

NIHR Greater Manchester PSTRC

## Plain English Publication Summary

Publication: [“We want to live a little longer and our family want us around”: A Summative Content Analysis of Adherence to COVID-19-Related Guidelines using the Theoretical Domains Framework](#)

### Publication details (Vancouver format)

Leather, JZ, Keyworth, C, Epton, T, Goldthorpe, J, Ulph, F, Armitage, CJ. “We want to live a little longer and our family want us around”: A Summative Content Analysis of Adherence to COVID-19-Related Guidelines using the Theoretical Domains Framework. British Journal of Health Psychology. 2022. Doi: 10.1111/bjhp.12591

### What are the most important findings/conclusions in this paper? Why are they important?

Most of the British public could follow government COVID-19-related instructions provided they had enough resources, for example,

- food/medication deliveries
- access to open spaces
- social support (from family, or volunteers)
- positive beliefs (for example, the belief that adhering to instructions protects vulnerable people).

However, 1 in 5 people faced obstacles, most often in their environment (for example, if they had no car, or due to crowding), or socially (for example, other people wouldn't keep their distance). Others reported personal barriers, including forgetting, not trusting the guidance, or misunderstanding the instructions.

### What did you do?

We collected data from over 2,000 UK adults during the first UK lockdown in April 2020 through an online survey. We asked members of the public to tell us about the challenges they were facing in following the government guidance about COVID-19. This allowed people to write about specific things that influenced their behaviour. We analysed the responses by searching for key words related to the guidance (e.g.: “essential”), and used something called a ‘behavioural science framework’ to categorise the different challenges, as well as the enablers (the things that helped people to follow instructions), described by participants.

**Why did you conduct this research?**

We did this research to explore how members of the public understood what it meant to follow, or adhere to, the government COVID-19 guidelines during the first lockdown. Other research about adherence to COVID-19 measures has used direct questioning methods, which provide little insight into the ways that people understand and act upon government health guidance. Also, these studies aren't based on behaviour change theories which are used to help decide which drivers (the things that motivate people to behave the way they do) to target in interventions. To address this research gap, we used a behavioural science framework to understand people's thoughts on following COVID-19-related guidance.

**What was known before your paper was published?**

During the first UK lockdown, the government used behavioural measures to slow down the spread of COVID-19. While these measures were effective, members of the public were not always able to follow all of the guidance. For example, people were easily able to wash their hands more often, but could not always maintain the 2-metre distance from other people when out in public. Some studies identified factors that influenced how well people were able to follow the guidance, such as beliefs about risk and caring responsibilities, but there was little information about which factors were most important to members of the public.

**What is next? What is the potential impact of the work in this paper? What will change as a result of this paper (or the study it describes)?**

Our analysis used the Theoretical Domains Framework (TDF) to identify targets for change. This means that public health researchers and policymakers can use something called the Behaviour Change Wheel to guide the design of interventions to meet these targets. For example, the TDF analysis showed that environmental and social barriers were the most common reasons for not following instructions, because these are not easy to change. Future work needs to be targeted towards policymakers and government health bodies to address barriers at a policy level.

**Does this paper link in to a particular study / project? If so, please summarise the study and explain how this paper has improved understanding, or will move the study forward.**

This study was part of a wider project that surveyed adults during the first UK lockdown. The project found that 80% of people who followed the guidelines experienced challenges, including changes to daily routine, and mental health challenges. The survey also identified a need to boost people's capabilities, opportunities, and motivations to adhere to COVID-19-related guidance. This paper extends the work by providing more detail about people's experiences of adhering to behavioural measures, and identifying relevant barriers and enablers that could be targeted by public health policymakers to support people to follow future government guidance.