

Behind The Mask survey

About this study

Covid-19 has made us stay apart from each other, and has required us to wear equipment such as masks, aprons, gloves, visors and gowns. This personal protective equipment is known as PPE. This has changed the ways we can communicate, especially in situations which involve giving and receiving care. This questionnaire is part of a study into how this has affected the ways we support each other, how make ourselves understood, and the ways care is given.

We are asking people who have been affected by these Covid-19 restrictions about their experiences in health and social care.

The survey is confidential. You do not have to answer every question. You do not have to give your name or contact details. It will take about ten minutes to complete. You can complete some of the survey, and come back to it later.

Any personal details you give, and any data you are involved in creating, will be stored in encrypted files or kept in a locked

metal box. The data will not be shared with anyone, and will be permanently destroyed by December 2022.

Nobody will be able to identify you in any report which is written as part of this study.

You can stop being involved in this study at any time. You do not need to say why.

You can access the information you give and any records made about you.

If you want your involvement in the study to be forgotten, at your request all the information which is held about you will be permanently deleted.

This project is funded by the Durham University Covid-19 Response Fund.

After reading this statement, would you like to take part in this research project?

I have read and understood the above information about the project, and understand my role in it.
I consent to the use of the information I give for the purposes stated above. *Required*

Yes
 No

About you

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. There now follows some questions about you. Are you over 18 years of age? *Required*

Yes
 No

Are you currently living in the United Kingdom? *Required*

Yes
 No

Are you affected by any of the following:

Visual impairment
 Hearing impairment
 Speech impairment
 Another impairment that affects my ability to communicate
 None of the above

Please think about the times when you have been talking with a person who is wearing a face mask. Please tick all the responses that you agree with.

- I rely on being able to see a person's lips to understand what they are saying
- I can't understand them because the sound is so muffled
- I can usually understand what the person is saying
- They seem less friendly because I can't see their facial expressions
- You can tell by someone's eyes if they're smiling behind the mask
- I feel uncomfortable because I can't tell how they're feeling
- I feel more comfortable because their mask is protecting me from the virus
- They seem to have to make a lot of effort to be understood
- The mask can make the person unrecognisable
- They don't sound like the person I know
- I feel more at ease than if they weren't wearing a mask

If you have any other thoughts about communicating with a mask-wearer, please feel free to express them here: *Optional*

How does being near a person in full PPE make you feel? That is, someone in a mask, visor, gloves and gown. Please tick all the statements you agree with.

- I don't know, I've never been around people in full PPE
- I feel like I'm in the presence of aliens, not humans
- It's reassuring - they're fighting the virus
- The person behind the equipment shines through
- I worry about how uncomfortable they must feel
- I have trouble understanding what they're trying to say or do
- I've stopped noticing, it's becoming normal

If you have other thoughts about interacting with people who are wearing full PPE, please write them here: *Optional*

Keeping our distance means that we must avoid shaking hands, hugging, or giving comforting touch to each other, such as placing a hand on someone's shoulder. How has that affected you? Please tick all the statements you agree with.

- I don't mind, I've never liked hugs anyway
- I ache to hug my friends and family
- A kind touch can get the message across when words fail
- I am able to live my life just as easily without touching people
- It feels impolite to avoid shaking hands
- I feel safer if no-one touches me

Please feel free to write your thoughts about being unable to touch while communicating with people: *Optional*

Your experiences during the pandemic

During the pandemic, have you or someone close to you required healthcare or social care?

- No (please go straight to page 9)
- Yes

If there has been more than one episode when you or someone close to you have needed health or social care support, please choose the episode which was most urgent and important to you, and think about what happened during that event. Please briefly describe the care that was needed during that event:

Did you speak to a care professional face-to-face about these needs?

- No, I dealt with it myself
- No, I followed advice from an NHS website
- No, I was given advice over the phone
- Yes, via video
- Yes, in person

Did your interaction meet these needs?

- Not at all
- No, but it was better than nothing
- Partly
- Yes, it met my needs
- Yes, and it was a better experience than before the pandemic

If you wish, please briefly explain what happened: *Optional*

Do you have a job which involves caring for people in a health or social care role?

- No (please go straight to page 15)
- Yes

Please briefly describe your job, and the type of place where you work:

Which items of PPE do you wear as part of your role? Tick all items that apply.

- Hair covering
- Goggles
- Clear visor
- Mask
- Respirator
- Gloves
- Apron
- Gown with sleeves
- Full-body suit
- Other
- Nothing

If you selected Other, please specify:

Thinking about the PPE you wear at work, which of these statements do you agree with?
Tick all that apply to you.

- It fits me well
- It obstructs my vision
- It obstructs my hearing
- It's easy to get on and off
- My PPE prevents me from moving normally
- It makes it hard to breathe
- I get less done because of the time it takes to put on and take off
- It prevents me from eating and drinking when I need to
- It prevents me from taking toilet breaks when I need them
- I get too hot in my PPE
- My PPE causes skin problems
- I can move naturally in my PPE
- My PPE pinches and rubs on my face

If you wish, please add your own comments about the comfort and ease of use of your PPE. *Optional*

How do you feel when you are engaged in conversation at work while wearing PPE?

Please tick as many as apply to you.

- I feel safer, so I can express myself naturally
- I'm afraid I scare people by the way I look
- I can communicate just as well as I did without PPE
- I am distracted by the discomfort of wearing PPE
- I prefer to conduct difficult conversations online so people can see my face
- I have to exaggerate my body movements to be understood
- I prefer to conduct difficult conversations by phone so people are not distracted by the way I look
- If wearing PPE means I can be in the room to have a difficult conversation, it's a price worth paying
- I exaggerate my facial expressions in order to be understood
- I feel frustrated by my inability to communicate in the way I would like
- I've stopped noticing my PPE during conversations
- I have to shout to be heard
- I exaggerate my diction in order to be understood
- I don't sound like myself
- I feel isolated from my colleagues

If you have other thoughts about communication while wearing PPE, please write them here: *Optional*

In your healthcare role, do you normally use touch when you are communicating?

- Yes, instinctively
- Yes, if the situation requires it
- Rarely
- No

How have you managed the need to avoid touch when communicating in your role at work?

Tick all the responses you agree with.

- It hasn't really affected me
- I can't avoid touch, so I wear gloves and wash my hands more
- I have forced myself to avoid touching people
- The touch from a gloved hand is not the same as skin-to-skin contact
- The virus has put me off touching people
- People are now afraid of being touched, touch has lost the power to comfort
- A comforting touch means more now than ever
- It is harder to do my job without being free to use caring touch to communicate
- I can do my job just as easily without touching people
- Gloves don't get in the way of the message conveyed through caring touch

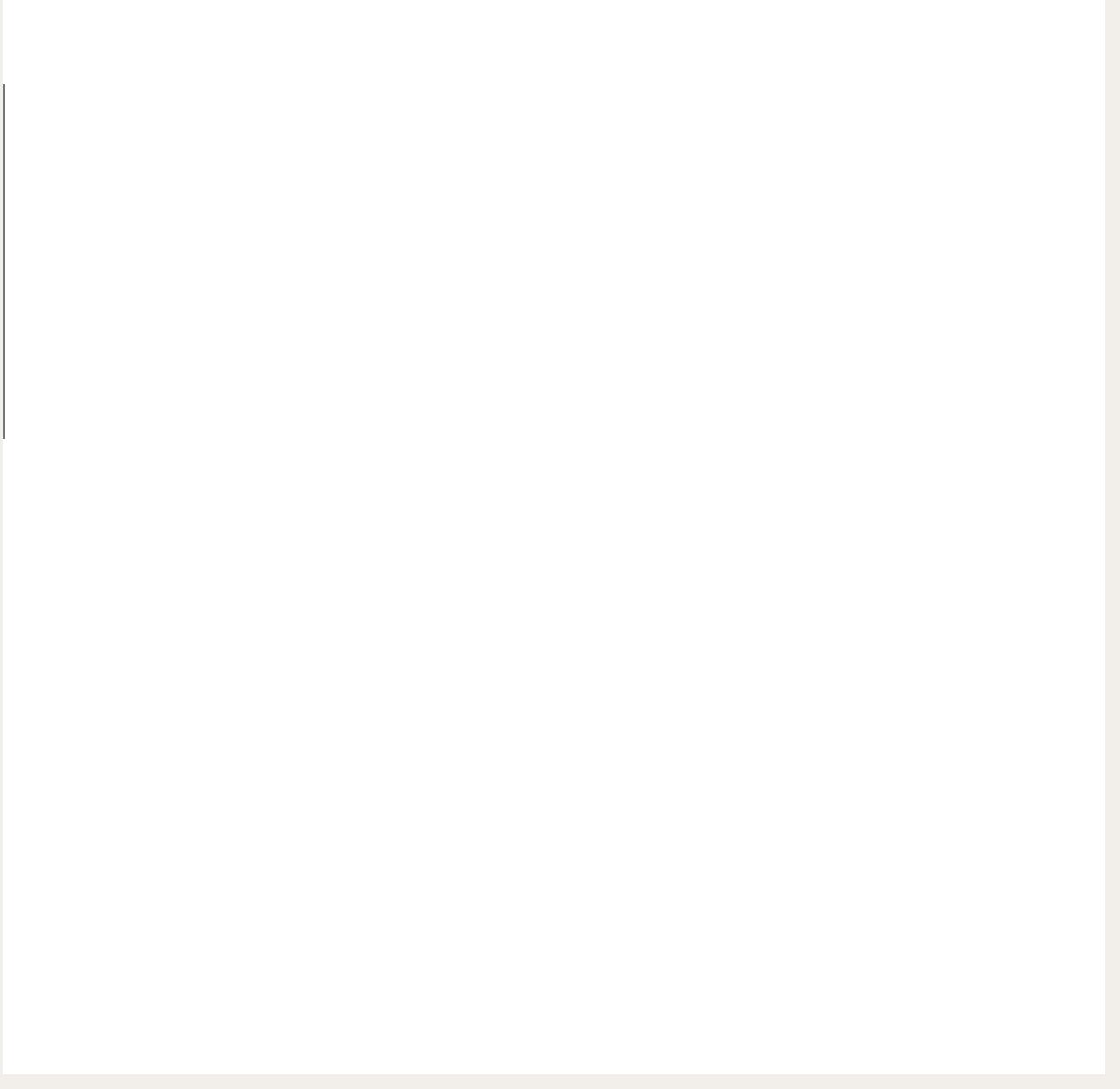
Please feel free to add your thoughts on the effect of distancing and the wearing of gloves on communication in your role: *Optional*



Have you used any particular methods or techniques to get around the barriers to communication caused by your PPE and/or distancing?

- Yes
- No

Please briefly describe the communication techniques used, and the outcome.



Your contact details

Thank you for completing this survey. Please send it to Andrea Lambell, Department of Anthropology, Dawson Building, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

This project aims to improve how we communicate with each other in health and care situations while wearing PPE. To this end, I am keen to interview some people about their experiences. If you would like to be contacted, please complete the following form. If you'd rather not give your details, just leave this part blank.

Name:

Email address:

Phone number:

Thank you for taking part in this survey. If you have been affected by the issues raised in this survey, please consider seeking support from someone you trust, such as your GP, your workplace counselling service, or a mental wellbeing organisation such as Mind (mind.org.uk). If you have any questions or comments, please contact the researcher, Andrea Lambell, at andrea.r.lambell@durham.ac.uk, or the leader of the project, Professor Jane Macnaughton, at jane.macnaughton@durham.ac.uk. Thanks again for your valuable help.