

## WMRCG | Citizens' Panel

### Headline findings from quantitative survey | 06.07.20

#### Background

- This note presents headline findings from a quantitative survey conducted online between 26<sup>th</sup> June – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with a sample of 500 respondents living in the West Midlands.
- Quotas for local council areas were applied to the sample based on population estimates:

		% of survey sample
Constituent authorities	Birmingham City Council	26%
	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Walsall Council City of Wolverhampton Council	30%
	Coventry City Council Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	15%
	Cannock Chase District Council North Warwickshire Borough Council Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Redditch Borough Council Rugby Borough Council Shropshire Council Stratford-on-Avon District Council Tamworth Borough Council Telford and Wrekin Council Warwickshire County Council	29%

- Data is weighted to be representative of the area surveyed in terms of age and gender. In the absence of regional data for socio-economic grade, the sample is weighted to the UK adult population for SEG.
- All comparisons between sub groups reported in this topline note are significant at the 95% level, with a confidence interval of +/- 4.38. This means we would expect to find a result within 4.38 percentage points of the result in this survey in 95% of samples of 500 adults drawn from this population.
  - Where base sizes are lower than 100 and findings should therefore be treated with greater caution, this is indicated with an asterisk.
- We have included analysis of responses to open ended questions at the end of this note.

## Headline findings

### Optimism and pessimism

- Levels of optimism about people's personal lives and neighbourhoods are higher than when they're thinking about the region or the country as a whole.
  - Around three quarters (74%) are optimistic about their personal life over the next year or so, and over three fifths (62%) are optimistic about their neighbourhood.
  - Just under half (48%) are optimistic about the West Midlands over the next year or so (42% are pessimistic).
    - 18-24 year olds are more likely to be optimistic about the West Midlands (64%\*) than those aged 45-54 (40%\*).
  - Only two fifths (40%) are optimistic about the UK as a whole over the next year or so, with over half (52%) pessimistic.

### Concern about the threat of Coronavirus

- Concern about the threat coronavirus poses is high:
  - 93% say they are concerned about the threat to the country as a whole.
  - 89% say they are concerned about the threat to the West Midlands.
  - 79% say they are concerned about the threat to their neighbourhood.
  - 78% say they are concerned about the threat to them personally.
- Older age groups are more likely to be concerned about the threat of coronavirus:
  - 85% of 65+ year olds and 88%\* of 55-64 year olds are concerned about the threat to them personally, compared to 63%\* of 25-34 year olds.
  - 94% of 65+ year olds and 95%\* of 55-64 year olds are concerned about the threat to the West Midlands, compared to 78%\* of 18-24 year olds.

## Experiences of lockdown

- The data shows people in the West Midlands have been experiencing a range of problems and emotional challenges that during the lockdown<sup>1</sup> with the most common issue being missing socialising with friends/family:
  - Over four fifths (81%) said they were 'missing seeing family and friends', with 47% experiencing this a lot.
    - Women are more likely to say this (87%) than men (74%).
    - 65+ year olds are more likely to say this (91%), compared to 75%\* of 25-34 year olds, 35-44 year olds and 45-54.
  - 43% said they were 'struggling with changes to my usual routine'.
    - Women are more likely to say this (49%) than men (36%).
  - Over a third (36%) said they were 'feeling lonely and isolated'. Women are more likely to say this (42%) than men (30%).
  - Over a third (35%) said they had experienced 'a negative impact on my finances'.
  - 30% said they were 'struggling with my mental health'.
    - 41%\* of 18-24 year olds and 37%\* of 25-34 year olds say this, compared to 24% of 55-64 year olds and 19% of 65+ year olds.
  - Just under one fifth (18%) said they were experiencing bereavement or grief
  - 17% said they were 'struggling to work from home. 18-24 year olds are more likely to say this (32%).
- However, the evidence also shows that experience of lockdown in the West Midlands hasn't been all bad:
  - 71% said they had been 'focussing more on the things that matter to me'.
  - Over half (55%) said they were 'spending more time outside and in nature'.
  - Just over half (52%) said they were 'seeing greater community spirit in my area'.
  - Just under a third (31%) said they had experienced 'a positive impact on my finances'.

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<sup>1</sup> %s in this list refer to proportion of respondents saying they experienced this 'somewhat' or 'a lot'.

## Impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the West Midlands

Those areas where people think there has been a negative impact include jobs/business, hospitals, education/skills, mental health and transport. Those areas where people think there has been a positive impact include the environment and community spirit.

- Three quarters (75%) say they think jobs and business have been negatively impacted.
  - 40% think this impact has been *very negative*.
- 63% think that access to hospitals and GPs for non-coronavirus conditions has been negatively impacted.
  - Almost three quarters of 55-64 year olds (73%\*) and 71% of 65+ year olds say this, compared to 53%\* of 18-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds.
- 63% think education and skills have been negatively impacted.
- Over three fifths (61%) think people's mental health has been negatively impacted.
- Half of people (50%) think transport has been negatively impacted.
- Over three fifths (62%) think the environment has been positively impacted.
- Over half (56%) say community spirit has been impacted somewhat or very positively.
- Just over two fifths (42%) say the upkeep of their local area has been impacted neither positively or negatively.

## Priorities for recovery in the West Midlands

A focus on jobs and health, as well as protecting the most vulnerable who have been impacted, emerged as priorities for recovery.

	% ranking as one of top three priorities	% ranking as their top priority
Getting people who lost their jobs or were furloughed during the coronavirus crisis back to work.	45%	18%
Supporting those who have illnesses apart from coronavirus to access proper treatment in the NHS.	34%	10%

Protecting the most vulnerable in society who have been impacted by the crisis.	32%	10%
Protecting businesses to prevent further job losses.	29%	10%
Ensuring spaces open to the public, such as workplaces, transport, schools, shops, are as safe as possible from the virus, for example by being socially distanced.	28%	12%
Supporting children's development who have missed school.	28%	8%
Preventing a 'lost generation' of young people who have missed opportunities for further education and employment.	25%	8%
Making sure those whose mental health has been impacted get the help they need.	21%	5%
Continuing to recognise key workers and essential workers.	16%	5%
Ensuring low levels of crime across the West Midlands.	15%	6%
Ensuring that carbon emissions do not rise as we get the economy going again in the West Midlands.	12%	4%
Enabling and encouraging people to use public transport safely again.	8%	2%
None of the above.	2%	2%

### Priorities for change in the West Midlands after coronavirus

Better support for the NHS, public services and essential workers, alongside the equitable distribution of resources across the country and the West Midlands emerged as the most important priorities for change in the region.

	% ranking as one of top three priorities	% ranking as their top priority
That the NHS and other public services are better supported.	44%	21%
That the economic recovery is spread evenly across the country, not just focused on London.	36%	15%
That those who work in essential services are valued more highly and treated better.	25%	9%
The economic recovery is spread evenly across the towns and cities of the West Midlands.	24%	7%

That we are kinder and more generous towards each other.	22%	7%
That we have a 'green recovery' that prioritises the environment.	22%	9%
That we provide more support to the vulnerable in society.	21%	5%
That we become a more equal society.	18%	6%
That we live less 'consumerist' lifestyles, reducing spending on things we don't need.	17%	3%
That life returns to normal, exactly as it was before.	17%	7%
That we live less busy lives and are able to spend more time with loved ones.	16%	4%
That we provide better support to people struggling with their mental health.	16%	2%
That we support community groups and charities that have stepped up to help others during lockdown.	11%	2%
None of the above.	3%	3%

This is broadly reflective of data from a similar survey question conducted 19th – 21st June with a nationally representative sample. In the latter, there emerged a very similar ranking of these options<sup>2</sup>.

### Paired statement questions

Getting the high street and small businesses back on their feet, getting people back to jobs, prioritising safety over reopening businesses and waiting until the risk of the virus is lower before sending children back to school all emerged as priorities.

We should prioritise getting the high street and small businesses back on their feet.	We should prioritise helping large businesses, including those in the manufacturing sector, recover from the damage they have experienced.
74%	26%

<sup>2</sup> Most of the options presented in this survey question were also presented in a similar question conducted with a nationally representative sample. However the latter question did not include the following options: 'The economic recovery is spread evenly across the towns and cities of the West Midlands', 'That we provide more support to the vulnerable in society' and 'That we support community groups and charities that have stepped up to help others during lockdown'.

- Women are more likely to say we should prioritise getting the high street and small businesses back on their feet (79%) than men (69%).

We need to prioritise getting people back to jobs, even if that means a higher level of carbon emissions as people commute to work.	We should prioritise the environment in the recovery from the coronavirus outbreak, maintaining the low carbon emissions we have seen during the lockdown.
57%	43%

- Younger people are more likely to say we should prioritise the environment in the recovery (57%\* of 18-24 year olds and 35-34 year olds) than older people (38%\* of 55-64 year olds and 35% 65+ year olds).

The health risk of the virus is still too high, and we need to prioritise safety over reopening businesses and kick starting the economy.	The need to reopen businesses and get the economy going again outweighs the health risk coronavirus poses
65%	35%

- Young people are more likely to say the need to reopen businesses and get the economy going outweighs the health risk (39%\* of 18-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds) than 55-64 year olds (23%\*).

We need to wait until the risk of the virus is lower before sending children back to school.	Children need to return to school now to ensure they don't miss out on their education and allow their parents to get back to work.
53%	47%

### Additional priorities for recovery<sup>3</sup>

When asked an open question on any further areas that should be a priority to ensure a successful recovery, around half responded that they could not think of any additional areas not already covered in the survey. Most of the other responses were specific suggestions that would fall under the areas covered within the survey, however a several new themes emerged which were not explicitly covered by the survey:

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<sup>3</sup> The findings in this section are based on qualitative analysis of verbatim responses to an open-ended survey question: 'Are there any areas that you think should be a priority to ensure a successful recovery from Coronavirus in the West Midlands that you have not seen mentioned as part of this survey so far?'

- Stricter *enforcement* of social distancing rules.
- Tackling homelessness.
- Support for the arts, entertainment and culture sectors.
- Support for the self-employed.
- Upkeep of local areas, particularly parks.

### Groups who may need additional support

In response to an open question on which groups or people might need additional support as the West Midlands recovers from the coronavirus crisis, most commonly mentioned were the elderly, the unemployed and those with mental health problems.

Group/people	% mentioning in response to open question <sup>4</sup>
The elderly	27%
That unemployed/those made redundant/job seekers	20%
Those with mental health problems (existing or new)	18%
Vulnerable people	14%
Young people/children	14%
Those with physical health problems	12%
Small businesses / small business owners	9%
The homeless	9%
Those in education/missing out on education/quality education	9%
Those who are isolated/alone	8%
People on low/restricted incomes	8%
People who have been shielding/isolating	6%
The disabled	6%
The poor/those in poverty	5%
Key workers/those on the frontline	5%
People who have not been able to access healthcare	4%
BAME/Black/Asian/Ethnic minority people	3%
The self employed	3%
People suffering from abuse/violence	3%
Care home residents	3%

<sup>4</sup> This table does not include groups or people mentioned by less than 3% of the sample. The verbatim responses to this question were coded to give the quantitative data in the table.



