

Social science and COVID-19

This list includes work funded by UKRI/ESRC, the UKRI-DHSC calls, and major relevant activity being undertaken by ESRC investments in response to COVID-19.

COVID-19 and its consequences raise enormous questions about the economy, work and unemployment, mental health, education, social isolation and much more. ESRC is the major public funder of social science in the UK and has acted quickly to ensure that the pressing work that needs to be funded can be undertaken by researchers across our disciplines.

This list represents urgent work ongoing now. Further projects will be added as they are funded.

We are also scoping the significant future relevant work which will be needed to navigate the recovery.

Economy

Measuring the Impact of Brexit/COVID-19 on UK Investment, Sales and Productivity (Mizen, University of Nottingham). Researching impact of COVID-19 via ongoing Decision Maker Panel on sales, employment, capital and requirements/availability of credit, working patterns, non-labour inputs, business expectations. Existing investment.

Supporting fiscal policy decisions (Johnson, Institute for Fiscal Studies). Targeted analysis using new data sources (including a COVID-19 module in a large longitudinal household survey and real-time bank data). Draws on IFS's expertise on tax and benefit policy design and familiarity with the institutional and policy context around the UK's labour market, taxes and benefits and the public finances. New funding.

Modelling the Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on the UK economy (Young, NIESR). Use of NIESR's modelling capability to estimate short-term impact of the pandemic on the UK economy, and assess longer-term issues that will influence the economic recovery and effectiveness of policy measures. New funding.

Coronavirus Economics Translational Hub (Griffith, Royal Economic Society/Institute for Fiscal Studies). Draws together key evidence from research on the economic impact of COVID, key policy solutions, and identifies evidence gaps. New funding.

Harnessing Existing Research to provide Rapid Responses (Chadha, NIESR). Four strands of work including: using NIESR's econometric model to provide new analysis; understanding COVID-19's real time economic impact; public understanding of economic and policy messages; impact of the virus in less advantaged, deprived and migrant communities. New funding.

Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy (CAGE) (Advani, University of Warwick). Research on policies to rebuild government finances: personal income and capital gains taxation, based on HMRC Datalab data; net wealth taxation measuring UK wealth using tax data. Existing investment.

Employment

The Impact of COVID-19 on Economic Inequality and Employment Progression (Adams-Prassl, University of Oxford). Five additional survey waves to gather data on the impacts of the crisis on different workers and to evaluate the effectiveness of different policies aimed to smooth the effect of containment measures on living standards. New funding.

Self-Employed and COVID-19 (Machin, Centre for Economic Performance). Will monitor and quantify the effect of the pandemic on the self-employed and provide timely and policy-relevant information to support government decisions. New funding.

Where does work belong anymore? The impact of the COVID19 pandemic on working in the UK (Marks, University of Stirling). This study researches home-based working and interrelated issues, including organisational support, caring responsibilities, domestic relationships and psychological wellbeing. This project is designed to help understand the management of work and productivity in a crisis, providing a benchmark for understanding the impact and responses of both individuals and businesses. New funding.

The impact of economic and social changes arising from COVID-19 on Foundational Sectors (including food delivery and social care) (Jones, WISERD, Cardiff University). Existing investment.

Practices and Combinations of Practices for Health and Wellbeing at Work (Daniels, University of East Anglia). Collecting data on how occupational health and wellbeing services are adjusting through a longitudinal case study. Existing investment.

Effects on businesses and their responses including relationships with workers

Measuring the effects of COVID-19 on businesses and the economy (Mizen, University of Nottingham). The project draws on the ongoing Decision Maker Panel to gather fortnightly/monthly data on the business response to COVID-19, feeding into the Bank policy committees. The project is creating a data archive of a matched dataset using ONS surveys to provide detailed analysis of employment, investment and sales growth. It will also assess the resilience to shocks from a survey focused on management practices. New funding.

Understanding and Explaining Management Practices to Promote Higher Productivity in UK Businesses (Riley, NIESR). Extending ONS-Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence (ESCoE), Management and Expectations Survey (MES) of ~25,000 businesses with 10+ employees drawn from and linked to the 2016 Annual Business Survey sample. Existing investment.

Gig workers: unsung heroes and a strategic role in the UK national response to the COVID-19 pandemic (van Tongeren, University of Manchester) This project researches different risk mitigation measures and social distancing strategies to understand how delivery workers contribute to the UK's national response by delivering to households and how they could potentially contribute to transmission. New funding.

Young graduates' engagement in new training (Del Bono, Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (MiSoC), University of Essex). To what extent have young graduated engaged in new training as a result of the impact of the pandemic on the jobs' market. Existing investment.

Responses by SMEs

Impact of COVID-19 on Staff Mental Health and Well-Being in SMEs: Strategies and Interventions to Support Workforce and Boost Productivity (Kumar Dey, Aston University). Research on mental health and productivity within small and medium sized enterprises' (SMEs).

From productivity to prosperity (Driffield, University of Warwick). Analysing impact on small firms and supply chains. Existing investment.

Place

What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (Overman, London School of Economics). Research on the evidence to help places rebuild their economies and identify the leading indicators that might help them understand the impact of the pandemic on different areas. Existing investment.

WISERD (Jones, Cardiff University). The role of City Regions and place based polices in supporting and renewing local economies in the aftermath of COVID-19. Existing investment.

Supply chains

Food System Impacts of COVID-19 (Winter, University of Exeter). This research examines the extent of continuity and dislocation in the supply chain across different foods, including changes in routes to markets, the barriers to change, and the regulations, incentives, investments or interventions which might be required to optimise supply chain adjustments and ensure fairness. New funding.

COVID-19: Food and Nutrition Security during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic (Rivington, James Hutton Institute). The aim of this study is to conduct an initial rapid food and nutrition security risk assessment and explore options for changes in agricultural production, trade and distribution to protect food and nutrition security without jeopardising wider ecological and climate goals.

Medical and healthcare

Remote-by-Default Care in the COVID-19 Pandemic: addressing the micro-, meso-, and macro-level challenges of a radical new service model (Greenhalgh, University of Oxford). Researches micro- (technical tools, clinical techniques), meso- (organisational change) and macro (national infrastructure) aspects of new remote service model in primary care to understand/disseminate best practice. New funding.

Rapid evaluation of the COVID-19 pandemic response in palliative and end of life care: national delivery, workforce and symptom management (CovPall) (Higginson, King's College London). This project rapidly evaluates the palliative care response to COVID-19 to improve care. New funding.

COVID-19: Safety and personalisation for UK maternity care provision during and after a pandemic (Downe, University of Central Lancashire). Identification of which

organisational responses have worked best for maternity care organisation during COVID-19. New funding.

Necessary discussions: Advance care planning for nursing homes in a COVID-19 outbreak (Brazil, Queens University Belfast). Develop and evaluate an online advance care planning (ACP) COVID-centric intervention for nursing homes during a COVID-19 outbreak to improve care at the end of life. New funding.

Supporting family carers in making decisions for older relatives with dementia (Davies, University College London) This project will produce an evidence-based decision aid for family carers and people with dementia for use in the management of COVID-19. New funding.

DETERMIND (Banerjee, University of Plymouth). Developing new empirical data on how best to support dementia sufferers and their carers and identifying predictors of better and worse outcomes. The project will generate practical guidance for services and families on how best to support people with dementia and carers. Existing investment.

Care homes and adult social care

Burden and impact in care homes (Shallcross, University College London). This project aims to support the management of COVID-19 in care homes by establishing a real-time surveillance system using data from a large care home chain and a virtual stakeholder network to expedite rapid learning during the pandemic and ensure pragmatic solutions are widely disseminated. New funding.

Understanding and improving antimicrobial prescribing in care homes: a multidisciplinary approach (Dickson, University of Dundee). Working with care home staff on COVID-19 including an in-depth case study and a survey of care home staff and GPs who prescribe for care home residents. Existing investment.

WISERD (Jones, Cardiff University). Spatial inequalities in access to residential care homes in Wales and a detailed case study in the area covered by the Regional Partnership Board in West Wales. Analysis of how the legal and policy context related to third sector adult social care provision has changed in light of the pandemic, and how third sector care providers have responded. Existing investment.

Supporting Adult Social Care Innovation (Malley, London School of Economics). Researching adult social care, how adult social care organisations are engaging with the NHS and changes in care delivery during the pandemic. Existing investment.

Education

Identifying effective remote literacy teaching methods for primary-aged children (Jones, Bangor University). This project researches effective remote, evidence-based literacy instruction for primary-aged children, across a range of literacy abilities, in order to mitigate the negative effect of school closure. New funding.

The effects of social distancing policies on children's language development, sleep and executive functions (Gonzalez-Gomez, Oxford Brookes University). This project follows up a UK-wide cohort of children aged 8 to 36 months to capture changes in key environmental variables and measure their impact on children's vocabulary size and executive function. New funding.

A duty of care and a duty to teach: educational priorities in response to the COVID-19 lockdown (Moss, UCL Institute of Education). This research explores the challenges the pandemic sets primary schools, using surveys and telephone interviews to analyse how teachers weigh a duty of care (for their pupils' well-being and welfare) and a duty to teach (given their responsibilities for curriculum delivery). New funding.

Other public services

Child Protection and social distancing: Improving the capacity of social workers to keep children safe during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ferguson, University of Birmingham). The project explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child protection, social workers and service users, with specific reference to the novel use of digital technologies in a period of institutionalised social distancing. New funding.

Welfare at a (Social) Distance: Accessing social security and employment support during the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath (Scullion, University of Salford). This project will provide rapid evidence on how the benefits system is meeting the challenges resulting from the pandemic. New funding.

Psychological and Societal Resilience

How to understand, scale and maximise the effectiveness of volunteer responses to COVID-19 (Burchell, University of Sheffield). This project will address the knowledge gap around the community resource mobilisation, infrastructural support and capacity building measures required to organise the scale and pace of volunteering needed to maximise the effectiveness of responses to COVID-19. New funding.

Outreach to Domestic Abuse Victims in Times of Quarantine (Kirchmaier, London School of Economics). Explores how best to reach isolated domestic abuse victims using non-traditional means to provide them with a safer means of contacting the police. New funding.

Supporting Parents, Adolescents and Children during Epidemics with a focus on mental health (Waite, University of Oxford) The project tracks children and young people's mental health throughout the COVID-19 crisis through an online longitudinal survey completed monthly throughout the pandemic by parents/carers of children aged 2-16 years and young people themselves (11-16 years). New funding.

UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (Gibb, University of Glasgow). Housing policies introduced during lockdown. Existing investment.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on nutrition (O'Connell, Institute for Fiscal Studies). This project uses real-time longitudinal data on a large representative sample to provide evidence on whether vulnerable people (including the elderly, those on low incomes, and those with young children) are having difficulties accessing essentials and maintaining a healthy diet. New funding.

Disabled people and COVID-19 in the UK (Shakespeare, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine). Disabled people's short- and medium-term experiences of the epidemic, including the impact of social isolation, the interruption of support on wellbeing, the barriers and facilitators of this process and lessons that can be learned for policy and practice. New funding.

Transitions to more harmful forms of gambling during COVID-19 pandemic: behaviours and targeted marketing in young people and bettors on sport (Hunt, University of Stirling). Providing regulators, policy makers and treatment providers with high quality evidence on the changing patterns and context of gambling behaviours during COVID-19 and its aftermath. New funding.

WISERD (Jones, Cardiff University). Follow-up interviews with families in South Wales to consider how families have responded to COVID-19 in relation to their family relationships and attitudes. Existing investment.

Wales Centre for Public Policy (Martin, Cardiff University). Briefings papers on promoting a Green Recovery, supporting the groups hit hardest by recession, impact on public services. Existing investment.

Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy (CAGE) (Fetzer, University of Warwick). Research and working paper on increase in Google searches indicative of anxieties and economic fears. Existing investment.

Exploring BAME differences

ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change (Martin, Tamayo, University of Essex). Examining differences between the immigrants and UK born ethnic minorities in vulnerability to COVID-19, using UKHLS and LFS. Using UKHLS and UKMOD, a tax-benefit micro-simulation infrastructure project, to project ethnic differences in the success of government support in protecting those effected by COVID-19 from poverty. Existing investment.

Consumer Data Research Centre (Paul Longley, University College London). Using the CDCR Modelled Ethnicity Proportions 1997-2016 (LSOA Geography) and Ethnicity Estimator software to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on different groups in society, particularly those in BAME categories. Existing investment.

Security, crime and public order

Monitoring the effects of the pandemic on illicit online trade (Baronchelli, City University of London). This project will build an infrastructure to monitor dark web trading in COVID-19-related goods and services. New funding.

Understanding Inequalities Project (McVie, University of Edinburgh). Working with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland on the policing of the coronavirus pandemic, collecting data on the use of the police powers, and data from public opinion surveys, as part of a scrutiny review of Police Scotland's use of the coronavirus powers during the lockdown period, and the transition into the next phase of regulation. Existing investment.

Developing fake news immunity (Musi, University of Liverpool). This project uses Natural Language Processing techniques to identify topics and understand the structure of the fake news ecosystem. These principles will be operationalised in a digital platform with a chatbot for training citizens to spot misinformation. New funding.

Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project (McGregor, University of Essex). Researching the human rights implications of the use of new and emerging technologies during the pandemic. Existing investment.

Environment

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on recreation and use of green space in Wales (Jones, Bangor University). Exploring the impact of COVID-19 on the use of local green space by different social groups. New funding.

COVID-19: The local as a site of food security resilience in the times of pandemic: opportunities, challenges and ways forward (Krzywoszynska, University of Sheffield). Working with key businesses and organisations in the local food sector, this project will use surveys, interviews, citizen science, and backcasting to provide timely evidence on sector robustness, adaptability, and its route to transformation in the post-pandemic context. New funding.

Consumer Data Research Centre (Singleton, University of Liverpool). Review of pandemic impact on mobility patterns and how this has impacted air pollution. Existing investment.

Behavioural science and behaviour change

Network for Integrated Behavioural Science (Starmer, University of Nottingham). Multiple projects including work on the impact (and possible unintended consequence of) messages to promote conformity with social distance recommendation and developing an experimental design to measure people's perceptions of when people would consider using NHS services. Existing investment.

Rapid co-design, implementation and evaluation of a digital behaviour change intervention to improve hand hygiene and limit spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, (Yardley, University of Southampton) This project evaluates how an existing digital public health intervention can be rapidly adapted and optimised for the changing needs of an infection outbreak. New funding.

Virus Watch: Understanding community incidence, symptom profiles, and transmission of COVID-19 in relation to population movement and behaviour (Andrew Hayward, University College London). This large project involves establishing two national household cohorts to measure symptoms and behaviour. This will be extended through the optional use of an app allowing individuals' mobile phones to be used as GPS trackers to enable secure transfer and analysis of detailed movement patterns. New funding.

A mixed-methods evaluation of advice on isolation and health-seeking to contain transmission (Oliver, Public Health England). A rapid evaluation of supported isolation (quarantine) to assess the extent to which people adhere to advice and the impact isolation has on their mental health and wellbeing. New funding.

Mental Health Research Network (Fancourt, University College London). The COVID-19 Social Study is a panel study of the psychological and social experiences of adults in the UK during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus run by UCL. Over 75,000 people are currently participating in the study, completing weekly online surveys about their experiences and behaviours. www.MARCHNetwork.org/research. Existing investment.

Understanding the dynamics and drivers of the COVID-2019 epidemic using real-time outbreak analytics (Edmunds, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) This project monitors contact and precautionary behaviours in a representative cohort and gathers data on risk awareness and perceived efficacy of interventions to refine transmission models, improve forecasting, and assess the effectiveness of social distancing measures. New funding.

Healthcare Workers: an in depth virological analysis and behavioural study during the outbreak (Nastouli, University College London). This project researches the risk of infection with SARS-CoV-2 in health care workers using longitudinal sampling methods, tracking of movement and studies of behaviours and attitudes. New funding.

Decision making

nCoV: Understanding the dynamics of policy development and healthcare worker behaviour in the UK during the COVID-19 public health emergency (Sheard, University of Liverpool). Researching how UK policymakers arrive at decisions during the outbreak, and their impact on UK healthcare workers. New funding.

Data and Data Collection

Understanding Society COVID-19 study (Benzeval, University of Essex). New monthly survey wave on the established Understanding Society longitudinal study, exploring the impact of the pandemic on the UK population, covering employment, income, health, family, education and civic engagement. Existing investment.

English Longitudinal Study of Ageing COVID-19 Sub-study (Steptoe, University College London). Two new waves of this established longitudinal study investigating the current and changing impacts of COVID-19 on older men and women. New funding.

Centre for Longitudinal Studies (Goodman, University College London). A nationwide survey of the participants of five national longitudinal cohort studies, to examine the impact of the pandemic, help understand how people at different life stages are affected, and how prior life experiences shape resilience or vulnerability. Existing investment.

WISERD Education Multi Cohort Study (Jones, University of Cardiff). New data collection from existing cohort of young people from across secondary schools in Wales. Existing investment.

Learning from international experience

Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy (CAGE) (Fetzer, University of Warwick). An international team from 12 institutions, including Harvard, Cambridge, IESE, etc, is collecting survey data on how citizens prepare for and cope with the pandemic. To date, more than 100,000 participants in 150 countries have taken part. Existing investment.

Life with Corona (Justino, Institute of Development Studies). IDS, ISDC and UNU-WIDER collecting real time data on the coronavirus and its social and economic impacts, to build a global knowledge base about how people are dealing with the epidemic (including on focus on trust, which was key in the response to the Ebola). Existing investment.

Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP) (Elkomy, University of Surrey). Researching health, economic and social aspects including risk perception and how it adversely affects economic activity and empirically testing effects of different population characteristics and health factors on mortality rate. Existing investment.

Trust and Trustworthiness in National and Global Governance (Jennings, University of Southampton). An online national survey in the UK, US and Italy which includes questions

on COVID and political trust. Focus groups exploring political trust in towns and cities relating to COVID. Existing investment.

Understanding Chinese government containment measures and their societal impacts (Duckett, University of Glasgow). This project compiles a database of policy documents (from government websites) that set out containment measures. It researches how these measures have evolved, use text and computational analysis of newspapers and social media, and conduct local fieldwork on societal impacts in urban/rural areas. New funding.

Strengthening & Accelerating the Global Research Response to COVID-19 by Sharing Methods and Knowledge Between Countries, Networks and Organisations (Lang, University of Oxford). This project helps diffuse methods and knowledge across international networks, and facilitates knowledge sharing and the provision of policy relevant information in nations and places where existing research capacity is low. New funding.

Optimising antibiotic use along surgical pathways: addressing antimicrobial resistance and improving clinical outcomes (Holmes, Imperial College London). Researching COVID-19 at country level to capture data from high-middle and low-income countries on political factors, economic influences, sociological trends, technological innovations, ecological factors, legislative requirements and industry (PESTELI framework). Existing investment.

Communication

Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (Semino, Lancaster University). Researching international communication and use of metaphors around COVID-19. Existing investment.

British Election Study (Fieldhouse, University of Manchester). Wave 20 of the BES internet panel will ask questions on COVID-19 and its impact on political opinion including exposure (individual and family), evaluations/handling and impact on issue position and salience. Existing investment.