants was not this long.

## Sampling

The sample for wave 2 was taken from wave 1 participants who had agreed to be re-contacted for future waves of the survey and new participants from Ipsos MORI's online panel. The online panel for the fresh survey consisted of people from three panel providers used by Ipsos MORI. The online panels are run with stringent recruitment processes and quality control with individuals who can only take part once, are not oversampled and are engaged. Checks are used at recruitment and while people are on the panel in order to ensure bad and inactive panellists are removed.

The eligible sample for the study was those aged 18-59 years in Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland). People under 18 and over 59 were not eligible to take part in the survey. The sample had three components, split into two sample types:

1. The longitudinal sample (i.e. those re-contacted from wave 1)
2. The new sample made up of:
  - a. The main sample designed to ensure the overall sample was representative of the national population aged 18-59 (including those who are not online) by age and gender, region, and social grade.
  - b. Boost sample of 500 people aged 18-29 representative of the profile of the population aged 18-29 (the intention was to ensure that a sample of 2,000 people aged 18-29 was achieved across the main and boost samples).

Sample quotas were not set for the longitudinal sample as the aim was to achieve as many responses from this sample as possible. However, sample quotas were set for the new sample (main 18-59 years and boost 18-29 years) to ensure overall representativeness of the total sample for gender, age, region and social grade. The quotas for gender, age and region used ONS mid-year estimates for 2019. The quotas for social grade used Census data from 2011 (as mid-year estimates are not available for this measure). The social grade quotas were also based on census data for age 16-59 years rather than 18-59 years as figures for 18+ were not available.

Table 1.1 below shows the target quotas as well as the percentage achieved in each quota group in the final data for analysis. Quotas and achieved sample (in final data) for the wave 2 samples.

**Table 1.1: Target and achieved sample quotas**

Quota variable	Categories	Sample aged 18-59 years	Longitudinal sample: 18-59 years	New sample: 18-59 years	Boost: 18-29 years	New Boost: 18-29 years
		Target (%)	Achieved (%)	Achieved (%)		
Gender	Male	49.93	49.79	44.89	51.13	47.76
Gender	Female	50.07	50.21	55.11	48.87	52.24
Age	18-29	27.82	14.80	29.96	100.00	100.00
Age	30-39	24.33	20.48	30.03	-	-
Age	40-49	23.03	28.93	19.23	-	-
Age	50-59	24.81	35.80	20.78	-	-
Region	NORTH EAST	4.05	4.34	4.20	4.24	4.26
Region	WALES	4.70	3.15	5.30	4.89	2.99
Region	SCOTLAND	8.58	6.44	8.74	8.59	9.17
Region	NORTH WEST	11.22	14.22	10.54	11.48	11.09
Region	YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER	8.41	9.16	8.42	8.90	8.96
Region	EAST MIDLANDS	7.35	7.97	7.71	7.55	7.25
Region	WEST MIDLANDS	9.03	8.50	8.79	9.52	9.38
Region	EAST OF ENGLAND	9.29	10.79	8.33	8.46	8.96
Region	GREATER LONDON	15.37	11.79	15.84	15.36	16.84
Region	SOUTH EAST	13.80	13.79	14.07	12.98	12.79
Region	SOUTH WEST	8.22	9.83	8.06	8.04	8.32
Social Grade	SES- AB	22.64	29.98	26.55	18.22	45.84
Social Grade	SES - C1	30.51	34.56	29.96	33.27	25.59
Social Grade	SES - C2	22.19	12.32	16.36	21.08	9.17
Social Grade	SES - DE	24.67	23.15	27.14	27.43	19.40

Weighting was used to ensure that the weighted profile of participants matched the target quotas for these characteristics where this was not achieved during fieldwork. This is described later.

## Data collection

All survey fieldwork was carried out from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 using an online survey panel.

In total, 6,658 surveys were completed. This includes:

- 6,625 completes
- 29 cases which answered all quantitative questions in the survey but did not answer open questions or say whether they were willing to be followed up
- 4 cases which were excluded from the completes as they exceeded one of the target quotas, but have been included because of their value to the longitudinal study and because they can be included without adversely affecting the weighting efficiency.

In the sample of 6,658 cases, 2,010 participants were aged 18-29 (longitudinal sample plus those aged 18-29 in the main and boost samples).

Incidence of eligible cases in the population was 94%.

The average completion length reported by the online team using their standard approach to calculating length was c.13 minutes. Interview length was also analysed for the final achieved sample using the raw length data. Figures are shown for overall median length as well as lengths when interviews of 60 minutes or more are excluded from the analysis. Questionnaire length varied by gender, age, whether or not they have ever had a sexual experience. There was very little difference in length by device on which the survey was completed. Questionnaire length was slightly longer for recontact sample than new sample.

**Table 1.2: Questionnaire length (medians)**

Group	Median (overall) in minutes	Base for median overall	Median (excluding 60+ minutes) in minutes	Base for median overall
All	13.04	6,654	12.52	6,182
Male	12.38	3,090	11.90	2,875
Female	13.57	3,530	13.03	3,276
In another way (gender)	13.48	34	12.38	31
18-29	12.08	2,010	11.75	1,918
30-39	13.30	1,660	12.70	1,547
40-49	13.10	1,389	12.49	1,264
50-59	13.80	1,595	13.22	1,453
Ever had sex (Eversexexp=1)	13.33	5,738	12.87	5,320
Not ever had sex (Eversexexp=2)	10.52	800	10.15	753
Completed on a laptop or computer	13.30	2,765	12.75	2,567
Completed on a smartphone	12.82	3,521	12.33	3,278
Completed on a tablet	13.20	368	12.65	337
Recontact sample	13.54	2,098	12.49	1,806
New sample	12.82	4,556	12.55	4,367

## Fieldwork outcome and response

In total 38,731 respondents from three panel providers started the survey. Ipsos's own panel provided 79% of the sample, supplemented with small numbers from other panels.

The Ipsos MORI research team monitored fieldwork outcomes and response rates throughout fieldwork. Table 1.3 below shows the breakdown of the fieldwork outcome.

**Table 1.3: Outcome of sample**

Outcome	Number of respondents
Error	2
Respondent screened out	11,708
Not returned	267
Abandoned (before final education question)*	2,405
Fraudulent	490
Quota Full (no more cases needed in their quota group)	17,230
Completes	6,625
Complete Over Quota	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38,731</b>

\*29 cases abandoned the survey but had completed all quantitative questions so are included in the data.

Table 1.4 below shows a further breakdown of respondents who were screened out and the reason for being screened out.

**Table 1.4: Reason for being screened out**

Outcome	Number of respondents
Respondent screened out as did not give consent to take part (at initial Ipsos MORI consent page)	<b>811</b>
Respondent screened out as did not fit quota	<b>10,895</b>
Screened out - failed to meet age requirements	10,454
Screened out - failed to provide gender information	23
Screened out - from Northern Ireland	418

Those who did not continue or said no to the NatSal specific consent question are included among the abandoned cases as they were considered to have started the questionnaire. Anyone who did not say yes to the consent question is not included in the data.



## Device

The most common device for completion was a laptop or desktop, followed by smartphone. Only one person completed on a smart TV so this is not shown on Table 1.5. Device use varied by gender and age with women and younger people more likely to use smartphones to complete the survey.

**Table 1.5: Device used for completion (overall and by gender and age)**

Group	Laptop or desktop	Smartphone	Tablet	Base
All	41.6	52.9	5.5	6,658
Male	47.3	47.1	5.7	3,092
Female	36.7	57.9	5.5	3,532
In another way (gender)	32.4	67.6	0	34
18-29	32.5	65.7	1.8	2,010
30-39	33.9	62.5	3.7	1,660
40-49	44.3	47.3	8.4	1,391
50-59	58.6	31.8	9.6	1,597

## Data processing

### Weighting

Weighting was used to ensure that the data used for analysis was representative of the population of Great Britain by gender, age, region, social status and ethnicity. The census estimates used for setting the weighting targets were ONS 2019 mid-year estimates for age, gender and region and 2011 census figures for social grade and ethnicity.

Six sets of weights were created:

- Weight2 is the weight used for the tables we have sent. This is for analysis of 18-59.
- Weight3 should only be used when analysing the boost sample of 18-29 year olds.
- Weight4 is the weight for analysing recontact sample aged 18-59. This version does not include sexual orientation in the scheme because it improved the efficiency of the weights.
- Weight5 is the weight for analysing recontact sample aged 18-29. This version does not include sexual orientation in the scheme because it improved the efficiency of the weights.
- Weight6 is the weight for analysing recontact sample aged 18-59. This version includes sexual orientation in the scheme but results in low efficiency.
- Weight7 is the weight for analysing recontact sample aged 18-29. This version includes sexual orientation in the scheme but results in low efficiency.

The achieved weighted profile and the rim weights for each group have been provided in a separate excel document (Weighting report).. Rim weights were calculated using regression analysis. The weight calculations are repeated until the weights are sufficiently close to the target. The weighting efficiency for rim weights varied from 83.80% for weight2 (all participants aged 18-59) to 51.20% for recontact participants aged 18-29 when sexual orientation was not included in the weighting (weight5) and 45.90% for recontact participants aged 18-29 when sexual orientation was included in the weighting (weight7).

The maximum individual weight for age 18-59 whole sample (weight2) was 4.34. The maximum individual weight for age 18-29 whole sample (weight3) was 1.84. The maximum individual weight for age 18-59 recontact sample with sexual orientation not included (weight4) was 4.52. The maximum individual weight for age 18-29 recontact sample with sexual orientation not included (weight5) was 7.30. The maximum individual weight for age 18-59 recontact sample with sexual orientation included (weight6) was 3.41. The maximum individual weight for age 18-29 recontact sample with sexual orientation included (weight7) was 17.97.

### Gender variables

There are multiple gender variables. These are listed below.

gender\_weight – the variable used for weighting. This is the same as Gend\_DV below but with 'in another way' set to missing since there is no population data to weight against for this group.

resp\_gender – respondent gender from panel information

GENDER\_NonBinary – respondent gender – Response to question in survey - Which of the following describes how you think of yourself?

Gend\_DV – respondent gender – Derived gender from original answer and backcoded identity from open answers given to the question asked who reported gender in another way. 4 people were backcoded to female or male as a result

Sexbirth –Response to question in survey - sex at birth

Gender\_dp – Gender used for tables – based on Gend\_DV and sex birth. Male is cisgender male. Female is cisgender female. All other identities are missing

Genderidentity - Gender identity based on gender\_nonbinary and sexbirth - used for questionnaire routing. Does not match Gender\_dp because it does not take account of the backcoding of 4 cases.

## Quality control measures

There were a number of quality control measures put in place to ensure the survey was run successfully and to standard. This includes the following:

- **Pre-survey checks:** before joining the panel, applicants are assessed by a sophisticated validation system (includes duplicate and robot detection, geo-IP and contact information validation, and checks against Ipsos MORI black-list).
- **Early panel checks:** potential members are tested on their survey taking behaviour. New panellists who are most likely to make intentional or unintentional errors on future surveys are deactivated at an early stage.
- **During survey checks:** checking for suspicious behaviours (such as flat-lining, patterning on questions, excessively similar answers and high speed). Panellists who display such behaviours are removed from the panel (and from the survey data – as fraudulent).
- **On-going panel:** Panellist behaviour history is monitored and tracked across all surveys. Ipsos MORI uses purging procedures based on these data to remove bad and inactive panellists from eligible sampling pools.

Once the survey was complete, the research team also checked the survey data for suspicious response behaviour and any errors in the creation of variables.

## Ethical and compliance issues

Participants were shown an introductory screen explaining who was involved in the survey and the subject matter. An Ipsos MORI privacy notice was available to view and this linked to the University of Glasgow privacy notice. When asked about permission for follow up, participants were told the timing and purpose. The third wave of the survey needs to take place within 12 months.

Ipsos MORI has retained records of those who have agreed to follow up waves of the survey including the Ipsos MORI ID, respondent serial and the NatSal serial used for data sent to the University of Glasgow. The NatSal serial number can be used to link data from wave 1, 2 and 3. The other IDs are not shared with the University of Glasgow or their partners.

# Ipsos MORI's standards and accreditations

Ipsos MORI's standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a 'right first time' approach throughout our organisation.



## ISO 20252

This is the international market research specific standard that supersedes BS 7911/MRQSA and incorporates IQCS (Interviewer Quality Control Scheme). It covers the five stages of a Market Research project. Ipsos MORI was the first company in the world to gain this accreditation.



## ISO 27001

This is the international standard for information security designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls. Ipsos MORI was the first research company in the UK to be awarded this in August 2008.



## ISO 9001

This is the international general company standard with a focus on continual improvement through quality management systems. In 1994, we became one of the early adopters of the ISO 9001 business standard.



## Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partnership

By being an MRS Company Partner, Ipsos MORI endorses and supports the core MRS brand values of professionalism, research excellence and business effectiveness, and commits to comply with the MRS Code of Conduct throughout the organisation.

## Data Protection Act 2018

Ipsos MORI is required to comply with the Data Protection Act 2018. It covers the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy.

# For more information

3 Thomas More Square  
London  
E1W 1YW

t: +44 (0)20 3059 5000

[www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com)  
<http://twitter.com/IpsosMORI>

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