

COVID-19 communications, rules, and guidance - data up to 22.9.20

The Healthwatch Tameside COVID-19 survey opened at the beginning of May 2020 and is still available for completion. The questions have been updated twice since, to allow answers to reflect changes to the rules and guidance, from lockdown and shielding, through easing, wearing masks, social distancing and now Test and Trace.

This report is looking at any answers to questions about the way messages have been communicated, and people's thoughts about the rules and guidance. It includes any survey responses up to 22.9.20. There are 530 completed surveys. Not everyone has answered every question.

Much of the information used in this report is found in the free-write answers to the questions. The questions have been worded to give people the chance to tell us about anything they want to, which may be connected to the question. This provides a rich source of varied data.

After this data was downloaded, an additional free-write box was added to question 1. Anyone who completes the survey after 22.9.20 is also asked **'Have you had symptoms and tried to get a test or not? Please tell us more about this.'** Future reports about this survey will include more information about testing. Some of the other questions have also been updated to include Test and Trace.

The first part of the report (from page 2) is mainly graphs, summarising answers to 'Yes' and 'No' questions, and our collation of the data.

The second part of the report (from page 6) is about what the free-write comments are telling us. There are lists of bullet points with numbers in brackets after some of the points. This shows how many people talked about this point.

The responses vary depending on when they were completed. Responses during lockdown may be different to those completed in August or September when rules/guidance had changed. In this brief report, we have not separated the free-write responses into months.

We have not included anything about access to health or care services or mental health in this report. Separate reports have been produced covering these topics, which can be found on our website at www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/healthwatch-tameside-publications. Paper copies can be requested by ringing 0161 667 2526.

The survey is still open and can be completed online at <https://www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/covid-19-survey>

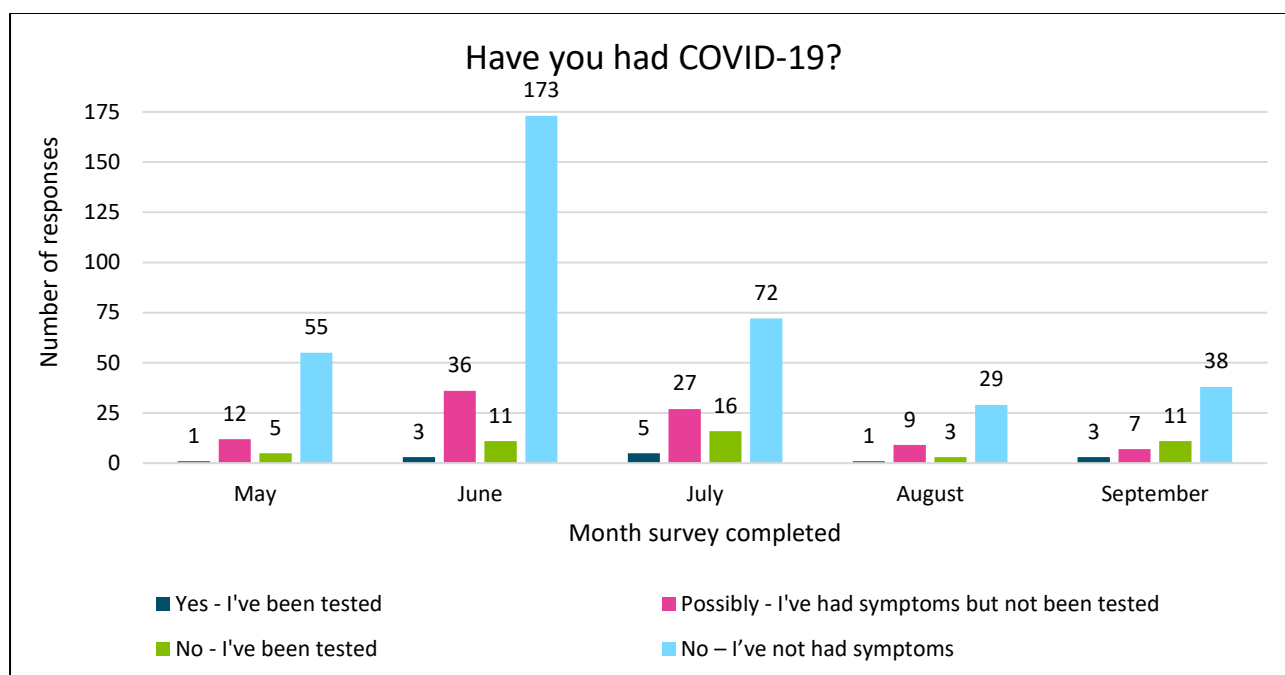
Paper copies are also available, or we can complete it with you over the phone. Give us a call on 0161 667 2526.

You can complete the survey again. With all the changes to rules, you may have more you want to say now, especially if you completed it early in the pandemic.

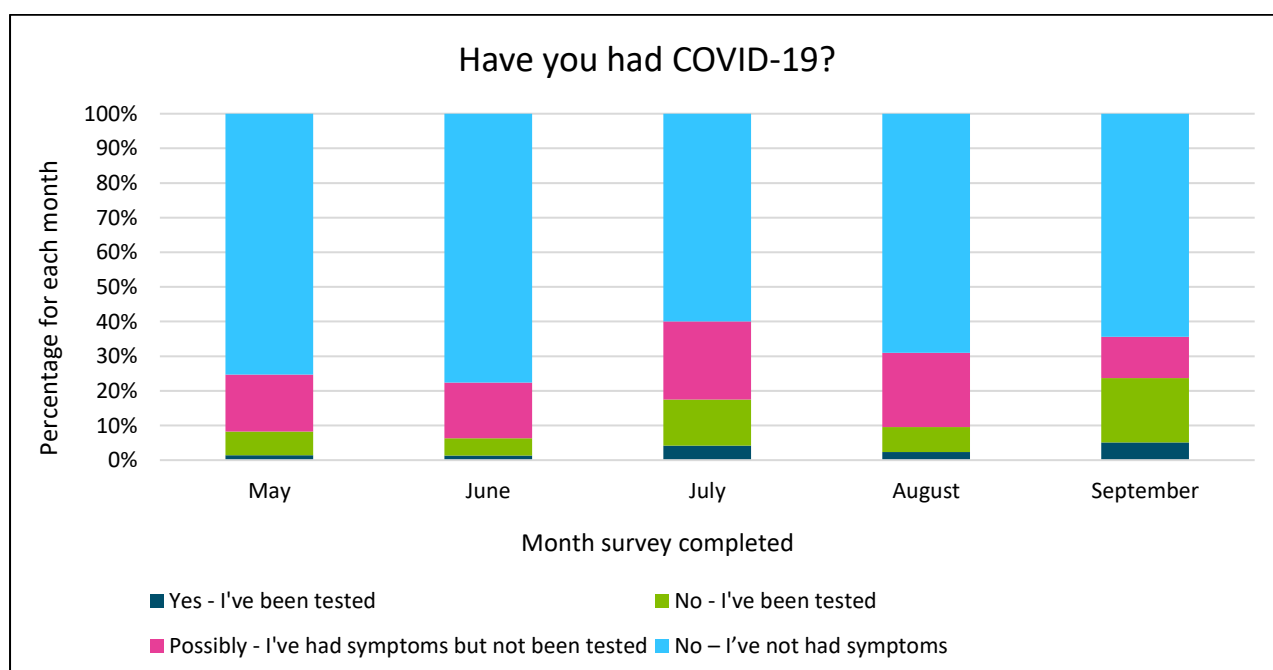
Part one

Have you had COVID-19?

This first question asks for a tick-box answer. Here are the results:



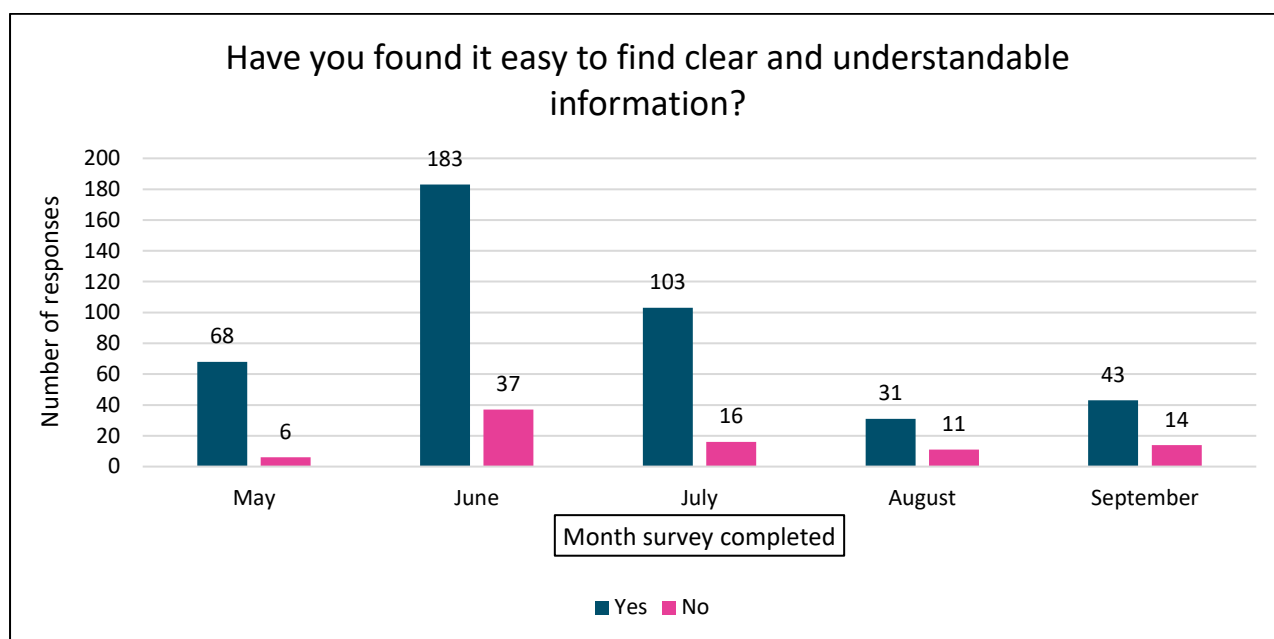
The number of surveys completed each month varies. The next graph shows the results for each month as a percentage. This shows the proportion of the surveys for each type of answer in a particular month.



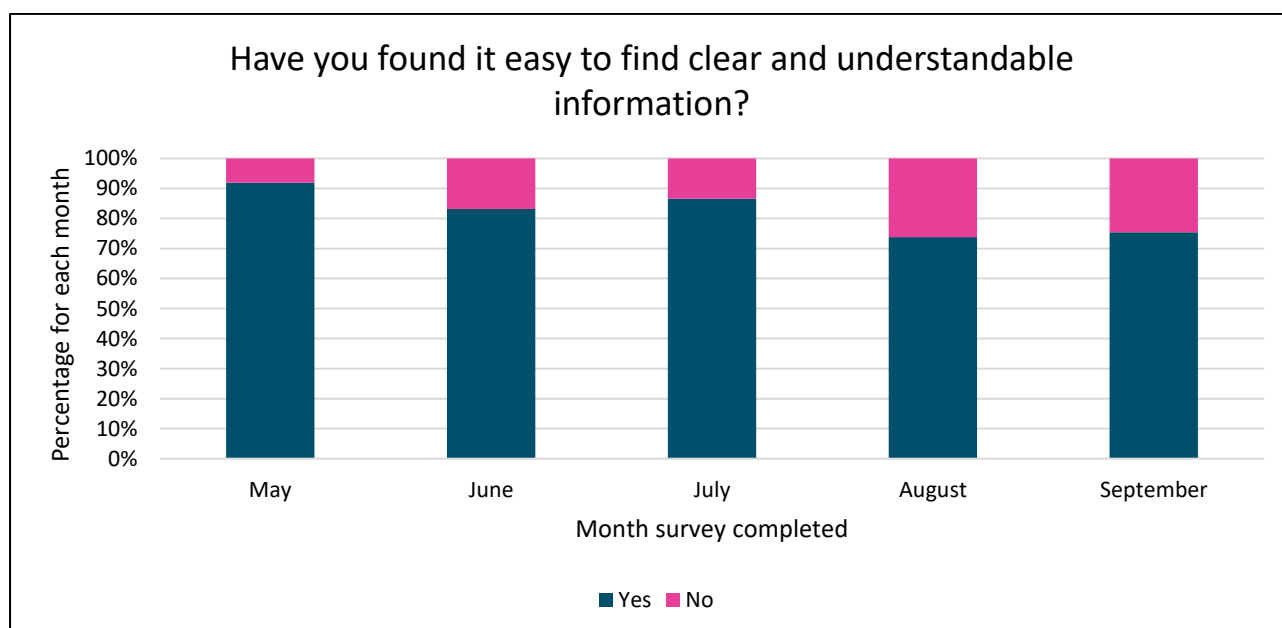
We can see that September (up to 22.9.20) has the highest proportion of people receiving tests (dark blue and green colours at the bottom of each column), and a lower proportion of people saying they have had symptoms but not been tested (pink colour).

July and August have a higher proportion of people who have had symptoms but not been tested (pink colour).

Question 2 asks ‘Have you found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep yourself and others safe during the COVID-19 pandemic?’



As with question 1, the number of completed surveys per month varies widely. This next chart shows the percentage of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ for each month.

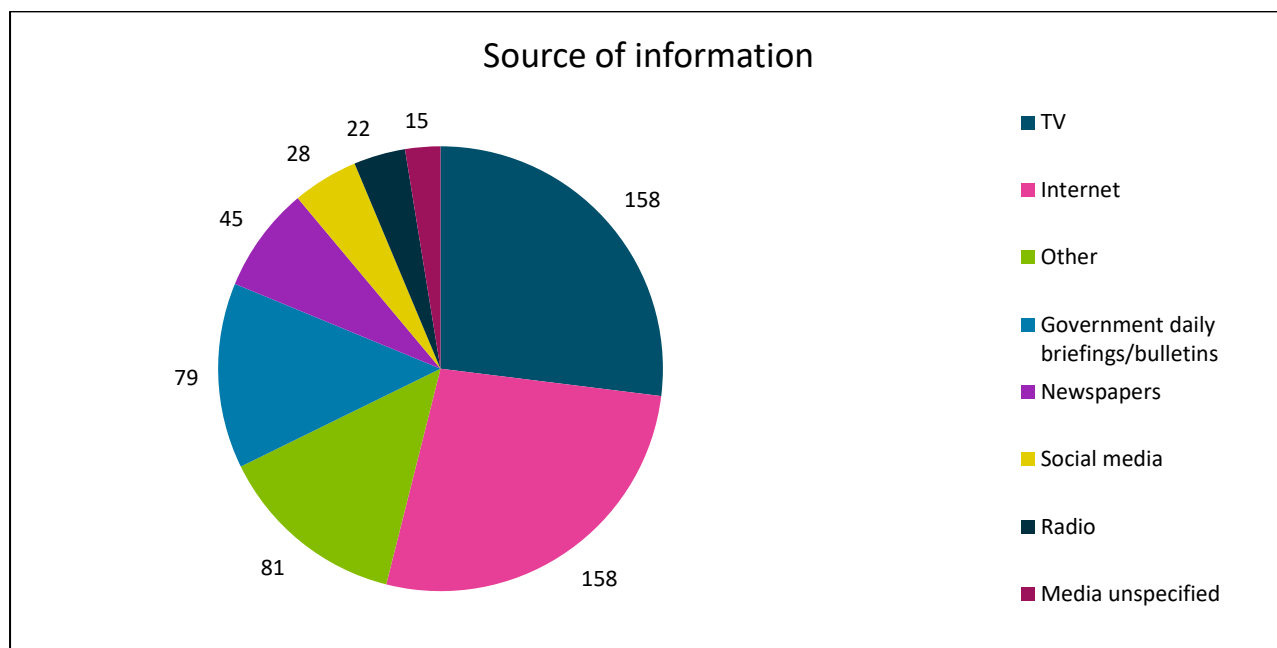


92% of people understood the messages in May. In June and July this proportion reduced. By August it had dropped to 74% and in September it was almost the same at 75%.

This question is followed by a request to ‘Please tell us more about this. Where did you look, and what was the most/least useful resource?’

More people answered ‘Yes’ than ‘No’ to the first part of the question. However, many of these people also mentioned areas of the communications where they had been confused. Some people did their own research (looking for different sources of information) or asked others to explain, to help them understand.

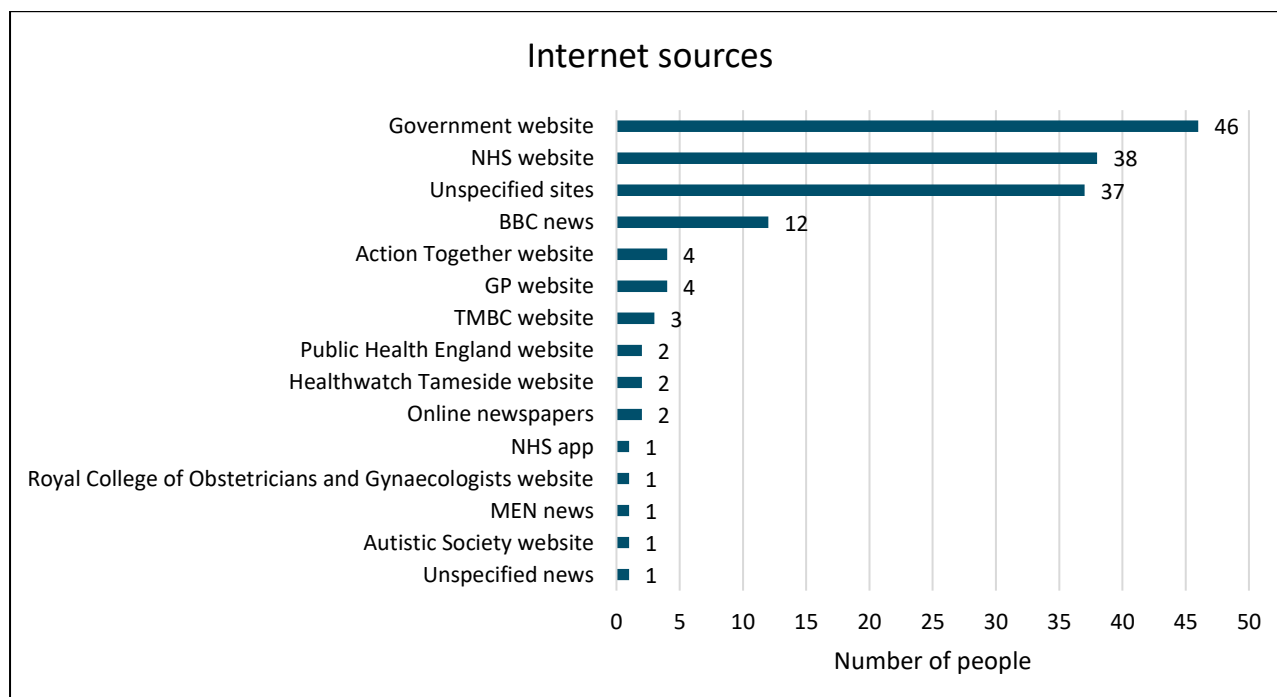
The next graph summarises the sources people mentioned.

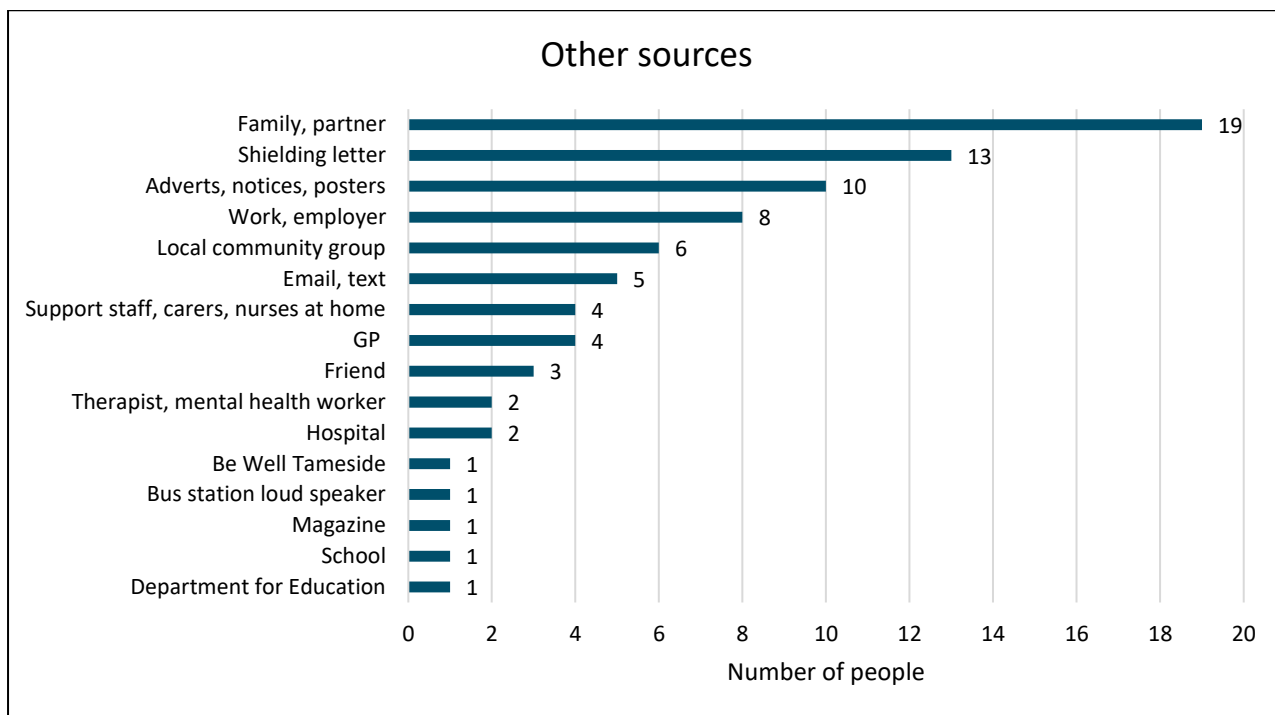


Where people talked about government briefings or bulletins, we do not know whether they watched these on the TV, or listened to the radio, or looked on the internet, etc. They have therefore been shown separately.

When people said they obtained information from the TV, approximately half of the responses talked about watching TV news and the rest did not specify. They could have been watching the government briefings, the news, or another programme including discussions about COVID-19.

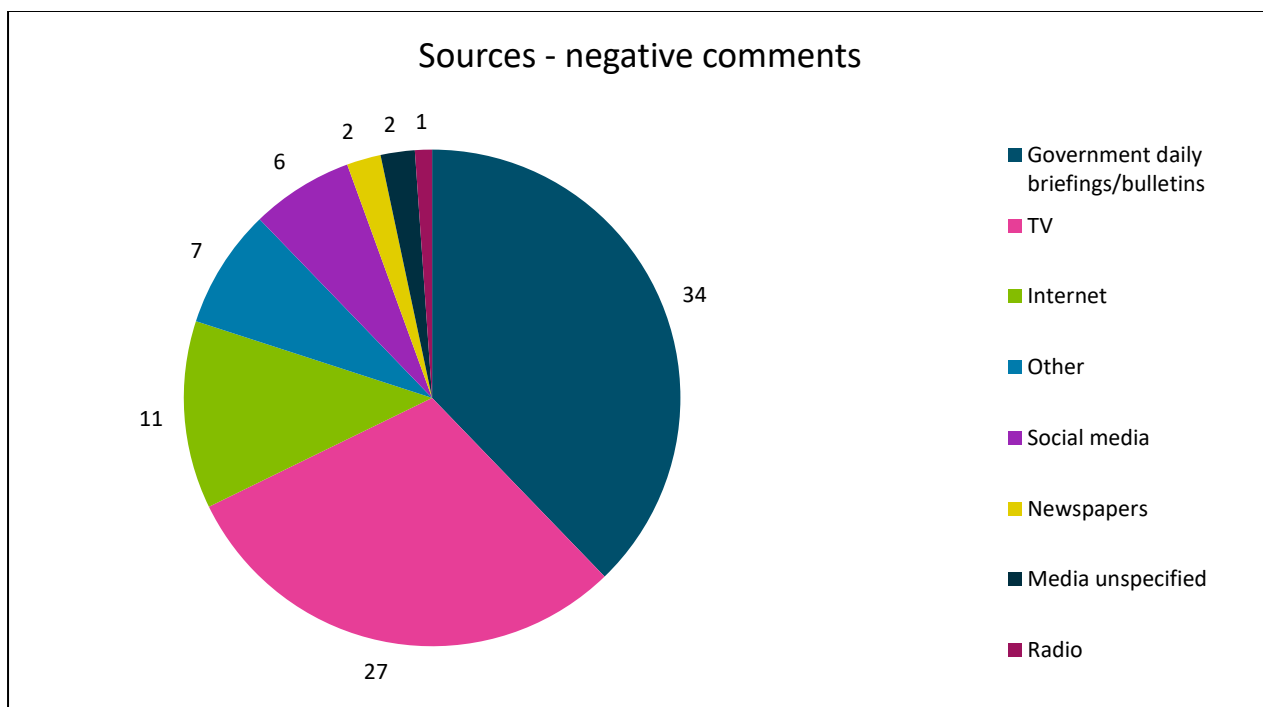
The next two graphs break down broad sources in the previous graph, to provide more detail about the sources people have used.





The graphs above included all sources, whether positive or negative reviews were received.

The next graph shows which sources people said were not always helpful. Not everyone identified these sources.



Part two

The next part of the report looks at the free-write comments from throughout the answers to the survey questions. The topics covered include:

- Sources
- Social distancing
- Wearing masks
- Testing
- Tracing
- Bubbles

Sources

The positive comments are generally brief, saying little more than identifying the source. More information has been provided when someone thinks a source was not as helpful as it could be.

Positive comments

- TV:
 - Information OK - hear it all the time (4 people).
 - Liked the daily reports.
- Internet:
 - National Autistic Society website - provided specific information and concise instructions.
 - NHS website pops up on every website connected to government e.g. HMRC.
 - NHS website useful for medical information.
 - Used to access scientific information.
- Newspapers - use trusted resources (2 people).
- Media:
 - General media provided frequent advice and clear information.
 - Used independent media to get to the truth.
- Other sources:
 - Children kept me up to date and provided guidance to keep safe (6 people).
 - Community group provided information in Gujarati.
 - Daily emails from work (in NHS) (3 people).
 - Given information by hospital about isolation guidelines.
 - Hattersley/Mottram group call-line set up to help if needed.
 - Speak limited English, but support staff and/or family helped me to understand (4 people).
- General comments:
 - Initial information for full lockdown was clear (5 people).
 - It is easy to find information, there is a lot out there (sometimes too much, overwhelmingly so, it's everywhere) (6 people).
 - The information is easy to understand (2 people).
 - Took time to research and check (3 people).
 - Used common sense (10 people).
 - Used trusted sources.

Mixed comments

- Daily briefings:
 - Answering questions was good, it kept me up to date. Then it stopped so now I don't know.
 - Ok but sometimes lacked clarity or were confusing when delivering information (11 people). One person stopped watching.
- Gov.uk website fairly clear but not always in line with other messages.
- Don't watch or listen to the news. Got overview on Google - don't want details, just plain English what to do and not do.
- Full lockdown straight forward, but more confusing as time goes on (3 people).

Negative comments

The negative answers to this question suggest that people want information that is clear and easy to understand. They do not want messages which cause confusion for many. The feedback below is shown by source.

- Government briefings/bulletins - many phrases used including (29 people):
 - Different ministers say different things - they don't know what it's all about
 - Hard to understand and remember
 - Need clear instructions
 - Need honesty
 - Need straight answers
 - Should be ashamed, causing panic and fear
 - So many changes, so often
 - Too many late decisions
- TV/news - words/phrases used include (31 people):
 - Changes all the time
 - Complicated
 - Confusing messages
 - Confusing numbers and graphs
 - Contradictory
 - Create fear, stockpiling food and irrational behaviour
 - Hard to keep up to date
 - Hardly credible at times
 - I've not got a clue
 - Need proper answers
 - Not clear
 - Repetitive
 - Unsatisfactory
- Internet:
 - Don't have access to the internet so cannot access the information (3 people).
 - Gov.uk website hard to navigate and get information, especially as lockdown changed - confusing information, or no information (4 people).
- Social media:
 - Sometimes unhelpful, provides misinformation (3 people).

- Letters - phrases include (2 people):
 - Letter from Boris 6 weeks after the outbreak said the same as the TV
 - Only received council letter in June - too late
- Media - phrases include (6 people):
 - Journalists questions a waste of time - already been answered or show no common sense
 - Not balanced enough
 - Scaring everyone instead of just giving facts
 - Should give best advice
 - Useless
- Public Health - would like more information from them as national information often contrary to what is going on locally e.g. R-rate.
- Public information adverts (2 people):
 - Change of wording on 'Stay at home' advert poor and confusing
 - Films not hard hitting enough
- Shielding - phrases include (7 people):
 - Dates kept changing
 - Didn't receive letter although vulnerable
 - No information, national or local, about help available
 - Received no contact from GP or TMBC as a vulnerable person - feel left out
- Work - information provided was confusing.
- Source unspecified - phrases include (24 people):
 - A lot of confusing information at the beginning
 - After lifting of lockdown confusing, causing anxiety
 - Causing panic where there does not need to be - makes me angry
 - Contradictory advice
 - Guidance not clear for pregnant women
 - Misleading information
 - Too many mixed messages
- General:
 - Comments made about how the media and news can increase anxiety and affect mental health (5 people).
 - How could after the relaxation of the rules be a good time to tell people who were shielding that they could go out?
 - Not everyone can read newspapers, etc. - people may be blind, never have learned to read, or English is a second language and spoken only.
 - Not everyone watches the news.
 - Uncertainties (4 people):
 - Not always sure what applied to me
 - Not sure about where we can go
 - Wasn't sure what to do if I caught it and who to tell
 - Would be helpful if information in other languages (3 people).

Social distancing

The majority of people understand the reasons for social distancing. There are different opinions about how and where this should happen.

Positive comments:

- Do social distancing as best we can on a mobility scooter.
- It works when everyone follows the rules.
- It's important to have rules to protect the public. They should be managed strictly (8 people).
- Police helped when neighbours broke guidelines.
- Should keep to the 2 metre rule and continue to socially distance, especially in supermarkets and on public transport (9 people).
- Social distancing makes it quicker and easier to shop.
- Social distancing signs in yellow and black are helpful colours for people with sight issues.

Negative comments:

Many people commented on the impact of not being able to see family, either in their own homes or by visiting others. Comments included feelings of isolation and loneliness, and the effect on stress, anxiety, and mental health. This was across all ages, not just the elderly.

Some people said they were losing their independence, by having people do shopping, etc. for them whilst they had to stay at home.

Some people say they are losing their mobility by not being able to swim, etc. and having to spend more time at home.

The following comments are people's thoughts about the rules/guidance:

- Complacency (9 people):
 - People are using confusion as an excuse to do what they want instead of what they should do
 - Think the rules have gone out of the window as nobody is socially distancing
 - Too many families mixing and not isolating
 - Too many people have no regard for their own health or others
- Have sight problems, and social distancing is difficult. Makes me anxious so I do not go out as much (2 people).
- It is hard to enforce in supermarkets (2 people).
- Local people made fun of a person who was strict about not letting people into their home/garden.
- Not everyone respects the health needs of others to keep their distance.
- Social activities:
 - Child says they sometimes forget about social distancing when they are playing out.

- Hard to understand why you can go to the pub but not visit grandchildren or elderly parents (2 people).
- Pubs are open but cancer wards are closed - a disgrace.
- See lots of children close together - they think they are immune (2 people).
- Think social distancing is a joke (2 people).

Suggestions:

- 2 metres is not enough - may as well get rid of it.
- Keep social distancing (3 people):
 - For some time
 - Into June/July
 - Until epidemic goes completely, or a remedy is found
- Social distancing could be reduced slightly.

Wearing masks

The majority of people agree with wearing masks. There are different thoughts about when and where this should be required. There were difficulties obtaining masks for some people initially.

Positive comments:

- Feel better wearing a mask, and when others are wearing masks.
- Have to wear mask for work - not nice but that's the way it is (4 people).
- Masks not comfortable, but if NHS staff can wear them all shift, I just have to put up with it (5 people).
- Plenty of advice available if needed.
- Some people are exempt - their comments include (3 people):
 - Try to wear mask but if struggling to breathe have to drop below nose
 - Can't wear mask but wear visor instead
- Wear a mask to protect myself and others (2 people).

Negative comments:

- Affordability of masks is an issue (4 people).
- Child said they hadn't tried wearing a mask yet, so not sure how they feel about it.
- Concerns about the way masks are used:
 - How single use masks are discarded.
 - Masks such as scarves won't help - need triple layer or medical (2 people).
 - More education needed about use, how to put on, where to put them when you take them off, hygiene, washing after each use (5 people).
- GP said not to wear mask, but worried about what people might say or do.
- Mandating wearing masks is against human rights laws.
- Masks are a joke
- Not everyone is wearing them. Comments include (9 people):
 - At the school gates

- Especially in supermarkets
- Needs to be monitored
- Non-compliance is a joke
- Not enforceable
- Problems whilst wearing masks:
 - Breathing difficulties due to asthma, respiratory conditions (6 people).
 - Can't see properly behind a mask.
 - Masks make communication difficult for people who lip-read (4 people).
 - Masks steam up all the time when wearing glasses (3 people).
- Questions about wearing masks include (4 people):
 - Is it proved masks help?
 - Is the evidence conclusive?

Suggestions:

- Masks wouldn't be good for schools.
- Should have been compulsory (10 people):
 - From the start
 - Months ago
- Should wear masks outside.
- Shouldn't be forced to wear masks - makes mental health worse.
- Would rather things opened up with compulsory masks.

Testing

Availability of testing has varied during the pandemic. Initially tests were only available in certain situations e.g. to people in hospital. If a survey was completed in May, the comments may be different to a survey completed more recently. All comments are included here:

Positive comments:

- Booked drive through test online.
- Recently had a test and waiting for the result.

Negative comments:

- A lack of protection and testing, despite what the government said.
- Annoyed that social care staff in supported living not offered tests when they can't socially distance at work.
- Not clear online how to get tested and where to go.
- Person who does not speak English well - no explanation what to do next as couldn't read the card.
- Sent positive test result by text but can't use phone. Had to wait for someone to read it.
- Test results lost so don't know if positive or negative.

Suggestions:

- Should offer door to door testing.
- Testing should be available for those self-isolating or shielding. If negative, could then see partner.
- Tests should be available sooner.
- Would like an antibody test to see if I've been exposed to COVID.

Tracing

Tracing has only been introduced recently. We do not have many comments yet.

- One person thought it was a breach of privacy laws.
- One person was interested in seeing the new app, thinking it was a good idea, before it was launched.

Bubbles

The concept of 'bubbles' was introduced part-way through the pandemic. Many of the comments talk about isolation and loneliness. This also applies where two people live together and cannot form a 'bubble' with anyone.

We only have a few comments:

- A lot easier since able to form a 'bubble' with family (2 people).
- Reluctant to visit dad who lives independently, even when 'bubbles' introduced. He lives in a home attached to a care home and is vulnerable.
- Should scrap 'bubbles'. They are useless.
- Stay in a family 'bubble' so able to look after father.

General comments

We have many comments which cross more than one of the topics mentioned in this report, and/or are general in nature. Some of these are positive, some are negative, and some are suggestions about possible changes which could be made.

Positive comments:

- Have completed the daily test for Zoe.
- It's new to everyone. We just want answers.
- Like the screens that have been put up in supermarkets (2 people).
- Makes you aware of going out and what you can do.
- No problem - to keep everybody safe. Will continue to stick to recommended guidelines (11 people).
- Social distancing, hand sanitiser and masks have become second nature - the new norm (2 people).

- Some people say they do not go out anyway, so the rules have not made a difference to them. Family do shopping and other errands.
- Will stay in lockdown until it is safe.

Negative comments:

- Concerned about:
 - The impact on older/vulnerable family members of children and young people taking the virus into their homes.
 - Children going back to school (9 people).
 - The mass use of sanitiser.
 - Civil liberties.
 - Seeing people at demonstrations when pandemic not over.
- Fed up with it going on so long. Not sure it isn't one big con.
- If you've not got symptoms, people are expected to use their common sense.
- Lockdown:
 - Needed to stay in lockdown with restrictions for longer. Things eased too rapidly (6 people).
 - Concerned that some areas are not locked down and next to those that are, and people are moving between.
 - Needed to take action with lockdown sooner (6 people).
 - Care homes should have been locked down straight away with the staff.
 - Anyone needing home care should have been put in a hotel with their carer in lockdown. Would have saved PPE costs.
 - Non-supermarket shops which sell a range of products were allowed to stay open during lockdown if they sold food. They should not have been allowed to sell non-food items e.g. gardening items. This made it very busy.
- Rules:
 - Wish rules were more enforced (5 people).
 - Unhappy about people breaking the rules (13 people):
 - I get cross
 - Concerned
 - Increases my anxiety
 - People too complacent
 - People let social distancing lapse
 - People carry on as normal
 - People who test positive have been in shops, pubs, etc. before test and spread disease'
 - Rules need to be followed by everyone in the community. It makes it 'harder' or 'scary' for people who want to socially distance and wear masks to get out e.g. do shopping, when people do not follow rules (7 people).
 - When ministers and advisors flout the rules, it makes people mistrust and lose faith (4 people).
 - It is hard to keep teenagers indoors and following the rules.
- Shielding and isolation:
 - As a blind person need someone to take me out, so can't go anywhere. Got a mask, but not sure it will help. Too frightened to go out and getting more fearful.

- I'm shielding - seem to have been forgotten going forwards.
- Scared to be living on my own - if I become ill, no-one will be aware.
- My age group and above have been forgotten and just told to stay in. We could have been used to help. We have friends and neighbours who haven't seen anyone for weeks (2 people).
- Used to volunteer but have had to stop to isolate or shield, and I miss this (14 people).
- Unable to understand (3 people):
 - People with dementia do not grasp the concept
 - Concerned for children and those who don't understand
- Unhappy at the way the government have handled the pandemic (16 people).

Suggestions:

- It's changed the world we live in (2 people):
 - People will need to adapt to living with it
 - People need to stop rebelling and adapt to the times
- Keeping safe:
 - Everyone needs to be more considerate of asymptomatic transmission (2 people).
 - We mustn't believe we are immune because we haven't experienced symptoms.
 - People's lives are more important than the economy. 'Safety is paramount.' (3 people).
 - Until vaccine released and health and safety of society changes, keep to oneself.
 - Keep rules in place until it is safe to relax them.
- Offer door to door behaviour change like in Oldham.
- Protection:
 - Would not like social distancing and masks to be permanent.
 - Hospitals should keep masks, gloves, etc. after the pandemic is over.
 - Should keep sanitising stations at front doors of shops, GPs, etc. (2 people).
 - Like to see more temperature checks before entering public places.
- Public reaction:
 - Low infection/deaths - get back to normal and stop the drama. Stress and fear not good for mental health.
 - People are over-reacting, and this should stop (3 people).
- Think herd immunity would have been a better option.
- Would like reassurance about the safety of going out to local places such as markets and libraries.