

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

**Technical note for NatSal online – Wave 1**

September 2020

Ipsos MORI





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## Introduction

This technical report provides details of the first wave of the online survey into 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 1, conducted in summer 2020.

## Questionnaire and material design

The questionnaire was designed by UoG (in collaboration with UCL and the LSHTM), based on 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 three main topics:

- Sexual activity during the strict lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic (since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020)
- Unmet need for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services 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)

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 would not be this long. For more details on the content of the questionnaire, a full copy is available under APPENDIX A. NatsalCovid Wave 1 Questionnaire.

## Sampling

The initial sample for wave 1 was taken from Ipsos MORI's online panel. The online panel for this survey consisted of people from seven 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. People under 18 and over 59 were not eligible to take part in the survey. The sample had two components. The main sample was designed to be representative of the national population aged 18-59 (including those who are not online) by age and gender, region, and social grade. In addition, there was a 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 set for the two samples (18-59 years and 18-29 years) based on 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 1 samples

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

Quota variable	Categories	Main: 18-59 years		Boost: 18-29 years	
		Target (%)	Achieved (%)	Target (%)	Achieved (%)
Gender	Male	49.93	48.05	51.13	38.88
Gender	Female	50.07	51.95	48.87	61.12
Age	18-29	27.82	32.88	100.00	100.00
Age	30-39	24.33	22.61	0	0
Age	40-49	23.03	21.74	0	0
Age	50-59	24.81	22.77	0	0
Region	NORTH EAST	4.05	4.44	4.24	4.2
Region	WALES	4.70	3.85	4.89	5.32
Region	SCOTLAND	8.58	7.69	8.59	10.51
Region	NORTH WEST	11.22	12.33	11.48	11.07
Region	YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER	8.41	9.22	8.90	8.27
Region	EAST MIDLANDS	7.35	7.99	7.55	7.34
Region	WEST MIDLANDS	9.03	8.9	9.52	9.21
Region	EAST OF ENGLAND	9.29	9.8	8.46	7.85
Region	GREATER LONDON	15.37	13.35	15.36	16.45
Region	SOUTH EAST	13.80	13.7	12.98	12.15
Region	SOUTH WEST	8.22	8.71	8.04	7.61
Social Grade	Socio economic status - AB	22.64	24.84		
Social Grade	Socio economic status - C1	30.51	30.62		
Social Grade	Socio economic status - C2	22.19	21.07		
Social Grade	Socio economic status - DE	24.67	23.46		

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.

No quotas were set for women of reproductive age but this was a particular group of interest. Women aged 18-49 formed 42.1% of the achieved unweighted sample.

## Data collection

All survey fieldwork was carried out from 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 using an online survey panel.

In total, 6,657 surveys were completed. This includes:

- 6,504 completes
- 43 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
- 110 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 6,657 cases, 2,217 participants were aged 18-29 (boost sample plus those aged 18-29 in the main sample).

95% of those invited were eligible to take part.

The average completion length was 10 minutes. Interview length was also analysed for subgroups in the sample. 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.

**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	10.07	6,657	9.92	6,473
Male	9.82	3,189	9.68	3,106
Female	10.27	3,440	10.13	3,342
In another way (gender)	11.21	28	10.68	25
18-29	9.58	2,217	9.42	2,162
30-39	10.02	1,508	9.79	1,458
40-49	10.17	1,434	10.01	1,401
50-59	10.62	1,498	10.47	1,452
Ever had sex (Eversexexp=1)	10.53	5,740	10.35	5,575
Not ever had sex (Eversexexp=2)	7.05	785	6.98	768
Completed on a laptop or computer	10.12	3,263	9.92	3,159
Completed on a smartphone	10.00	2,977	9.88	2,913
Completed on a tablet	10.13	416	10.01	400

## Fieldwork outcome and response

In total 17,425 respondents from seven panel providers were approached to take part in the survey and started the survey. Ipsos's own panel provided 88% 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
Respondent screened out	847
Not returned	85
Abandoned (before final education question)	1,326
Fraudulent	137
Quota Full (no more cases needed in their quota group)	8,373
Completes	6,657
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,425</b>

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>506</b>
Respondent screened out as did not fit quota	<b>341</b>
Screened out - failed to meet age requirements	2
Screened out - failed to provide gender information	50
Screened out - from Northern Ireland	285
Screened out – panel issues	4

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. There were 191 cases who dropped out at the consent wording or said no to the consent question.

Table 1.5 shows the percentage in each gender and age group who were eligible and refused consent at this point (from among those who reached this question).

**Table 1.5: Percentage refusing to give consent at the NatSal consent question**

Group	Percentage refusing (%)	Base
All	3	7,213
Male	2	3,418
Female	3	3,765
In another way (gender)	0	30
18-29	2	2,377
30-39	3	1,635
40-49	3	1,573
50-59	4	1,628

## 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 1.6. Device use varied by gender and age with women and younger people more likely to use smartphones to complete the survey.

**Table 1.6: Device used for completion (overall and by gender and age)**

Group	Laptop or desktop	Smartphone	Tablet	Base
All	49.0	44.7	6.2	6,657
Male	55.1	38.9	6.0	3,189
Female	43.4	50.2	6.4	3,440
In another way (gender)	42.9	39.3	17.9	28
18-29	43.7	53.6	2.6	2,217
30-39	44.1	51.7	4.2	1,508
40-49	48.7	43.5	7.7	1,434
50-59	61.7	26.2	12.1	1,498

## 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.

Two sets of weights were created. One was for analysis of all cases aged 18-59 (weight2) and the other was for analysis of cases aged 18-29 (weight3). Once weighted the data will match the population profile for the relevant age group (aged 18-59 years or 18-29 years). Table 1.7 shows the achieved weighted profile and the rim weights for each group. Rim weights were calculated using regression analysis. The weight calculations are repeated until the weights are sufficiently close to the target. For both weights (weight2 and weight3) convergence occurred on the fourth iteration. The weighting efficiency for rim weights was 92.20% for all participants aged 18-59 and 76.90% for participants aged 18-29.

The maximum individual weight for age 18-59 was 4.15 with 99.9% less than 3. The maximum individual weight for age 18-29 was 5.47 with 99.6% of weights less than 3.



**Table 1.7: Profile of achieved sample after weighting and rim weights**

		Weight 2 (18-59)		Weight 3 (18-29)	
		Output percent	Rim weight	Output percent	Rim weight
Gender - gender_weight	Male	49.93	1.039116	51.13	1.315051
	Female	50.07	0.963823	48.87	0.799601
Age - age_weight_1859	Male - 18-29	14.22	1.034599	51.13	1
	Male - 30-39	12.09	1.05486		
	Male - 40-49	11.41	1.002219		
	Male - 50-59	12.21	0.920169		
	Female - 18-29	13.59	0.681874	48.87	1
	Female - 30-39	12.24	1.074805		
	Female - 40-49	11.63	1.162629		
	Female - 50-59	12.61	1.39584		
Ethnicity - qethnicity_weight	Male - Ethnicity Group - White	42.73	0.960015	41.78	1.000566
	Male - Ethnicity Group - Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	0.83	0.824201	1.37	0.706279
	Male - Ethnicity Group - Asian / Asian British	4.1	1.246517	5.45	0.984037
	Male - Ethnicity Group - Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	1.62	1.778406	1.74	1.044326
	Male - Ethnicity Group - Other ethnic group	0.64	2.944708	0.79	2.966832
	Female - Ethnicity Group - White	42.96	0.954188	40.16	0.953648
	Female - Ethnicity Group - Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	0.85	0.827957	1.34	0.799624
	Female - Ethnicity Group - Asian / Asian British	4.01	1.497042	4.98	1.393376
	Female - Ethnicity Group - Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	1.77	1.702857	1.81	1.388466
	Female - Ethnicity Group - Other ethnic group	0.47	2.034178	0.58	2.142049
Region - QREGION_weight	Male - North East	2.01	0.825299	2.18	1.027236
	Male - Wales	2.34	1.222135	2.54	0.814548
	Male - Scotland	4.22	1.161232	4.33	0.741021
	Male - North West	5.59	0.864605	5.86	0.87262
	Male - Yorkshire and The Humber	4.2	0.927162	4.54	1.015696
	Male - East Midlands	3.67	0.873871	3.89	1.271329
	Male - West Midlands	4.53	0.995478	4.89	0.891255
	Male - East of England	4.62	0.991577	4.34	1.310142
	Male - Greater London	7.77	1.034408	7.71	0.816341
	Male - South East	6.88	1.141937	6.69	1.580508
	Male - South West	4.1	1.02287	4.15	1.205008
	Female - North East	2.04	1.056365	2.06	1.055664
	Female - Wales	2.35	1.302462	2.35	0.975961
	Female - Scotland	4.35	1.148798	4.26	0.827369
	Female - North West	5.63	0.944224	5.62	1.132276
	Female - Yorkshire and The Humber	4.21	0.899173	4.36	1.108402

	Female - East Midlands	3.68	0.992744	3.66	0.948446
	Female - West Midlands	4.5	0.995836	4.63	1.073398
	Female - East of England	4.67	0.915683	4.12	1.035531
	Female - Greater London	7.6	1.127685	7.64	1.023317
	Female - South East	6.92	0.947956	6.29	0.922395
	Female - South West	4.12	0.904709	3.89	0.967235
Social Grade - QSG_weight	Male - AB	11.51	0.887892	9.42	0.607782
	Male - C1	14.54	0.993983	16.91	1.607329
	Male - C2	11.93	1.033703	11.23	0.672573
	Male - DE	11.94	1.106808	13.58	1.587819
	Female - AB	11.13	0.940272	8.81	0.625691
	Female - C1	15.96	1.014896	16.36	1.118888
	Female - C2	10.26	1.029531	9.87	1.149453
	Female - DE	12.72	1.014369	13.84	1.186697

\* Red text indicates rim weight is outside the range of 0.6 - 1.4

### Quality control measures

There were a number of quality control measure 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 futures 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 base on these data to remove bad and inactive panellists from out eligible sampling pools.

Once the survey was complete, the research team also checked the survey data for suspicious behaviour. Checks were made on the number of sexual partners and the academic research team confirmed they would like to weight and receive all cases even if the numbers were outliers.

## 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 second wave of the survey needs to take place within 12 months and the follow up qualitative research within three months. In the case of a qualitative sample to be provided to the University of Glasgow they were told which information would be provided in an identifiable way. Individual name and contact details for the qualitative follow up were sent separately from the survey data with a different identifier.

Ipsos MORI has retained records of those who have agreed to a follow up wave 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 and later waves. 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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