



**Covid-19 Survey**  
**April 2020**

## Background

Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the COVID-19 virus, the disease it causes and how it spreads. At this time there are no specific vaccines or treatment for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments.<sup>1</sup>

The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a statement on Friday 20th March 2020 closing all cafes, pubs, bars and restaurants along with nightclubs, theatres, cinemas, gyms and leisure centres. The Government urged people to stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives.<sup>2</sup>

Healthwatch Rotherham are interested in how the pandemic has affected our residents, and how they feel about the information that is being presented to them.

## Method

In order to research residents' reactions we promoted our electronic survey on social media platforms and via our website for a 10 day period (from 22nd April 2020 to 4th May 2020). During the 10 day period we received 174 responses, not all respondents chose to answer all the questions.

Here are the questions we asked:

1. How much information have you seen about Coronavirus?
  - Too much
  - Too little
  - Just right
  - Other
2. Do you consider yourself to be at high risk from Coronavirus?
  - Yes - I have an existing health condition
  - Yes - I am pregnant
  - Yes - I am aged 70 or over
  - No

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<sup>1</sup> "Coronavirus disease 2019 - World Health Organization."

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>. Accessed 4 May. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> "PM statement on coronavirus: 20 March 2020 - GOV.UK." 20 Mar. 2020,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-20-march-2020>. Accessed 4 May. 2020.

3. Do you care for or support someone who is considered high risk from Coronavirus?
  - Yes - they have a pre existing health condition
  - Yes - they are pregnant
  - Yes - they are aged 70 or older
  - No
4. Have you or someone you care for recieved a letter or text from the NHS advising them to shield for 12 weeks?
  - Yes
  - No
5. How easy have you found it to find the information you need about how to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic
  - Very easy
  - Easy
  - Neither easy nor difficult
  - Difficult
  - Very Difficult
  - Don't know
6. How easy have you found it to understand information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic
  - Very easy
  - Easy
  - Neither easy nor difficult
  - Difficult
  - Very Difficult
  - Don't know
7. How easy have you found it to keep up to date with the information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic
  - Very easy
  - Easy
  - Neither easy nor difficult
  - Difficult
  - Very Difficult
  - Don't know

8. Which topics if any, have you found it difficult to get clear information or advice about? (Select all that apply)

- None, I have all the information I need
- Looking after my physical health
- Looking after my mental health or wellbeing
- Accessing repeat prescription medications
- Managing existing physical health conditions
- Managing existing mental health conditions
- Changes to health care services (e.g GP Practice, Pharmacy, Outpatients Appointments, Community nursing visits)
- Advance care planning and end of life care
- Advice for family carers
- Help for people who do not use the internet
- Accessing help in my local community (e.g getting groceries or picking up medication)
- How to volunteer in my local community
- Testing for Coronavirus
- Symptoms of Coronavirus
- Social distancing
- Self-isolation
- Shielding people who are at very high risk of severe illness from Coronavirus
- Other

9. Where have you found information or advice about Coronavirus (Please select all that apply)

- Online - National organisations websites (e.g Government, NHS)
- Online - Local organisations websites (e.g Council, local hospital, voluntary and community organisations)
- Online - Social media
- Media - Television, newspapers or radio
- Received via email or text message
- Received by post
- From family or friends
- Other

10. Have you found any specific information or sources of information especially helpful?

11. Have you or anyone you care for experienced any changes to your healthcare due to the Coronavirus pandemic

- Yes
- No

12. How much of an impact has the Coronavirus pandemic had on your mental health?

- Scale of 1 (no impact) to 5 (significant impact)

13. Have you been able to access support for your mental health or wellbeing during this time?

- Yes - from family and/or friends
- Yes - from a community or voluntary organisation
- Yes - from a mental healthcare provider
- Yes - online or from an app
- No - I haven't needed any support

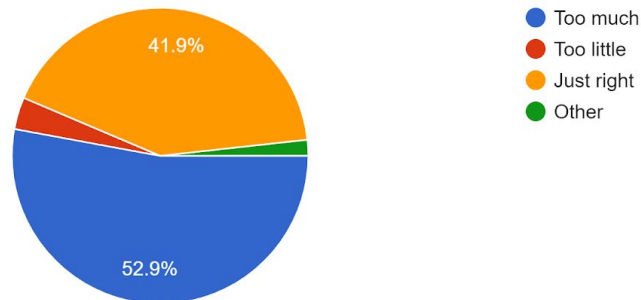
These questions were followed by a series of equality monitoring questions, see appendix.

## Results

**Question 1** Almost 53% of residents feel that they have seen too much information about Coronavirus. New bulletins and daily updates from the government seem to take up a large chunk of airtime and often the same news is being replayed.

How much information have you seen about Coronavirus?

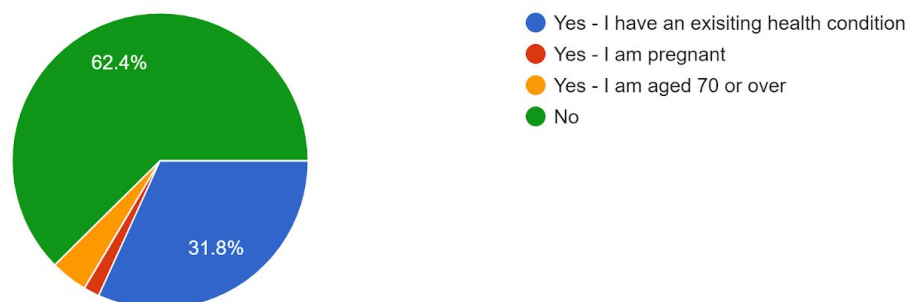
172 responses



**Question 2** 37% of residents feel that they are at high risk from Coronavirus, with 32% having an existing health condition. 4% of the respondents felt they were at higher risk due to their age ( over 70 years) and just below 2% felt that they were higher risk due to being pregnant.

Do you consider yourself to be at high risk from Coronavirus?

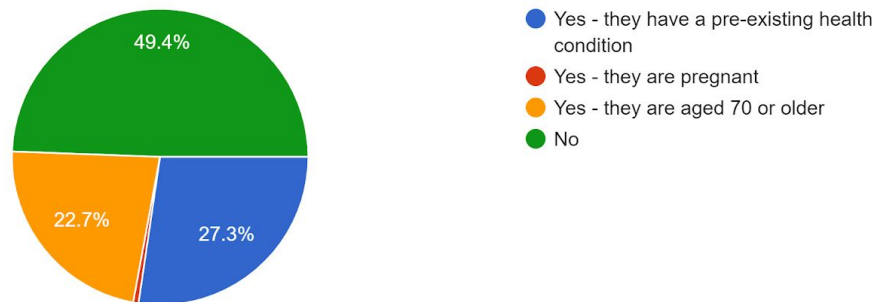
173 responses



**Question 3** 50% of our residents are supporting or caring for someone who is considered to be high risk. The main concern was people with a pre-existing medical condition closely followed by caring or supporting someone who was over 70 years old.

Do you care or support someone, who is considered high risk from Coronavirus?

172 responses

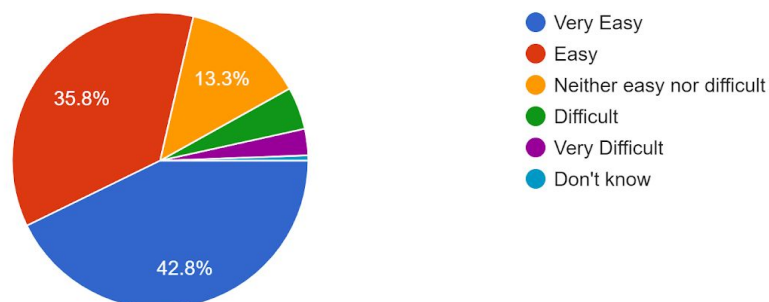


**Question 4** Almost 30% (28.6%) of people who responded have received a text or letter from the NHS advising them that they have been identified as being at high risk of severe illness if they catch Coronavirus because they have underlying health issues.

**Question 5** Over 79% of residents found it easy or very easy to find the information they needed on how to keep themselves and others safe during the pandemic. 3% reported that they found it very difficult to find the information they needed.

How easy have you found it to find the information you need about how to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic

173 responses

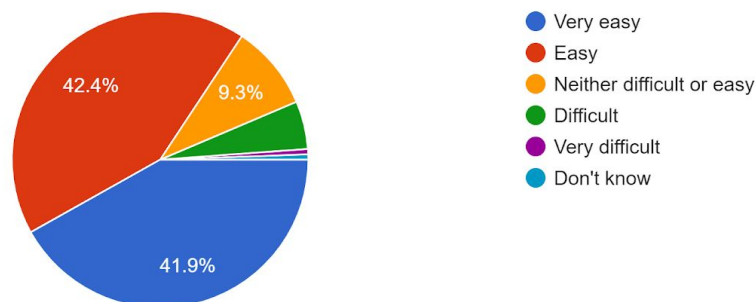


**Question 6** The same amount of people who found it easy to find the information about staying safe during the pandemic also found the information they were provided easy to understand. 10% said they found the information difficult (8%) or very difficult (2%) to understand.

**Question 7** Almost 85% found it easy to keep up to date with the information whilst just over 5% found it difficult to find the latest information.

How easy have you found it to keep up to date with the information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic

172 responses



**Question 8** We asked what topics if any, had residents found it difficult to get clear information or advice about? The majority 39% responded by saying they had all the information they needed. We have found that the following information proved harder to find for some of our residents:

These were the top 5 problem areas

1. Testing for Coronavirus (30.3%)
2. Changes to health care services (e.g GP Practice, Pharmacy, Outpatients Appointments, Community Nursing visits) (24.8%)
3. Looking after my mental health or wellbeing (15.8%)
4. Help for people who do not use the internet (15.2%)
5. Accessing repeat medications (10.9%)

Followed by

6. Shielding people who are at very high risk of severe illness from Coronavirus (10.9%)
7. Accessing help in my local community (e.g getting groceries or picking up medication).(10.9%)
8. Self isolation (9.7%)
9. Managing existing physical health conditions (9.7%)
10. Both with 8.4% Advice for family carers & Social distancing

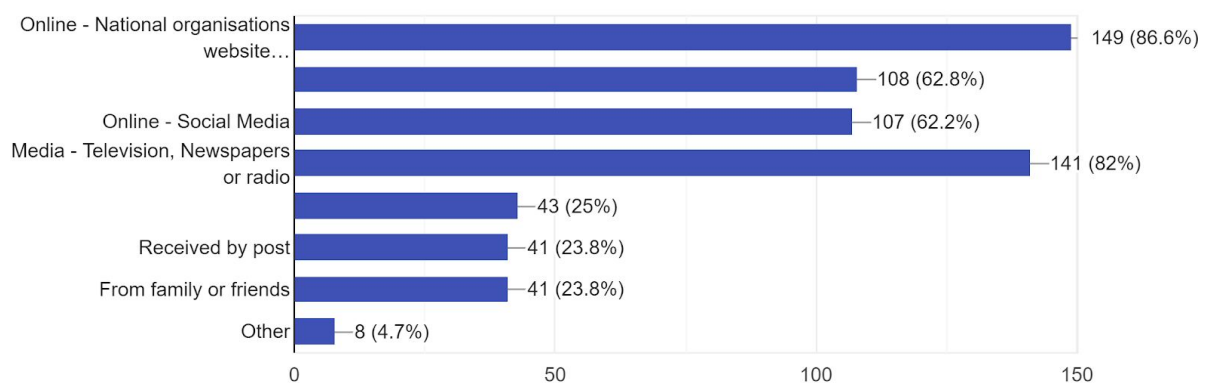


Residents have also told us they feel there was a lack of information in an easy read format and that they found advice about wearing facemasks confusing.

**Question 9** High percentages of residents said they were finding their information from trusted sources, but many reported getting their information via social media platforms (it was not clear from the survey if residents were using trusted sources for their information)

Where have you found information or advice about Coronavirus (Please select all that apply)

172 responses



**Question 10** We asked residents if they had found specific information or sources of information particularly helpful. Official advice from the NHS and statistics given out in news bulletins were mentioned alongside some local organisations including

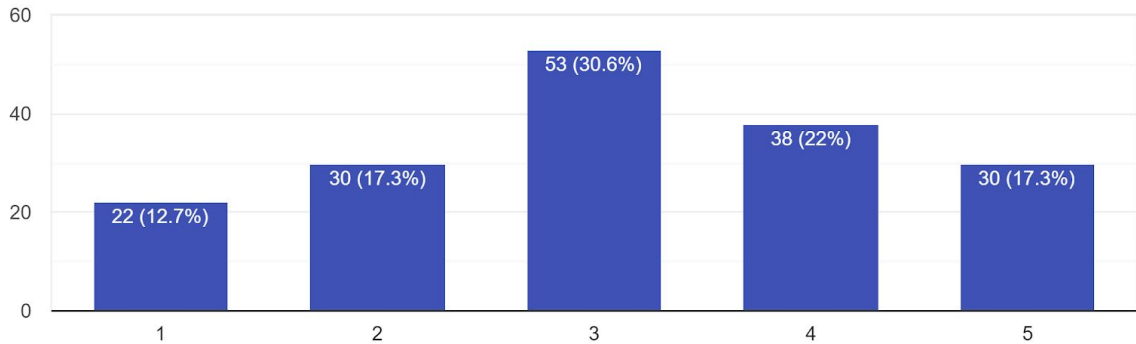
- Rotherham Carers facebook page
- Local Ward Councillors
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- Rotherham Community Hub
- Citizens Advice Rotherham
- Age UK Rotherham

**Question 11** 60% of respondents said they had not noticed any change in the way that their health care is delivered. 40% said they had experience changes.

**Question 12** We asked residents how the Coronavirus pandemic had impacted on their mental health 1 = no impact 5 = significant impact. Less than 13% said it had no impact at all, meaning 87% have been affected in some way by the pandemic.

How much of an impact has the Coronavirus pandemic had on your mental health?

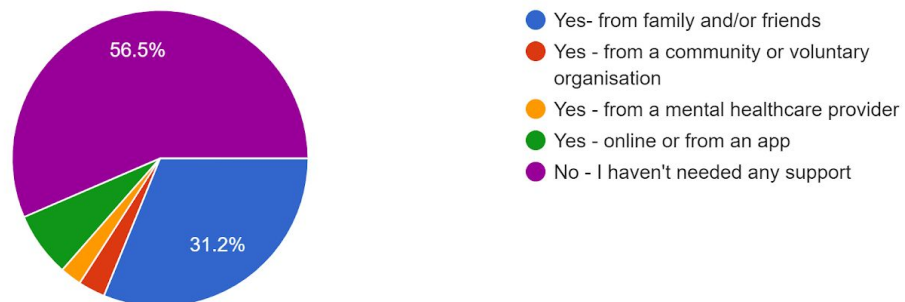
173 responses



**Question 13** Interestingly 56% of residents did not feel they needed support with their mental health during this time with 31% getting the support they need from family and friends. 7% found support online or via an app with the remaining 5% split equally between healthcare professionals and community or voluntary organisations.

Have you been able to access support for your mental health or wellbeing during this time?

170 responses



## Demographics

With regards to the demographic of residents surveyed, please see the charts in the Appendix. In brief, of those who answered our equality and monitoring questions we found:

- Two thirds were aged between 35 years and 55 years
- 82% were female
- 93% were White/British
- 52% were married
- 4% were pregnant
- 25% considered themselves to be carers.
- 15% considered themselves to be disabled.

## Discussion

Over 50% of residents felt that they had seen too much information about Coronavirus, however this survey was conducted on line and often people find it difficult to navigate the advertising and pop ups which appear on their screens. Some of these will undoubtedly be from official sources but they are not as easy to control as turning the TV off for instance.

37% of respondents felt that they were high risk due to existing health conditions, their age or because they were pregnant. 28% had received a letter or text from the NHS advising them to shield for 12 weeks. We have received calls from residents who felt that they should have been included in this category but had not received official communication from the NHS or their GP. We also had the other end of the spectrum where residents had received a letter but they did not currently see themselves as high risk and assumed they had been sent the letter due to a serious illness some years previous.

Over 30% had tried unsuccessfully to find information on testing for Coronavirus, again from the responses we are unable to ascertain if these were key workers, looking to find out if they were ok to continue or return to work or if they are self isolating with symptoms. The information on testing and the rate that tests are being carried out changes almost daily and this could be the cause of the lack of information.

64 people told us they had found support and useful information by using local services with many praising the voluntary and community sector for their help. Ward Councillors got several mentions for arranging projects within their own areas, mobilising volunteers and supporting our most vulnerable.

86% said their mental health has been affected in some way by the pandemic, most of the residents believed it was "low level" and dealt with it by talking about their issues with family and friends. Feelings of anxiety and depression have been brought about due to the uncertainty of job security, people facing redundancy or being furloughed for an undetermined amount of time. Citizens Advice Rotherham reported helping over 200 residents to complete a new claim for Universal Credit during April 2020 compared with 100 for the same period last year. There is also the buffer of a 3 month payment holiday being offered by many banks and building societies, according to Which more than 1.6 million homeowners have taken out mortgage payment holidays since applications opened in April <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Coronavirus: how to get a mortgage payment holiday – Which ...." 28 Apr. 2020, <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/04/coronavirus-how-to-apply-for-a-three-month-mortgage-payment-holiday/>. Accessed 5 May. 2020.

At some point in the future this will end and homeowners will possibly be faced with higher repayments which they could find unmanageable if their employment has ended.

There are also issues regarding food security which could be causing stress and anxiety amongst all ages. The early days of the pandemic saw residents panic buying, which left our elderly and vulnerable unable to access food either because they were apprehensive about going out to the supermarket, or there being no food left when they got there. There was also evidence of some vulnerable and high risk residents being unable to purchase non perishable goods in time due to being on tight budgets.

Although social distancing is needed to prevent the spread of the virus, this again causes food insecurities as many OAP lunch clubs are no longer operating, also contributing to social isolation causing loneliness and depression. Although vouchers are being distributed to families who were previously entitled to free school dinners, the scheme has been fraught with problems leaving some families in real difficulties.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

Although the survey has only been conducted online, which may have restricted the the responses we can draw conclusions and make possible recommendations on the following

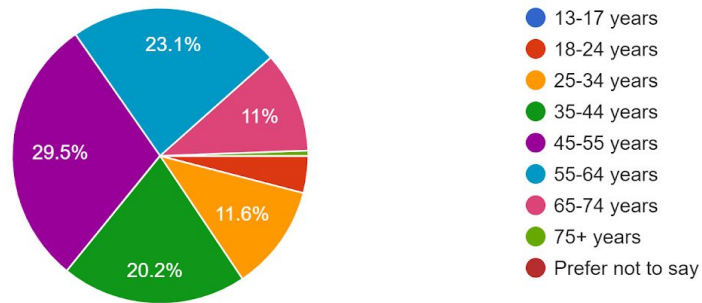
- ★ There is lots of information out there regarding the Coronavirus and it is a constant battle to ensure the information given out is current and from a trusted source. We can try and stop the spread by
  - Ensuring the information we share on social media is always from a trusted source (checking the verified blue tick symbol)
  - Look at creating a mythbuster section on our websites.
  
- ★ To look at the information available on testing for Coronavirus and ensure that this is shared with local services.
  - Inform resident who can apply to be tested
  - Inform residents that it is not an “antibody” test
  
- ★ To ensure where possible we publicise the change to health care services for example
  - Change to how Dental Services are being delivered
  - Changes to Maternity Services
  - Changes to how our GP Practices are operating.
  
- ★ Mental health services will be more in demand and support measures will need to be put in place to deal with an increase in mental ill health caused by a direct result of the pandemic including but not limited to
  - People with existing mental health problems who have been faced with a disruption to their treatment
  - Older adults who are facing increased social isolation and financial insecurity and loneliness
  - Bereaved residents, who feel they have been unable to say goodbye to their loved ones.
  - Children & Young People affected by school closures, food insecurities due to lack of free school meals, lack of routine
  - Frontline healthcare workers who face the fear and stress of coming into contact with the virus.

## Appendix

These charts give the demographic data from the people we surveyed, please note that not all respondents chose to answer all the equalities monitoring questions.

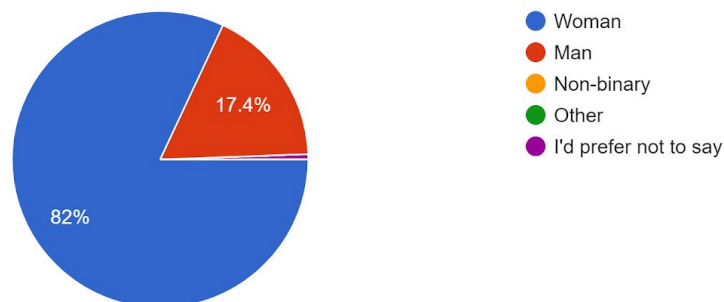
Please tell us which age category you fall into

173 responses



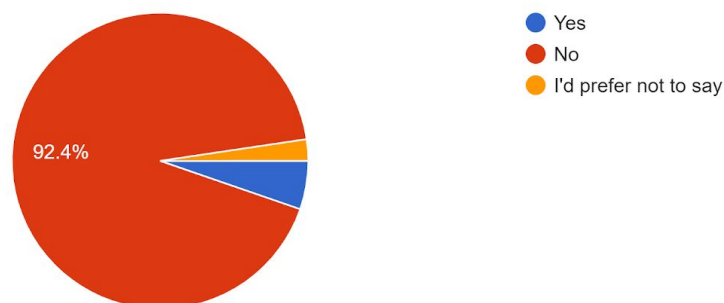
Please tell us which gender you identify with

172 responses



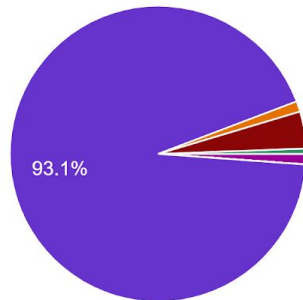
Is your gender different to the sex which was assigned to you at birth?

170 responses



### Please select your ethnic background

173 responses

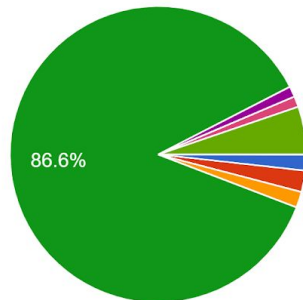


- Gypsy, Roma or Traveller
- Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups: Asian a...
- Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups: Black A...
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black C...
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Any oth...
- White: British/English/Northern Ireland...
- White: Irish
- White: Any other White background

▲ 2/3 ▼

### Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with:

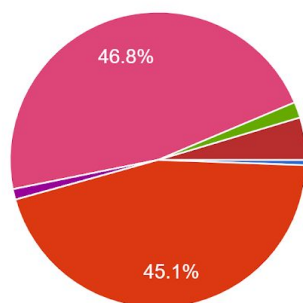
172 responses



- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual/Straight
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Other
- Prefer not to say

### Please tell us about your religion or beliefs:

173 responses

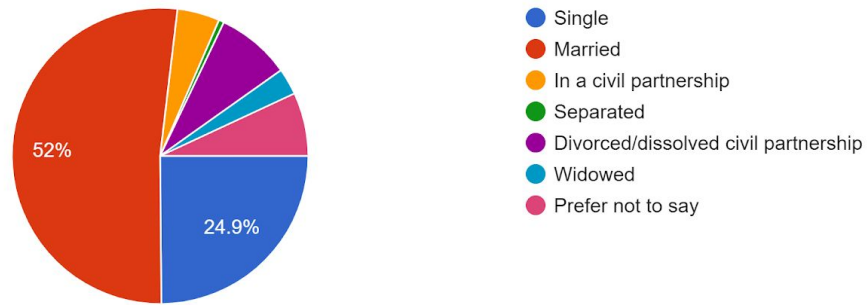


- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- No religion
- Other
- Prefer not to say



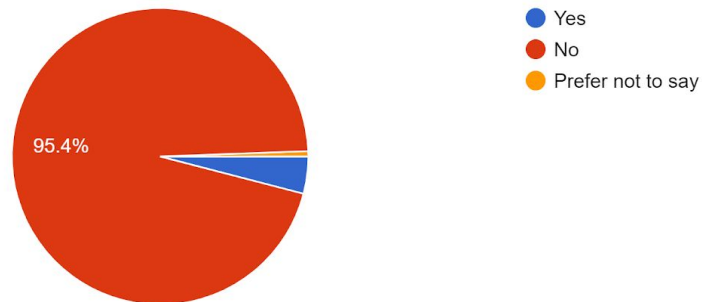
### Please tell us about your marital or civil partnership status

173 responses



### Are you currently pregnant or have you been pregnant in the last year?

173 responses



### Do you consider yourself to be a carer, have a disability or a long term health condition? (Please select all that apply)

173 responses

