

Insights to understand residents thoughts and experiences of Test, Trace, Isolate

What helps, what gets in the way of being able to self-isolate?

London Borough of Newham
University of East London
1 February 2021

Case Examples

I spoke to a gentleman on Tuesday he is a family of 8, he has just started a new job and is on probation and so is not entitled to sick pay. He made an application for £500 isolation payment and was informed he wasn't entitled to it. I gave him other options by contacting Micro grants and Money works, he was so pleased as he can't afford not to have any income coming in for the next couple of weeks. He was really pleased and thanked me for all my assistance.

Spoke to a gentleman who had COVID. He has no recourse to public funds, has 3 kids and was really worried about how his family will feed themselves during isolation. I gave him the COVID-19 help line number and referred him to Newham Food Alliance and for an emergency micro grant.

Spoke to couple (60 & 62) who mentioned that they need help with rent payment as the husband is self-employed and they have never claimed any benefit before so do not know what to do. The wife is feeling really distressed about it. I advised about applying for Council tax reduction and gave her the link from the handbook about help with rent.

Case was trying to access the £500 support, but the team who authorise the payment are telling her as the track and trace haven't completed something on the system to show that she has engaged with them (I imagine her CTAS is not showing as complete) she could not obtain the grant. We managed to find her in our system, complete CTAS with her and give her the 8 character number required to re-apply for the grant which was successful.

Research objectives

1. To understand residents' thoughts and experiences of the COVID-19 test, trace, and isolate journey: what helps, what gets in the way
2. To use this knowledge to identify practical steps that can be taken at a local level and, where required, at a national policy level to enable residents to engage with test, trace, isolate

This research was rooted in our everyday experience of developing locally the test, trace, isolate support system

The focus of this presentation is to share residents thoughts and experiences of what helps, what gets in the way of being able to **isolate** if they have COVID-19 or are a contact of someone with COVID-19

About Newham

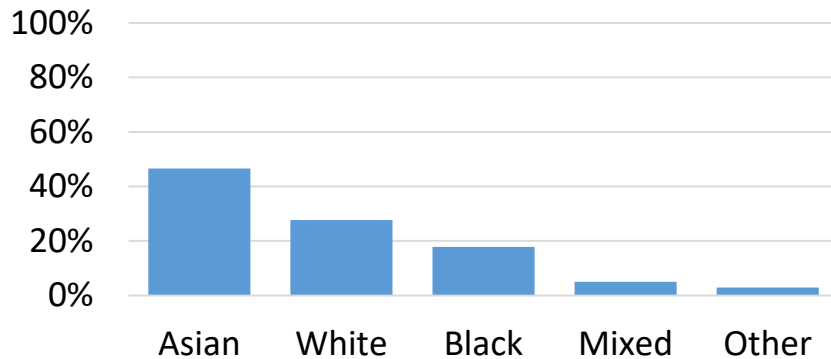


- The population of Newham is relatively young, highly diverse, **often substantially deprived with a high degree of mobility**
- **Weekly earnings (median) are lower** for residents in Newham than London
 - Newham's Household Panel Survey established that (pre-pandemic), **27% of employees in the borough are paid under the national statutory minimum wage, which was approx. 36,000 residents in 2018**
- The borough's residents have great ethnic diversity and residents from many different ethnic groups make up $\approx 70\%$ of the overall population of Newham

Ethnicity in Newham

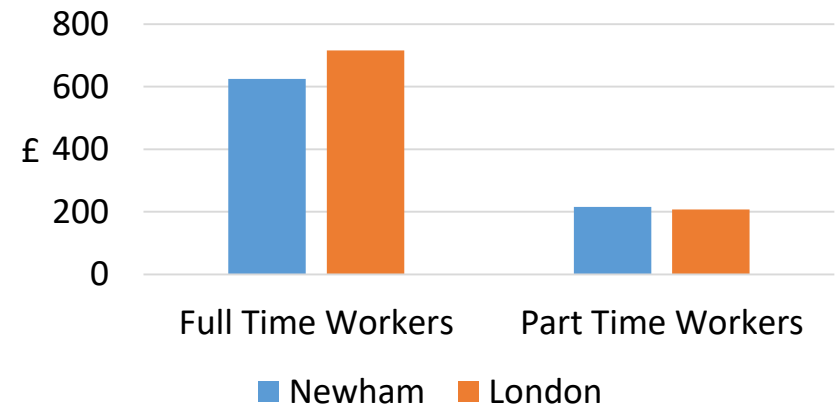
Source: GLA Population Projections

2021



Gross median weekly pay - 2020

Source: NOMIS



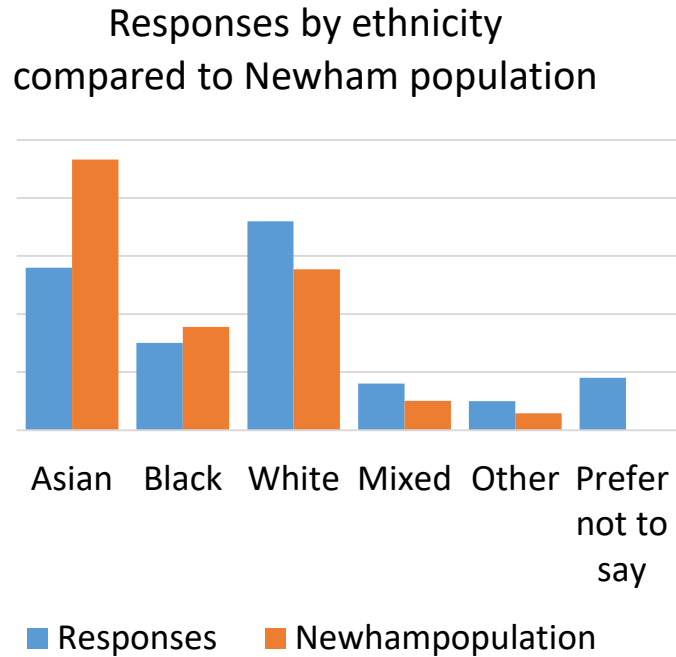
Focus Groups

- Total of 3 focus groups (25 participants including some repeat)
- Participants were Newham Health Champions
- Themes from focus groups helped inform survey questions

Survey

- 129 surveys completed
- Mix of close-ended and open ended questions
- Dec 2020 – survey was completed by residents via various dissemination routes including VCFS organisations, LBN social media, Health Champions
- Dec/Jan 2021 – survey was completed by residents who telephoned Newham's COVID-19 Helpline

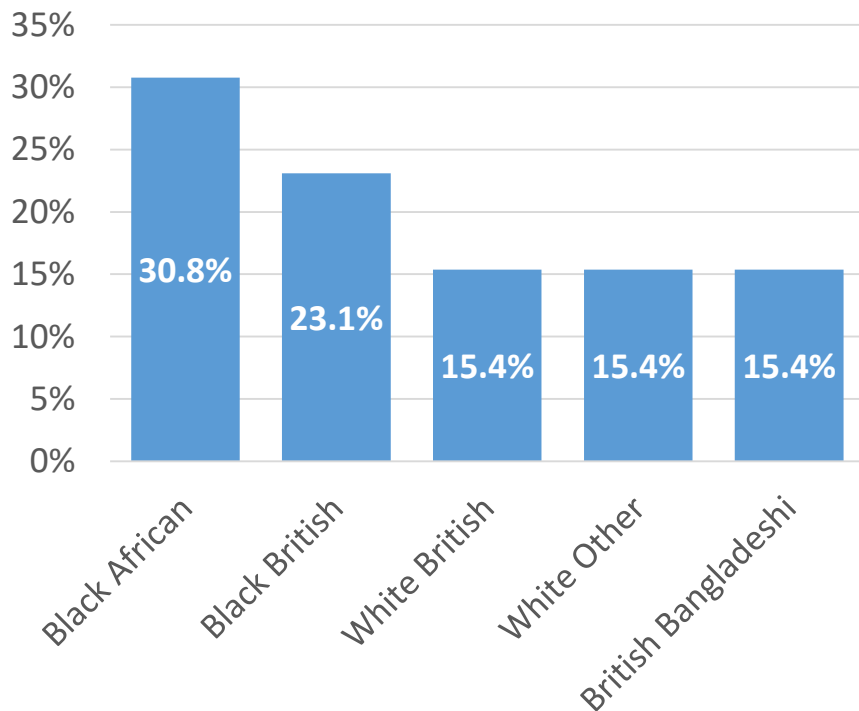
Overview of survey responses: demographics



- Total of 129 residents responded to the survey.
- Around two-thirds of the participants were female (61%).
- Three-quarters of the participants were between 19 and 60 years old, and 16% were over 60.
- People of White ethnicity were over-represented (36% of participants compared to 28% of Newham population).
- People of Asian ethnicity were under-represented at 28% compared to 45% of Newham population.

Overview of Focus groups: demographics

Focus Group Participants



- A total of 25 Newham residents participated in the focus groups.
- Just over half (56%) of the participants were female.
- Over half of the participants identified as Black British / Black African (54%), a third were White (31%), and 15% were British Bangladeshi.

Insights from the Focus Groups

What helps/what gets in the way of being able to isolate if they have COVID-19, or are a contact of someone with COVID-19

Focus Groups - What gets in the way of being able to isolate?



When asked for their thoughts and experiences of what gets in the way of being able to isolate if they have COVID-19, or are a contact of someone with COVID-19 the main themes mentioned by Newham residents (in 3 focus groups) included:

Focus group themes: what gets in the way of being able to isolate?	No. of times mentioned
Lack of support (in many contexts including from employers, need of food deliveries, financial fears, fear of losing employment)	15
Mental wellbeing impacts of isolation/the virus itself	12
Fear of break-up of families incl. how to cope, and the logistical implications of isolation on living arrangements (e.g. space needed to isolate within households)	8

Focus Groups - What helps/ what gets in the way of being able to isolate?

Unravelling the themes – what residents said

Lack of support: Financial worries and fear of losing employment

- *“I think the **self-employed** particularly... if you're on a low income, then **you don't turn up for work, you're the first on the list to be sacked**”*
- *“If the person had income like a month to a thousand or two thousand pound and if he leaves the job because of self-isolating all those things and **I don't think so, 500 pound will be enough for him. I think it's very little amount to survive, you know.**”*
- *“I think a really big thing is money, frankly, if you know, you have no savings and you're relying on your income and you're employed, not retired, so you don't have a pension, **you have very little option but to go out there and earn the money**”*

Focus Groups - What helps/ what gets in the way of being able to isolate?

Unravelling the themes – what residents said

Lack of support: Need for help with food deliveries etc.

- *“Daily shopping such as bread and milk, letters that need posting, items needed from the pharmacy, getting the dog to the vets”*
- *“ We were not ill but we had help from friends and our fridge has never been so full”*

Lack of support from employers: Speaking about the reaction of their employer when their child needed to isolate as a close contact and developed mild symptoms:

“I said, any chance I can get 14 days leave or like self-isolation. They said no, as long as you don't have any symptoms and said, I can't lie to them if I don't develop any symptoms. I can't lie that I developed symptoms since I didn't have anything....”

Focus Groups - What helps/ what gets in the way of being able to isolate?



Cont. Unravelling the themes – what residents said

Impact of isolation and the virus itself on mental wellbeing

- *“When her isolation period was finished, she felt that she needed to stay in isolation because her neighbours....let other people know that she had the virus and **she felt embarrassed.... she really is struggling with getting back outside.**”*
- *“When she was in self-isolation, my child, because she's still little, so she was in the in her room and **she was very upset** because we didn't give her any chance to see us, because she was restricted... So she felt very upset in that room... **me and my wife cried...**”*

Focus Groups – Implications for getting tested



During the conversations with focus group participants the themes which emerged around **what gets in the way of being able to isolate also plays a role in deterring people from getting tested**. For example, fear of losing employment and not being able to afford to isolate deters people from getting tested.

As one resident commented:

“And I was telling him....have you or got any symptoms of COVID? And they say to me, Oh yeah, I got I think I got it. And I said why you not calling NHS for any testing. And he said, no, I don't want to because in case I'm positive what I have to self-isolate. And also I couldn't do that because I am under no [recourse] to public fund and I don't get any benefits. So if I lose my job I have how can I survive? How my family can survive...”

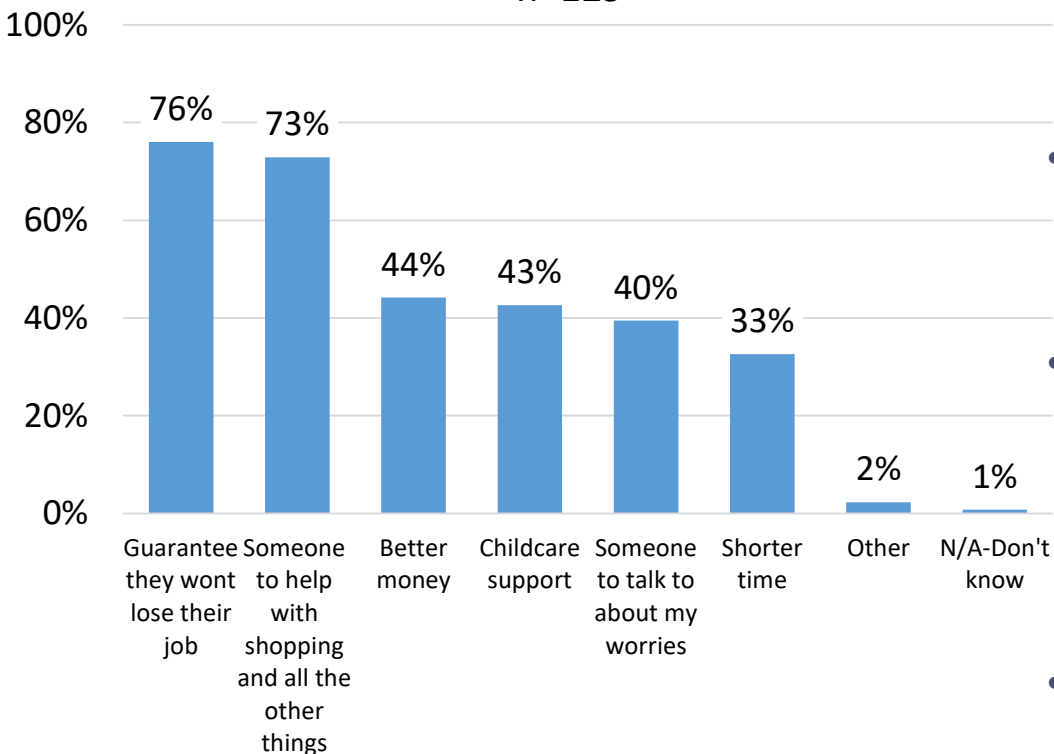
Insights from the Survey

What helps/what gets in the way of being able to isolate if they have COVID-19, or are a contact of someone with COVID-19

What would help residents to isolate?

What would help people to better self-isolate because of COVID-19?

n=129

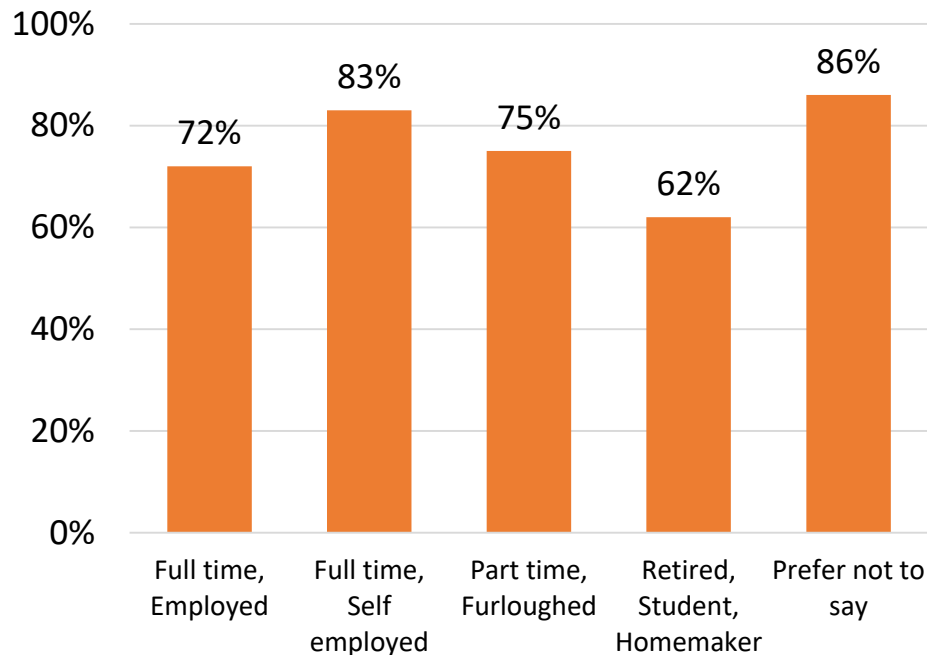


- Three-quarters (76%) of people responded said a guarantee that they would not lose their job would make them more likely to isolate.
- Support with shopping was also selected by three-quarters (73%) of respondents.
- 57 people (44%) mentioned that better financial support would help them isolate, 43% mentioned childcare, 40% would like someone to talk to
- A third of respondents felt a shorter isolation time would help them

“Guarantee they won’t lose their job”



Proportions within socioeconomic status groups



Who was most concerned about this?

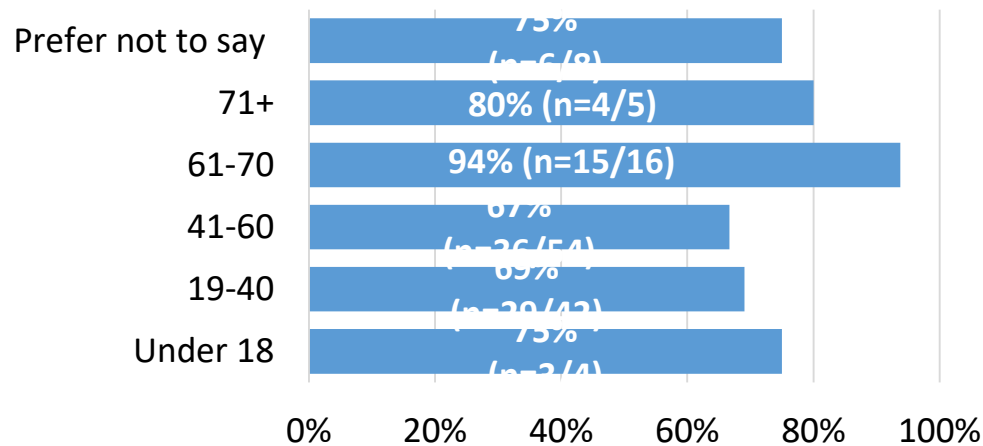
- 86% of young people (19-30 yrs. old) who responded selected guarantee they won’t lose their job, which was highest among all working age groups.
- 83% of respondents who identified as Full time self employed and 72% of Full time, employed selected this.

“Someone to help with shopping and all other things that need doing”

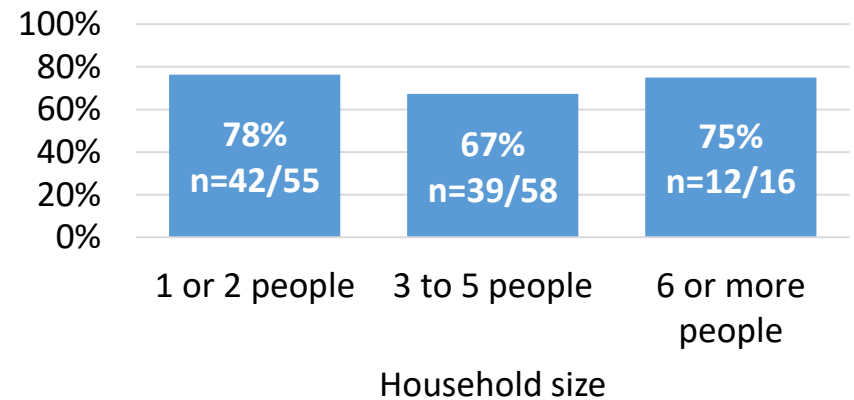
Who was most concerned about this?

- Nearly all residents aged 61 and over who responded to the survey selected help with shopping and all other things. However, all age groups rated this highly.
- Shopping and help with other things that need doing was raised as an issue by around three quarters of respondents regardless of household size.

Percentage age bands
(showing number concerned out of all respondents)

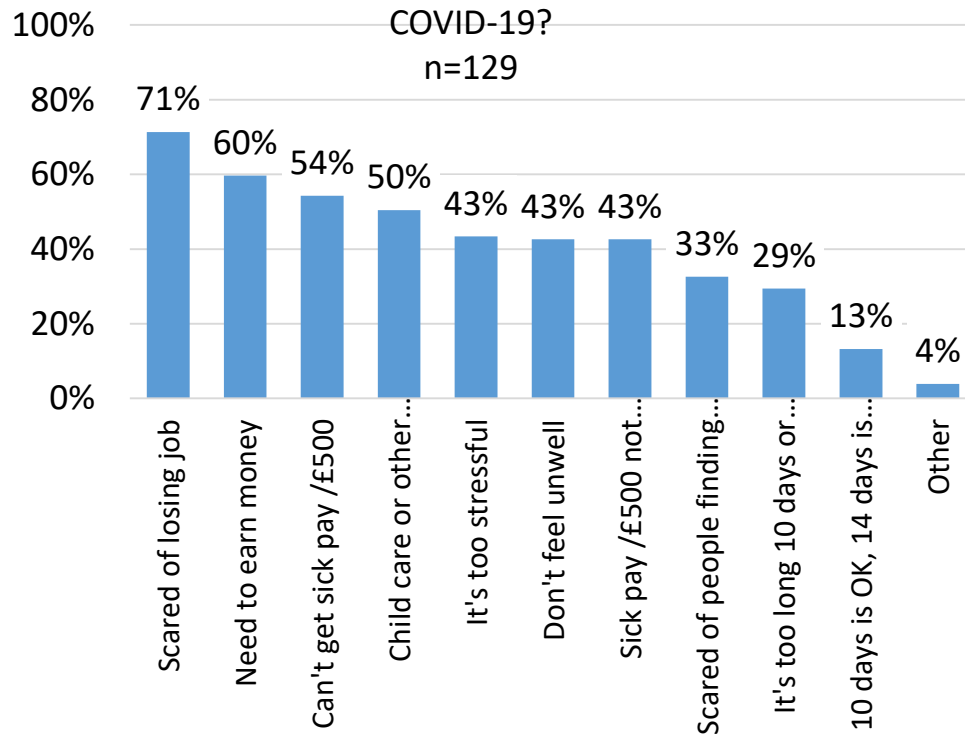


Percentage within household size groups
(showing number concerned out of all respondents)



What gets in the way of being able to isolate

What do you think gets in the way of people being able to isolate (stay at home) if they have COVID-19 or are a contact of someone with



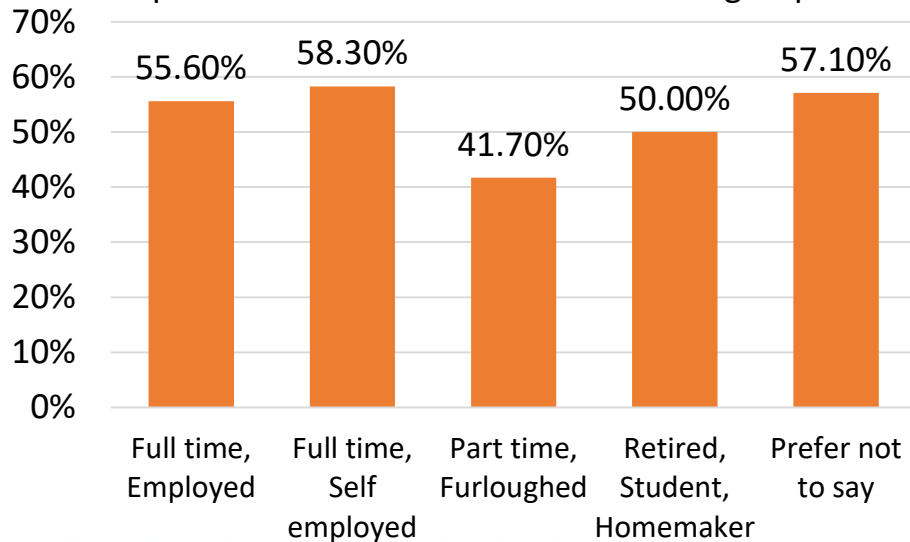
- 69 people (54%) who responded said “can’t get sick pay/£500 support payment” gets in the way of being able to isolate
- Half of respondents said that caring responsibilities gets in the way of being able to self isolate
- For 55 respondents (43%) the stress of isolating got in the way of being able to isolate
- 43% felt not feeling unwell could prevent people from isolating
- A third of people said they were scared of others finding out, and 29% found the isolation period too long

“Can’t get sick pay/£500 support payment”

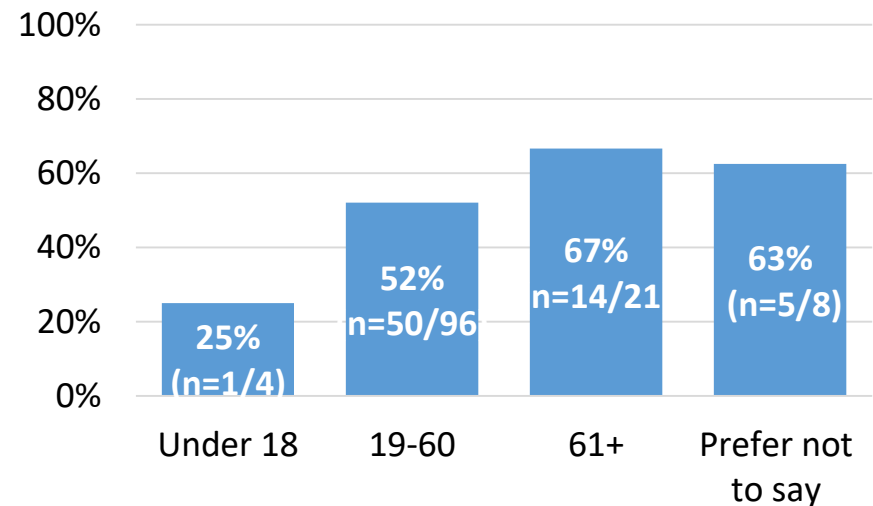
Who was most concerned about this?

- “Not being able to get sick pay or the £500 support payment” was selected as a barrier to isolating by over half of working age residents (19-60 years old).
- Around half of all residents, regardless of employment status selected “Can’t get sick pay/£500 support payment” as barrier to isolating.

Proportions within socioeconomic status groups

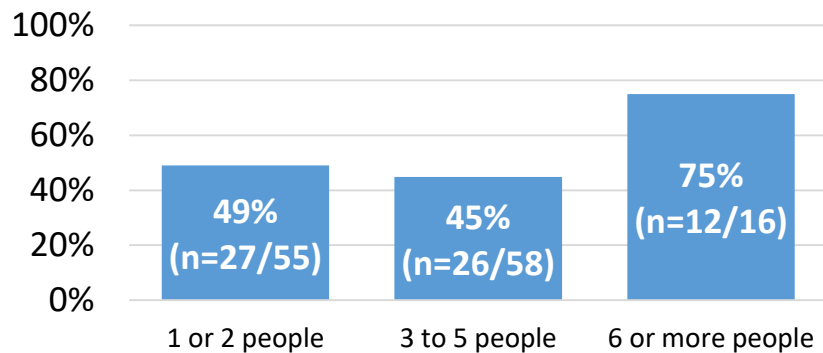


Percentage within age bands (showing number out of all respondents)

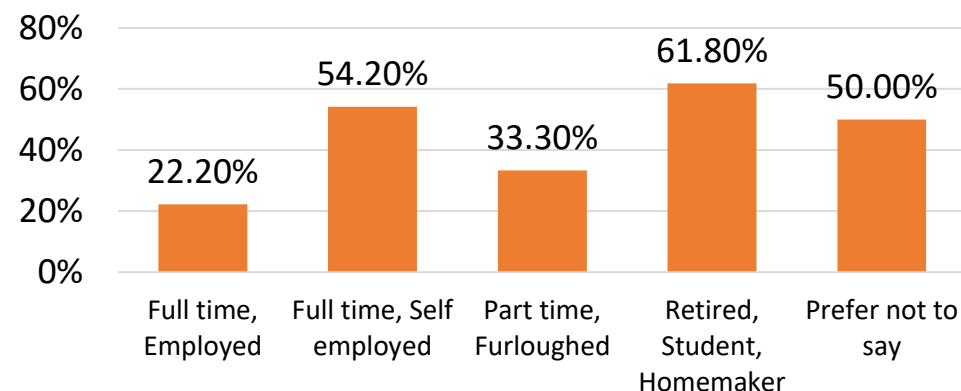


“Childcare and other caring responsibilities”

Percentage within household size groups
(showing number concerned out of all respondents)



Proportions within socioeconomic status groups



Who was most concerned about this?

- Childcare was identified as a barrier by all age groups. This was true for nearly half of respondents.
- Three quarters of residents with households of 6 or more people selected this option as a barrier to isolation.
- Over half of Full time, self employed and nearly two thirds of residents who identified as retired, student or homemaker selected childcare and other caring responsibilities as a barrier to isolating.

This rapid assessment set out to understand what helps and what gets in the way of residents being able to isolate.

We carried out a survey of 129 residents and 25 health champions took part in focus groups. The main conclusions were as follows:

1. Residents were most concerned about loss of job and financial security.
2. Isolation is impacting the mental well being of Newham residents.
3. There is a tension between isolating and meeting everyday needs (e.g. shopping, caring responsibilities etc.).
4. Reluctance to get tested is linked to concerns over the impact on earnings and job security of isolating.

Action is needed at both national and local levels:

- Job security needs to be improved and all residents should expect to have the living wage.
- The national support payment to isolate should be in line with the Furlough scheme (i.e. 80% of salary or £500 whichever is the higher amount). **A narrow conversation about eligibility of the support payment is insufficient.**
- A locally run Self Isolation Support Service would ensure that all positive cases receive regular welfare calls to give advice and link to support (incl. mental health support services, Newham Food Alliance, Befriending Service etc.).

Similar insights could be gathered across the country to improve the scale and validity of the findings.

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