

Human signals

Tracking today's behaviours to
find tomorrow's solutions

Edition 3 | June 2020



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A rolling research project

EY Seren teams help organisations achieve growth by serving the needs of people, communities and the planet.

EY Seren teams are running two-week sprints of mixed-method research to understand how the global pandemic is changing how everyone lives and works.

The hypothesis is that human behaviour is changing significantly, and that service providers will need to significantly change what they offer and how they offer it, to meet these new needs. To do that, EY Seren teams are running:

- ▶ **Desk research** across over 200 sources
- ▶ **Depth interviews** with people, virtually, in their own homes about what really matters to them right now
- ▶ **Diary studies** with customers across the UK to get insight into how behaviour is changing
- ▶ **Interviews with design leaders and professionals across sectors** to understand how COVID-19 is transforming the role of design and delivery
- ▶ **Quantitative surveys** for insights into our community fortnightly. If you want to share your opinion or find out more about this research, please let us know.

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Insights in this issue

A culture of fear

1. Daily dissonance
2. Polarised experiences
3. Reality shock

Daily resilience and resourcefulness

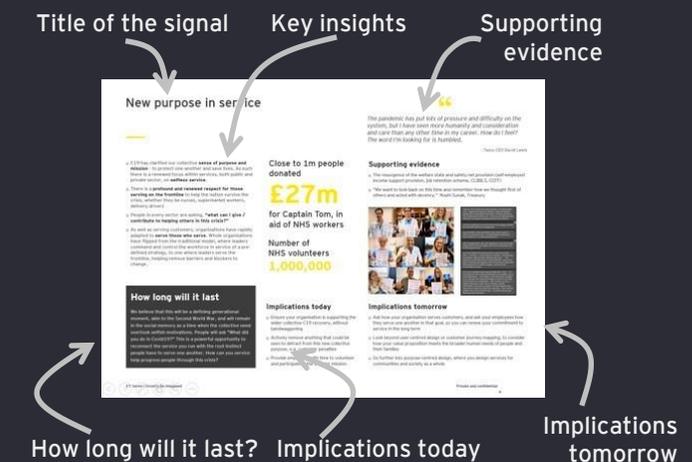
1. A million new normals
2. Polarised experiences

Hopes for a better life and world

1. Re-evaluating life's priorities
2. New forms of enterprise
3. Less bias, more compassion

The anatomy of an insight

Each fortnight, EY Seren teams are collecting the research into a series of insights. EY Seren teams expect these to morph and adapt through this series of papers. All references are given at the end of the document.



Hoping for the best, whilst fearing the worst – new normal isn't here yet

With stark predictions from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), EY Seren adapt our predictions to take into account a second possible wave of in human behaviour change

Second waves – people anxiously await the end of government furlough schemes, to see what the impact of a return to economic reality brings with it. The OECD and three former Chancellors predict 1980s levels of unemployment, no one can rule out a second wave of infections. All are likely to provoke social unrest.

Winners and losers – the data demonstrates that COVID-19 has hit some groups much harder than others. Women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, and frontline service workers have given the most, due to their more often being at the frontline, but are also likely to suffer the most. Meanwhile others appear to be winning for now: exploring and enjoying new lifestyles and workstyles.

Social injustice – COVID-19 has revealed ongoing social dividing lines across the UK, leading many to question why these groups have been left more exposed whilst the position of others has been reinforced. This is contributing to significant social unrest, stoked by global incidents.

Erosion of trust – early motivations to help one another in service of a greater good have eroded as trust has broken down. Mixed messages and behaviours from leaders, combined with ongoing uncertainty and sense of biased decision-making, have led to an erosion of trust across society. People aren't yet seeing a return for their selfless service and fear they may be unintentionally punished by systematic bias and economic fallout.

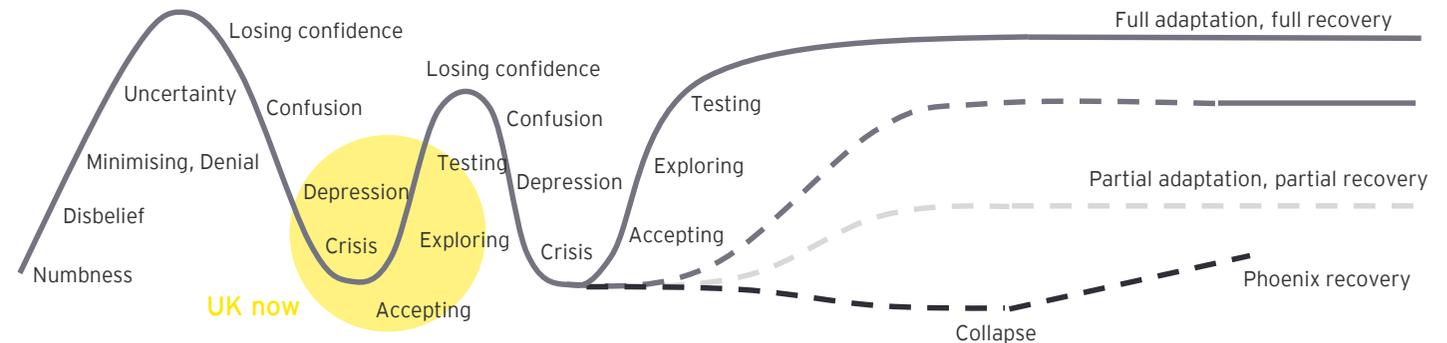
When recessionary reality hits EY Seren teams fear that new and profound, yet still nascent organisational values of human-centricity and purpose-led work will be undermined by the reality that many who worked hard to serve, will now face job losses. If handled poorly, this could lead to a significant loss of faith.

Phase one and two
Social distancing and isolation
 18 weeks
 The United States is hesitantly moving back and forth between phases one and two, depending on location and attitude – with civil liberties ideology clashing with science.

Phase three
Pulsing and false recovery
 12-18 months
 Many countries have moved into phase three with social distancing in place alongside government stimulus. Regional and temporary isolation is pulsed as infection spikes occur.

Phase four
Pulsing and true recovery
 12-18 months
 As government stimulus programmes are withdrawn, the true impact of the crisis is revealed, leading to insolvencies and redundancies. A new economic crisis emerges, forcing people into a second wave of recovery. At the same time EY Seren teams can't rule out a second wave of infections.

Phase five and six
Vaccine/immunity
 24 months
 40 global teams, hunt for a vaccine, whilst ultimate immunity remains inconclusive.



Gradual awareness leads to overnight change in behaviour. People are forced to rapidly shift behaviour to adjust to lockdown

Service providers focus on short term service resilience and continuity.

Many people begin to accept aspects of the crisis, exploring and testing new ways of living and working. Others take longer to adapt or adapt less well or not at all. Strong government stimulus helps sustain normality

Providers step back and start adapting existing journeys and channels, and launching new propositions to help customers begin to recover themselves.

As economic stimulus is removed, a wave of insolvencies and redundancies damage much of the recovery work, with people now needing to pick themselves up again.

Successful providers are better prepared for this new spike of demand, with new propositions in place to help customers and employees through the change.

A range of end states materialise, based on two variables – how well the individual recovered and how long it has taken them. Some will have to invent new futures for themselves, whilst others recover from the ashes through 'moment of truth' interventions.

Successful providers survive recession with their strategy and purpose intact, and are able to innovate at speed, remotely and at low-cost, to create an effective future for their customers and colleagues

Edition 1

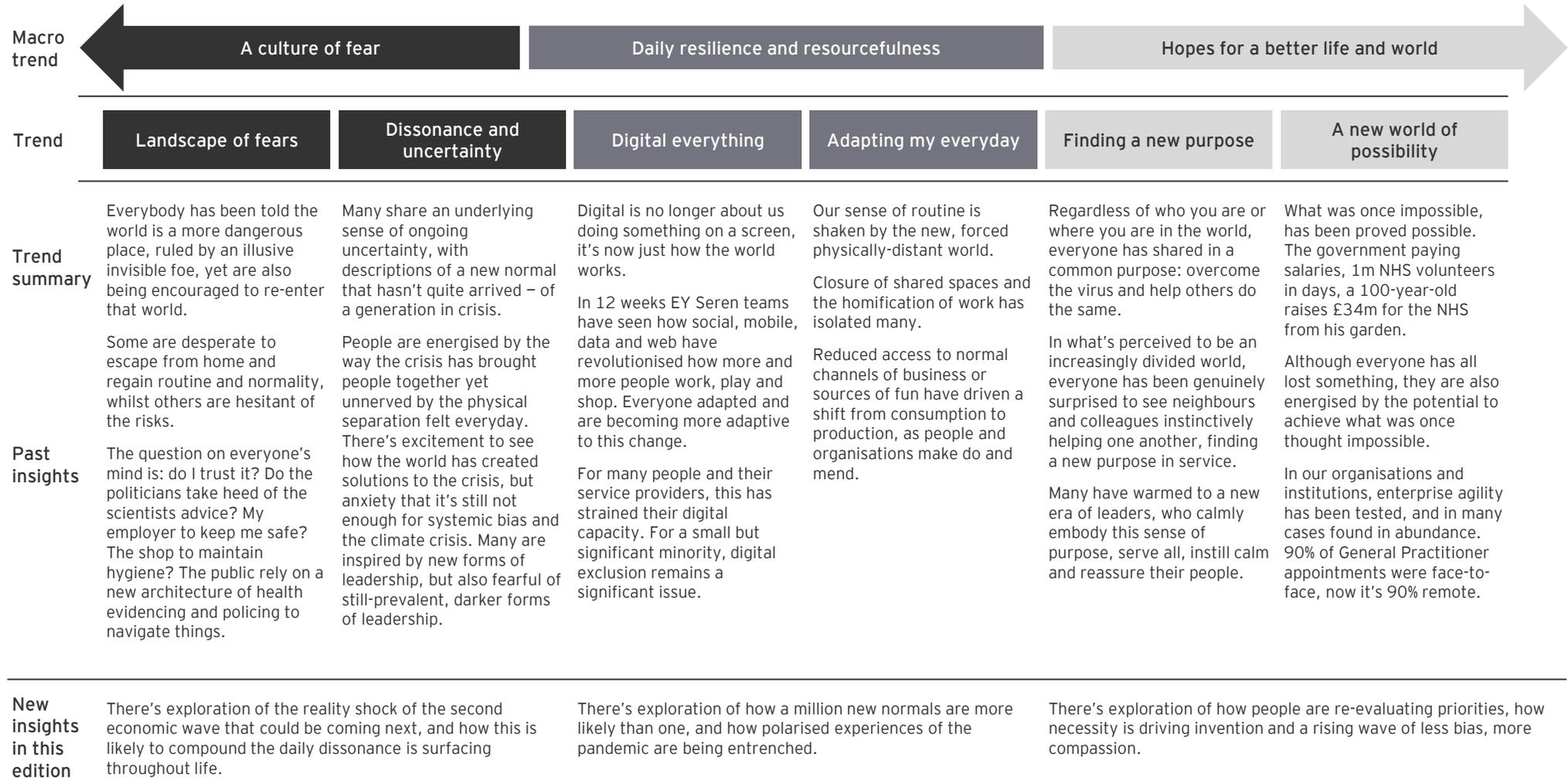
An overview of COVID-19 macro trends

After 12 weeks in the field, a clearer set of signals are emerging
from the noise



Human signals – macro trends and trends

Below is a summary of the 12 weeks of research to-date, combining our past 15 themes from editions 1 and 2, with seven new themes, all collated them under six trends and three macro trends



Edition 2

Exploring each
macro trend in
detail



A culture of fear

The world has always been a risky place. Yet COVID-19, and subsequent economic lockdown policies, have made things even more fragile. Not only have they revealed and reinforced existing societal fractures, but they've also introduced a new landscape of fears.

The most obvious new landmarks relate to physical space and proximity. As people move out into the world, they're asking 'Do I trust it?' They are policing their behaviour and being policed in new unsettling ways.

Then there are the existing landmarks, now sharply revealed as the economic tide goes out. Life was already difficult for those at the frontline of the service economy, contending with zero-hours contracts, racial prejudice and gender inequalities. COVID-19 has worsened those inequalities, often leaving those who have served so selflessly to deal with odds stacked against them.

To add fuel to the fire, predictions of economic recession and mass unemployment hang in the air like storm clouds. People understandably report feelings of daily dissonance for hoping for the best, whilst fearing the worst. Many are sustaining themselves through continued goodwill and service, yet what happens when those that serve find themselves redundant, rather than rewarded?

How organisations help customers and colleagues through this period of fear will test even the most deeply-held values and strategies.

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The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency — but it is far more. It is an economic crisis. A social crisis. And a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis.

– Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres

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With 11.5m people (22% of all adults) in the UK having less than £100 in savings, 8.99mn (17%) over-indebted, and 9mn (17%) borrowing to pay for essentials because they have run out of money, many households were already in a precarious financial situation going into the current crisis and may really struggle to keep afloat.

– Money and Pensions Service



Reality shock

The first eight months of World War II were known as the phoney war, because hardly any actual fighting occurred. It lulled people into a false sense of security and most day-to-day behaviour continued as normal. This situation changed dramatically.

Reading economic forecasts alongside scientific predictions leads us to believe this period of COVID-19 change could be something of a phoney recovery, largely due to the enormous amounts of money the government has put into the economy to prop up incomes.

There is growing concern that, when government furlough schemes end, the true reality of the economic situation will surface, triggering a second wave of behavioural disruption resulting from job losses and insolvencies.

Service providers will need to seriously consider how they marry their commitment to purpose, colleagues and customers, with their commercial imperatives, so that the latter doesn't erode progress made with the former.

The long-term role of the state in this remains unclear, with many arguing that they can't row back but instead need to accept the reality of a 'universal basic income' or similar. All will need to balance with countervailing debt concerns and ideological imperatives.

Either way, a second wave of consumer and employee anguish is growing likely, with service providers needing to prepare for another wave of complex demand across channels.

How long will it last?

The first spike of customer service demand caught everyone unawares. This time that doesn't need to be the case. EY Seren teams hope there's still the time and will to pull an economic rabbit from a hat, to avert the worst, but if not, it is recommended that organisations prepare for a further spike in demand.

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There will be loads of people in businesses that have gone bust that aren't going to return, and people who are coming off furloughs into unemployment. That is going to be a big social challenge, and of course economic challenge, for this government,

– George Osborne, Former Chancellor

Supporting evidence

'As long as no vaccine or treatment is widely available, policymakers around the world will continue to walk on a tightrope ... The pandemic has accelerated the shift from 'great integration' to 'great fragmentation.'

– OECD

According to the OECD 'Britain will suffer the worst recession of the world's 37 rich nation economies as GDP shrinks by up to 14 per cent this year and one in ten workers are left unemployed.'

– The Times

'The UK is experiencing some of the worst economic pain, yet also has the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in Europe. Bad news across the board will lead to louder questions about why Britain's economic and health outcomes are so poor and what, if anything, could have been done to mitigate the impact of coronavirus in at least one of these areas.'

– The Spectator



Implications today

- ▶ Be wary of making considerable investments in sentiments and behaviours emerging from this transition phase. Some of these may sustain, but others may fall away under economic reality.
- ▶ Prepare inbound and outbound channels around key government announcement dates.
- ▶ Run a COVID-19 lookback exercise, to learn lessons from the first spike of customer demand, so you're better prepared for a second one. Some initiatives made in haste may no longer be appropriate.

Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Consider how those who have selflessly served at the frontline are recognised for that work, and not inadvertently punished in the economic fallout. Cultural belief in organisational purpose could be poisoned for a generation.

Daily dissonance

The only thing that is clear in our lives now is that nothing is clear:

- ▶ I need to stay at home, unless I need to go out
- ▶ Some say a mask is useless; some say it saves lives
- ▶ I need social interactions, but the risk is they may kill me
- ▶ I should stay home, but it is important to spend time outside
- ▶ I must avoid going to a hospital, but I have an emergency
- ▶ I feel closer to others, but I also see a huge gap across groups
- ▶ I need to stay connected, but I want to minimise screen time
- ▶ Symptoms mean I may have the virus; but I may have the virus without any symptoms at all

The contradictory beliefs that co-exist in our minds are causing significant psychological stress, which is sustaining feelings of bewilderment.

As a result people may hide their actions or beliefs, shy away from conversations or debates, avoid learning new information that goes against their principles, ignore advice or research that causes dissonance.

Moreover, EY Seren teams have noticed that a lot of our research participants are avoiding seeking help even when they really need it, because everything in the world seems to be de-prioritised and non-essential except for the virus.

How long will it last

It's important first to sit with dissonance and admit the lack of certainty during this crisis. People yearn for certainty, yet leaders need to balance the instinct to lead with manufactured confidence (to allay fears) and leading with openness and honesty in the face of ongoing uncertainty (to generate collective empathy). In his book, Jacob Morgan has coined critical 'Future Leader' mindsets of explorer and servant to reframe what's valuable today.

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The coronavirus not only co-opts our cells, but exploits our cognitive biases. Humans construct stories to wrangle meaning from uncertainty and purpose from chaos. We crave simple narratives, but the pandemic offers none.

– The Atlantic

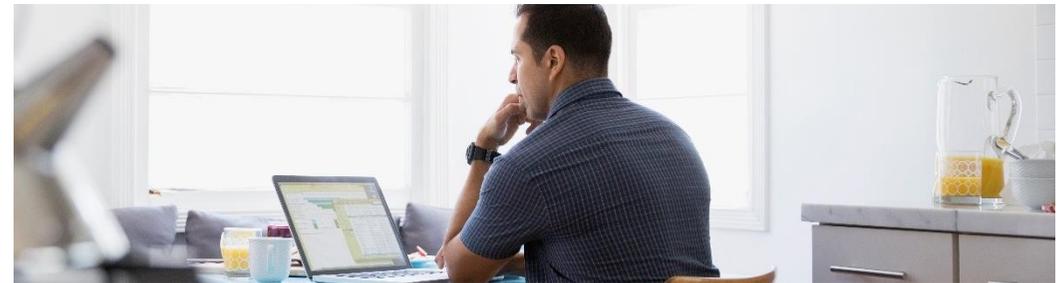
Supporting evidence

'What we are seeing is mass cognitive dissonance. That is the stress produced when people seek some kind of consistency between how they think life is and what we may call reality. It is really discomfoting to be given information that does not fit in with your beliefs. This results in denial or in justification for actions that do not fit the situation. Sometimes we may simply refuse to believe what we are told, attempting to resolve the contradiction between our inner and outer worlds by believing whatever we want to believe.'

– The Guardian

'People have this dual reality. On one hand they realise that [COVID-19] is a killer and that it's important to socially isolate and on the other hand they are doing things that are completely inexplicable – so there's lots of contradictions in the way people are behaving.'

– Siamack Salari, Ethnographic Researcher



Implications today

- ▶ Support your customers and employees by providing them with simple straightforward options rather than complex ambiguous ones. This may mean agreeing local guidelines in the absence of clear government policy.
- ▶ Take proactive steps in identifying customers that may need help, or at least make everyone aware of the different kinds of help you are offering, not only those related to the pandemic.

Human insights

'My husband is self-isolating in our caravan on the drive. His job as a paramedic is so important and I'm so proud of him, but it takes a real toll on family life'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

'I'm sat in my garden eating lunch with my sons. It's easy to slip into thinking we're in some happy bubble ... It's a strange time, pain and peace cheek by jowl.'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

'Well, two hours later and things have changed as we've just been told all employees are having a 10% pay cut. I know I'm lucky to still have a job as a lot of people don't but I'm still working whereas others are getting furlough and not having to work.'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Be careful not to impose blanket rules on colleagues or customers unless absolutely necessary. Individuals and households will want to make their own decisions in how they return to the world.
- ▶ Proactive support of customers and clear unambiguous communications should not be limited to COVID-19, but rather should become the new normal level of customer experience your organisation provides.

Daily resilience and resourcefulness

People are resilient. They continue with their day-to-day lives as hopes and fears co-exist. Classical crisis narratives usually have a hero who prevails, emerging stronger and wiser. This crisis offers few simple narratives. In that sense, the 'unprecedented' label remains appropriate. Back in 1999, David Bowie described the internet as 'an alien life form... [which is] going to crush our ideas of what mediums are all about.' In the past 12 weeks that's accelerated, as the internet and digital has penetrated every aspect of our lives, providing new resources to help daily life continue. For many, the world of spaces for work, home and play have dissolved. People exist and perform in all places at once. At the same time there's the ask to move from 'be fearful and don't leave home' to 'be confident and leave home under complex terms'. People are handling this in understandably different ways – some remain ensconced at home, resistant to 'back-to-work' agendas and school re-openings. Others lead the charge, seeking a return to normality or the proactive creation of a new normality. Social media continues to maintain filter bubbles, leaving little room for collective understanding, common sense and shared solutions. It's no surprise that a million new normals are arising from the ashes of the old normal.

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The pandemic has reopened the debate about what is necessary and what is possible. It has put us in a position where we can decide what is useful and what is not. That choice disappeared before. Everything seemed relentless like a tsunami. Now we realise it was not. We can see things are reversible. We can see which jobs are necessary and which are junk. How long that will last, I don't know. We might have forgotten everything in three months. That depends on how hard the economic crisis becomes.

– Bruno Latour, Philosopher

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In many ways, our homes have become our entire worlds through lockdown, and as our horizons shrank ... we've been forced to reassess how to continue living in a much smaller domain. Lockdown may be easing for many around the world and we're finally getting an indication of the adapted behaviours and attitudes that may stick for the foreseeable future. Tech giants talk of the success of working from home and even suggest now doing it 'forever'. As we brace ourselves for 'the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, we are likely to also be spending less on going out and spending more time in the home, even after the spread of COVID-19 has significantly slowed.

– Discover.ai



A million new normals

Confusing communications from the media and other sources that used to be trusted have put us in a position where people need to make their own choices, including how they navigate the relaxing of the lockdown.

It is already clear that public behaviour does not fully reflect government advice, but varies depending on the levels of concerns. According to early analysis from our survey, only 8% of people feel ready to share physical spaces again, despite the hygiene measures in place.

Apart from each individual and their circumstances, those levels of concerns and readiness are highly dependent on the observations people have been making in their local communities throughout the crisis. The more cases of breaching the rules you see around you, the more likely you are to treat the disobedience as something that is normal and acceptable, and vice versa.

Not everything will need to be unlocked. The lockdown has shown us the possibilities of doing lots of things that many of us have never thought were feasible (e.g., fixing the bike or dishwasher ourselves, not using public transport at all, efficiently working without entering the office for months). As a result, some of the newly adopted habits will sustain, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity. Cohorts of remote workers and cyclists will definitely grow.

Many people are having a moment of reflection. How am I preparing myself for a new reality? What do I have to let go of? What have I stopped and need never start again? What have I given up that I might not replace? What have I gained?

68%

feel they are more or equally productive from home

76%

expect to work more flexibly after lockdown

47%

said their employer would ditch widespread remote working once the pandemic ends

How long will it last

EY Seren teams don't expect a single 'new normal' to emerge. Digital technology has always driven hyper-personalisation, and there's no reason it won't do so here. EY Seren teams predict a million new normals emerging, as each individual and household forges what's right for them. Providers who can help customers and colleagues create and realise their new normal, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all, will be more likely to succeed.

A million new normal (cont'd)

Supporting evidence

'Scientists warn over relaxing UK lockdown too soon. Public health experts say new COVID-19 infections are too numerous to risk lifting restrictions further.'

– The Financial Times

'My company started encouraging staggered commuting and remote working in mid-February, and now I think that if you only need to be in the office once every week, maybe living in Tokyo isn't even necessary. Depending on how working from home plays out, I might start thinking about moving, or decreasing the size of our offices. The purpose of the office may change from a place where everyone works to a place where people can get together.'

– Tomoe Makino, TripAdvisor Japan

'According to a group of Harvard disease experts, some form of intermittent social distancing may need to be in place until 2022.'

New normal mindsets

– World Economic Forum

EY Seren teams have created a framework to explore what we think are the key dimensions that are important when people think about 'returning to work'. EY teams propose it's useful to consider these mindsets when crafting communications or designing changes to services. Two worth focusing on:

1. Back to visibility – this group are able to work from home, but need greater visibility and connection to others and the organisation as a whole
2. Back to proximity and connection – this group are earlier in their career and need to be visible to get on the career ladder, feeling insecure under remote conditions, and struggling with lack of physical space.

Implications today

- ▶ Do not assume that once lockdown is lifted, your employees and consumers will rush back to their normal consumption patterns. Try to keep alternative digital options available for longer periods of time to support those who are not ready to come back to the physical world just yet
- ▶ Wherever possible, allow people to make their own decisions. Do not force your employees to go back to office, better to ask what their preference is
- ▶ As leaders, make efforts to support your teams in creating and adopting new social rules

Human insights

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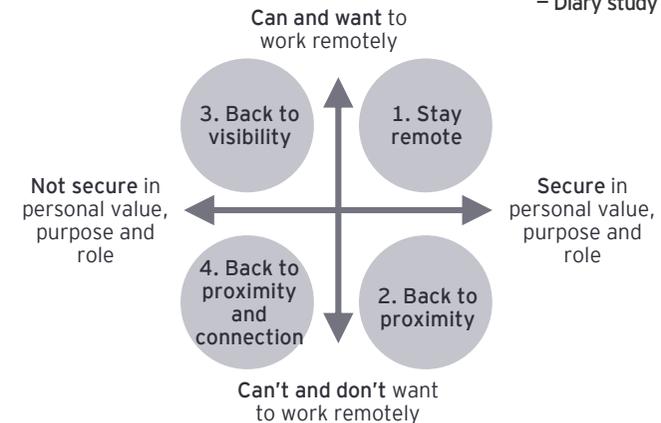
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– Diary study participant, Female 45



Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Now is the time to innovate and develop new ways for your customers to engage and interact with your products and services. Current measures of social distancing and use of screens, although effective now, may not be sustainable longer term. Your ultimate goal is to enable the same level of experience while eliminating any awkwardness or inconvenience
- ▶ In the workplace, reconsider how you make use of the physical space. Is it for focused work, or more for interacting? How will your policies support potential new ways of working?

Polarised experiences

There's a growing sense of polarisation across society. That differences in experience and situations are being compounded and deepened. That a real crisis is being made more critical by a sense of pervasive crisis.

Emerging theory indicates that social platforms, where over 50% of people get their news and form opinions, are underpinned by algorithms that tend to drive people into increasingly extreme filter bubbles, and thus polarised points of view and behaviours.

Wherever there are two camps, they increasingly end up more entrenched. Healing divides requires healthy debate. Instead the tendency is towards retrenchment.

This is being played out across racial, ethnic, political and economic lines. There's a risk COVID-19 has created two new camps of experience – one negative and one neutral.

Negative – around 70% of people are having a negative experience through loss of health or income. Those impacted by COVID-19 tend to already be disadvantaged. Women make up 70% of the global care workforce, do the bulk of unpaid care work, and rely on part-time service work, so face significantly disproportionate health and income vulnerabilities. Ethnic minorities are also affected due to their over-representation in low-skilled roles and multi-generational housing.

Neutral – in contrast, roughly 30% of the population have retained most of their income, and aside from some disruption and uncertainty, have adapted relatively easily to working from home.

How long will it last

Social technologies are embedded into our lives, so there's an expectation this ongoing polarisation to continue. Organisations need to consider how they help customers and colleagues manage this trend, just at a time that being human and customer-centred is becoming core to many strategies. Specific care needs to be made in applying advanced technologies so they don't polarise services.

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Social media platforms know what you're seeing, and they know how you acted in the immediate aftermath of seeing it, and they can decide what you will see next in order to further determine how you act – a feedback loop that gets progressively tighter until it becomes a binding force on an individual's free will ... Negative emotions like outrage and contempt and anxiety tend to drive significantly more engagement than positive ones.

– New Yorker Magazine

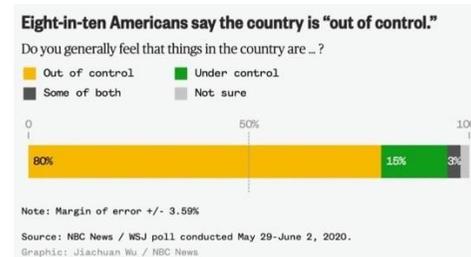
Supporting evidence

'Recognising the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on low-skilled workers, a recent poll of economists found that the vast majority are concerned that COVID-19 will raise inequality (IGM 2020). Our results strongly support this concern (Furceri et al. 2020). We find that major epidemics in this century have raised income inequality, lowered the share of incomes going to the bottom deciles, and lowered the employment-to-population ratio for those with basic education but not for those with advanced degrees.'

– VOX EU

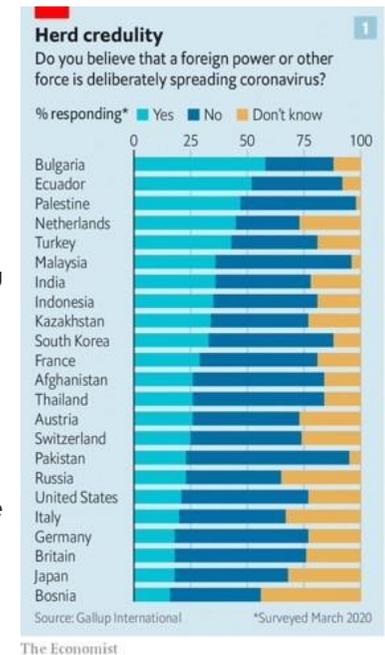
'During events like the Black Death and World Wars I and II, the loss of millions of working-age adults created labour scarcities that had an equalising effect, ushering in new political structures such as the decline of feudalism, the expansion of the working-class vote, and the creation of social safety nets like the United Kingdom's National Health Service. These more inclusive political and economic structures allowed groups to work out their differences by democratic means.'

– Carnegie Endowment for International Peace



Implications today

- ▶ Return to your purpose with strong and affirmative positions on key events, providing forums for debate and discussion around divisive issues, which may not exist for people elsewhere.
- ▶ Reaffirm your commitment to diversity and inclusion, whilst encouraging tolerance of view points and healthy debate.
- ▶ Make sure you aren't inadvertently handling your workforce in two streams, with the neutrals looked after at the expense of the negatives.



Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Review how smart, machine-driven technologies are being applied in service of colleagues and customers, so they don't unintentionally polarise or bias.
- ▶ Encourage greater contact between employees and customers to drive empathy and pop filter bubbles, for example through 'walk a mile in their shoes' programmes.
- ▶ Ensure you understand and know how to meet the new day-to-day needs of your teams, such as increased need for flexible working and access to childcare.

Hopes for a better life and world

What was once impossible is now possible. What was once essential and routine, is now open to question. If nothing else, COVID-19 has provided a moment of global reflection on what really matters and what new reality can be forged – for individuals, households and organisations.

The research reveals a great sense of potential, right when the planet needs it. Leaders have spoken about 'bottling' the recent surge of enterprise agility and inventiveness the crisis brought about. Individuals and households are redefining roles and investments. The value of public services and the key workers within them, once challenged by ideology, are now reaffirmed by reality.

So although the global economic, health and climate outlook might remain bleak, the outlook for human potential has, in many ways, never looked brighter. People have demonstrated to one another what can be achieved under pressure, and how new realities can be forged at speed.

Service providers have an opportunity to innovate how they work for customers and colleagues – more experimental, more agile, more human – and planet-centred – which will fundamentally inform what the right response is for them.

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Researchers have studied how people cope with the loss of their strongest attachments: children, spouses or partners, and parents. This large body of research shows that although traumas, crises, and tragedies come in a thousand forms... rising to a challenge reveals your hidden abilities, and seeing these abilities changes your self-concept.

– Jonathan Haidt, Professor and author of *The Happiness Hypothesis*

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Since we already see signs that most Americans are exhausted by this culture war, [my hope is] that this year or into next year will be kind of a pit of despair or a pit of darkness—and then we'll emerge from it.

– Thomas Cooley Professor of Ethical Leadership at New York University's Stern School of Business

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As we have seen in past crises of this magnitude, there will come a time when we will look back and it will be clear how we – at all levels of society, government, business, healthcare systems, and civic and humanitarian organisations – could have been and will be better prepared to face emergencies of this scale.

– Jamie Dimon, CEO JP Morgan



Re-evaluating life's priorities

Once the Chinese economy re-opened, young spenders didn't rush into buying, but instead into selling their stuff, starting the #ditchyourstuff movement.

- ▶ EY Seren teams are observing the same emergent trend in Western cultures, a few weeks behind that curve.
- ▶ Lockdown and the slower pace of life gave many time and energy to rethink what truly matters, with people questioning their choices of:
 - ▶ Health: I'm not bullet-proof, I need to be taking better care of my health.
 - ▶ Family: Should I be commuting to work every day, working long-hours and never have time for my kids?
 - ▶ Employment: Shall I continue doing the job I don't really like? Or shall I start my own business?
 - ▶ Spending: Do I really need all the stuff I am buying? Or maybe I can find alternatives and save more?
 - ▶ Home: Why do I need to live in expensive city locations?
 - ▶ Priorities have changed as a result of the crisis and lockdown, which challenge conventional consumer habits. This will in turn challenge providers to rethink their marketing, sales and service strategies, to keep in step.

How long will it last

EY Seren teams think that these priorities are likely to change again, depending on the severity of the economic fall out. However this trend is an acceleration of a society increasingly questioning lifestyle choices in an unstable world. Humans will always need certain things like shelter, food and warmth – however beyond that there's an expectation that established habits and needs to shift and flux for some time.

67%

ranked the basics of life – health, family, friends as the most important things

76%

U.S. adults changed their priorities due to the pandemic

Supporting evidence

'Unsurprisingly [our survey] showed more caution over buying and selling in the short term but less expected was an increased commitment to move in the next 24 months as the experience of COVID-19 has made people think more about the space they live in, the attributes of a property they most value and in some cases where they want to live.'

– Savills

'Overall, my financial priorities are shifting away from fun and immediate gratification and towards security and long-term stability.'

– Elizabeth Aldrich, The Business Insider

'With much more of their days spent in their homes, consumers also have more time and reasons to sort through things they don't feel they need – so they're not living around clutter that is common in many apartments.'

– Reuters

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The global pandemic is bringing back the less is more approach. Around the world, consumers are becoming more mindful of how they spend their money

– The National

Human insights

'I'm certainly even more conscious to save money where I can. And like many, we're questioning what's essential and what items are just not necessary.'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

'As many of us have sorted through cupboards, so much 'stuff' has been rediscovered! It's made me think how gullible I've been, believing advertising telling me I needed this or that.'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

'Before lockdown, although I liked walking, I never did it unless I had to. Now, I am actually enjoying a stroll four/five times a week. I find it relaxing and I'm enjoying listening to audiobooks. This is a habit I want to keep up when lockdown is lifted.'

– Diary study participant, Female 32

'I am very independent and love living on my own but lockdown has made me realise how much I need human connection. I find myself jealous of people living with their partner/friend/family member.'

– Diary study participant, Female 32

'I have time to think if I want to do my job 24/7 or do I want to do something else. I haven't ever been career-focused. Now I've got an opportunity to reconsider my life, we could do a joint venture.'

– Diary study participant, Female 45

'The one thing I reflected on today when both me and my son were lying on the grass in our garden, was the fact that this has given, not just us, but everyone a great opportunity to re-live the 'old school' days where parents had a lot more time to play with their children, spent time away from the TV and computers.'

– Diary study participant, Male 31

Implications today

- ▶ Be supportive of customer decisions to change their spending strategies. Have conversations on how your value offerings could support your customers' changed consumption decisions.
- ▶ Review your marketing segments and design personas based on emergent new mindsets, so you're servicing and building new offers based on the new reality. Expect to have to do this every quarter for now.

Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Be supportive of customer decisions to change their spending strategies. Have conversations on how your value offerings could support your customers' changed consumption decisions.
- ▶ Review your marketing segments and design personas based on emergent new mindsets, so you're servicing and building new offers based on the new reality. Expect to have to do this every quarter for now.

Necessity driving invention

'Lockdown could turn out to be one of the most creative times for humankind', says Ms Mann, author of *The Science of Boredom*. 'After all, William Shakespeare allegedly wrote *King Lear* during a plague, Sir Isaac Newton reportedly formulated the theory of gravity in quarantine in the 17th century, while Alexander Pushkin wrote some of his greatest works under lockdown in 1830.'

For decades economists were wondering what would happen if people can't work or don't need to work so much and exploring initially unorthodox ideas of Universal Basic Income, and four-day weeks.

Governments and companies have been already experimenting with four-day work week even before COVID-19, to boost productivity, happiness and commitment.

- ▶ Now, on the back of the crisis, factors of boredom, paused work (e.g., business can't operate) or less work (e.g., furlough) are coming together in an organic real-life experiment that is already showcasing the emergence of more creative and entrepreneurial behaviours:
- ▶ Leveraging the newly acquired time to hustle for additional funds
- ▶ Accelerating what had previously been side-projects
- ▶ Reconsidering 'beloved' occupations, leaning more towards passion jobs
- ▶ Unleashing their creative selves and experimenting across the board

Psychologists confirm that boredom is a very powerful source of innovation. At the same time, it's recognised that people do not need to feel bad if this is not their story, sometimes what people need is to rest in order to take on new things further down the road.

How long will it last

During the last decade the world has already started moving towards a passion economy, where technology and especially online platforms are enabling people to change direction and make a living aligned with their strengths and values. EY Seren teams expect to see an acceleration of this as lockdown reduces with more people and organisations choosing or forced into considering and embracing the unorthodox.

40%
Productivity and creativity boost achieved by Microsoft employees working four-day work week

Implications today

- ▶ When in an experimental mode, people may be more receptive to new ideas, products and services. There is an opportunity for providers to enable these lockdown experimenters with products and services that chime with motivations to make the most of the unexpected opportunities the crisis reveals.
- ▶ Consider ways of encouraging self-growth and support your employees and consumers in learning new skills.

Supporting evidence

'From a cellist to a scientist, workers find that slow living and embracing boredom sparks new ideas.'

– **The Financial Times**

'Boredom is one of the most creative forces – there are benefits to doing nothing. You start thinking in novel and productive ways. Get through the pain barrier and discover your creativity that is waiting to emerge.'

– **Sandi Mann, Senior Psychology Lecturer**

'We are seeing a classic response to an emergency by scientists rallying around and harnessing their energy to think creatively.'

– **Paul Freemont, Professor**

'Jacinda Ardern flags four-day working week as way to rebuild New Zealand after COVID-19.'

– **The Guardian**



Human insights

'It's crazy, I've made £10,000 in sales in a matter of weeks. I've had to drop everything to do it, but it's given me a welcome windfall in a time of uncertainty.'

– **Diary participant, Female 31**

'It [gardening] started as us doing favours for neighbours, but now we've seen an opportunity to build something of our own.'

– **Diary participant, Female 45**

'I'm waiting for an iPad to come this week to support my new found music production skills!'

– **Diary participant, Male 36**

'I've done more IT related troubleshooting than usual, by necessity. There's been so many complications with online learning that I've had to learn loads about new platforms and operating systems.'

– **Diary participant, Female 45**



Implications tomorrow

- ▶ Consider how to enable people to marry their side hustle with their job, as a way of helping your organisation and its people weather the downturn
- ▶ Model the impact of a four-day week or similar. Many companies have discovered a range of benefits in this model.

Less bias, more compassion

This crisis has allowed everyone to realise truths that were unseen before, be it a renewed appreciation of what your partner does for your family, or the realisation that you'd been previously blind to broader societal inequalities.

There's a paradox playing out. In some ways the crisis has been a great leveller, collapsing organisational and institutional hierarchies in very practical ways as people at all levels share equal space on a screen and are revealed to be working in the same cluttered spare rooms. This has led to a feeling of shared experience, which has stimulated greater empathy and compassion for one another. Behind the business suit is the human. And the human experience is defying convention. All assumptions and biases of how people live are thrown into the air.

However, simultaneously, there's been an equal and opposite trend revealing that the crisis is by no means a leveller, and is instead negatively over-indexing around existing gender and race boundaries.

What seems to be occurring is that the initial drive to 'help everyone through the crisis' has revealed that many systems are systematically unable to serve equally. A televised incident of American police brutality (motto: 'to protect and to serve') brought this into vivid focus and became the flame that lit the furnace.

How long will it last

This crisis is overturning assumptions and conventional wisdom. It began locally, in teams and organisations, but has quickly become a universal drive to challenge systematic bias. For us, the key question is whether leaders have enough bandwidth to both navigate an economic crisis, whilst simultaneously removing bias, to enable everyone, inside and out to be served equally, compassionately and fairly

Black British women are

4.3x

More likely to die from COVID-19 than their white counterparts

38%

feel more inclined to help strangers

Supporting evidence

'Our empathy, our capacity to envision that we too could be affected, has been a powerful tool in the public health arsenal ... We feel regret and feel terrible about those who are suffering, in no small part because we can imagine that suffering being our own.'

– The Lancet

'Since the pandemic hit, many of us have been moved by managers' gestures of care, big and small. Building a movement on those sentiments could let us humanise management'

– The Financial Times

'Could this collective togetherness allow us to redefine our values? Could it lead us as a society to treat those who have become accustomed to exploitation and marginalisation with respect? ... In a crisis of this nature it is not the bankers, traders or elite hedge fund managers who are essential workers, but doctors, nurses, carers, porters, drivers, teachers, food shop workers ... Among these are some of the lowest paid workers who have been undervalued in our neoliberal, financialised world.'

– Futures of Work

“

I have experienced homelessness and have mental health issues. I hope after the pandemic crisis we will see a more compassionate and caring society.

– Chris Bird, Artist

Human insights

'I think during this lockdown, it has certainly made me appreciate more of what my wife does when she isn't working ...'

– Diary participant, Male 31

'My neighbour has just rung me to see if I needed any shopping that was nice of them ...'

– Diary participant, Female 55

'I have spent the morning volunteering at a local food bank. I am also part of a COVID-19 group that helps those in isolation with shopping etc. Before COVID-19, I was interested in volunteering but never had the time. I am really enjoying being able to help others and I'm hoping to be able to keep volunteering when I go back to work.'

– Diary participant, Female 32

'Got a beautiful card in the post from my boss. She's so encouraging and thoughtful. I've worked in several places with poor leadership and dubious ethical practices. What a blessing to be experiencing this pandemic employed by such honourable people.'

– Diary participant, Female 45

[Referring to clap for NHS] 'This fills me with hope that at the very end of this lockdown, we can move forward and start to appreciate everything in more value and depth and be more conscious about our decisions which can have an effect on people, careers and the environment!'

– Diary participant, Male 31

Implications today

- ▶ As a leader, recognise the need for employees to respond to the crisis through helping others, providing them with the opportunity to do so – this could be simple mental health check-ins at the start of meetings to surface and discuss experiences, to more formal volunteering and dialogue programmes.
- ▶ Create a specific unit tasked with tackling systematic bias in your organisation, and create countervailing anti-bias measures within existing decision-making frameworks.

Implications tomorrow

- ▶ As society is moving to a more compassionate state, this is an opportunity to review your organisation's mission, vision and values – do they still resonate and do they address your changed customer and employee base. This is a chance to define your more compassionate normal.
- ▶ Consider moving your organisation towards an overarching principle of inclusion, in which staff at all levels within the organisation feel valued, are treated fairly and equitably, and able to speak out where they see the opposite.



Edition 3

An insight into
how different
people are
experiencing the
crisis

A deep dive into our diary studies

Fiona (page 1 of 2)

A typical day ...

Like many mums, Fiona is juggling a lot during lockdown. Home-schooling two boisterous children has become a near full-time occupation after being furloughed.



'Today has been pretty stressful, the kids have run out of all motivation for home learning and it's like herding cats getting them to focus on anything!'

Fiona's husband – a paramedic – sleeps in a caravan in the driveway to reduce the risk of inadvertently infecting the family. In addition to childcare, Fiona now does most of the cooking and housework. This has put added strain on their relationship.



'It's been over a week since my husband showed any appreciation for anything I've been doing. The difficulty with being married to a paramedic, who gets his name chanted every Thursday...is that it's pretty hard to compete on the heroics scale!'

Make do and mend.

Lockdown has caused Fiona to reflect on the limitations of modern consumer society.

'As I've sorted through cupboards, I've rediscovered so much 'stuff'! It's made me think how gullible I've been, believing advertising telling me I needed this or that. My sons have been very content on the whole. They've not needed trips to Alton Towers or expensive weekends away. A walk by our river has been all they need.'



Virtualising customs and rituals

Fiona's Christian faith is fundamental to her way of life. Her church has virtualised its services, which has both widened and restricted access for different segments of the congregation.

'Our church moved to a online video channel that hosts a weekly sermon. Our weekly prayer meeting is also a live call now. I know of some lone parents who struggled to get to a Sunday morning church service who can now access [online] meetings, but there are others who lack digital confidence and are excluded.'

Diary Study Participant

Age: 45

Family status: Married with two children under 18

Occupation: Higher education worker (furloughed)

Personal annual income: £15,000-£19,999

Savings and investments: Under £5,000

Personal debt: £20,000

Furloughed early in the pandemic, Fiona is doing her best to keep the household running whilst her husband works extra shifts as a paramedic on the front line. She delivers food parcels in the local community, supports her children's learning and is even project-managing building work to the family home. Lockdown has been tough at times, especially when she suffered the bereavement of a friend and was unable to attend the funeral.

Do I trust it?

Navigating the relaxation of lockdown and seeking out trustworthy information from reliable sources has not been straightforward.

'There's such a temptation to complacency. I need to remain vigilant, and actively seek out facts and research to make informed decisions. I don't trust the government one bit, there's been too much shameful lying. I've been extra careful about what information I consume regarding COVID-19. I know we all have agendas and our own particular biases, but the gulf between what the scientists are saying and how the cabinet avoid or lie is appalling. There are individuals I do trust more. It's about their tone, their ethics, their honesty, their attention to detail.'

Fiona (page 2 of 2)

Navigating unlockdown

A family trip to the local beach led Fiona to question her own conduct:

'There's a certain underlying anxiety felt when you're out. It's almost normal, then you remember it's not! There's an internal battle going on: knowing the new surroundings will do you good, and concern that you're breaking some confusing rule...Was I being selfish and putting others at risk, or was I prioritising the wellbeing of my household?'



Planning the household's financial future is more challenging than usual:

'The next year is certain to be volatile; forward planning our bills is difficult...Do we maintain the costs for the boys' extra curricular activities, or maybe we need to simplify our spending.'

Finding a new purpose

Ethical and philosophical considerations are coming into play in relation to financial planning:

'Should we be saving money each month (arguably good stewardship) or using that surplus to bless friends and neighbours whose circumstances are tougher than ours?'

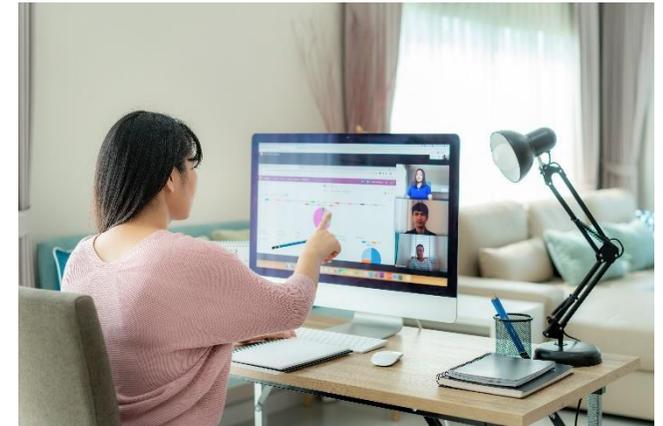
Less bias, more compassion

Fiona also plans to evaluate providers based on their conduct during the pandemic:

'We will patronage companies who've honoured their staff through this process, and avoid those who've acted less ethically.'

How can providers help Fiona?

- ▶ Employers can support her desire to continue volunteering in the community e.g., by providing paid time allowances for volunteering
- ▶ Provide products, services and policies according to an ethical and sustainability agenda
- ▶ Recognise that she is flexing what she needs over time, so let her flex her commitment



Fiona's post-Covid world

In reflecting on her pandemic experience, Fiona wants to slow down and live more intentionally.

- ▶ Explore new avenues professionally
- ▶ Prioritise her children
- ▶ Practice more intentional self-care
- ▶ Simplify her life and shop less
- ▶ Continue volunteering for those less fortunate
- ▶ Undertake more learning
- ▶ Sees personal and local networks (e.g., her church) as key ways her local community can recover
- ▶ Looking for companies to demonstrate genuine compassion for customers and workers
- ▶ Wants to see generations mobilise to help one another e.g., the young assisting older generations bridge digital divide

Connor (page 1 of 2)

A typical day ...

Homification of work

Connor leads a team of remote IT workers from his kitchen table. They have a vital role helping a healthcare trust adapt to the pandemic. He's found working via remote collaboration tools has efficiency and environmental benefits.

'The new technology allowing me to work from home is becoming 'the new normal' for my staff and myself. It's challenging initially but actually in some ways better/more beneficial than the old face-to-face way of meeting. Easier to collaborate on a shared document/less temptation for my team to print everything out.



However, managing a team remotely isn't always easy. According to Connor, some of his team thrive on autonomous working, but those who are require more support and encouragement are not operating at their full potential.

'We all like to think we have strong teams that can work autonomously but the reality is some people cope with this better than others. It's difficult to strike the balance between being a good 'remote' leader together with not being intrusive or being seen to be checking up for the sake of checking up.'

Homification of work

Remote working has encroached on Connor's home life. He tells us that it's not easy to switch modes, and there's a temptation to continue working with the ease of remote tools.

'It's difficult to put up a sign saying 'I'm at work' when I am at home. I still have responsibility to be a dad to my kids. Even on my weekday 'rest days' I've been obliged to take, I have still worked. I think technology remote working has had that impact. The boundary between work and home has been blurred massively.'

With less need to travel and an eye on family finances, Connor jettisoned one of the family's cars and purchased a bicycle instead. Health and wellbeing was also a motivating factor – with a more sedentary lifestyle, taking up cycling is giving him a new way to exercise.

Adapting and becoming more adaptive

'I've just been informed I can be released from my car lease. This is a massive benefit as it was costing me several hundred pounds a month and to be honest, we don't need the second car. I've joined the cycle to work scheme, I rarely travelled far in the car before this and certainly won't be afterwards. I think this is all part of the new way of working now, and living really! Actually quite excited to be cycling rather than driving everywhere.'

Diary Study Participant

Age: 36

Family status: Married with two children under 18

Occupation: IT management in healthcare

Personal annual income: £40,000-£49,999

Savings and investments: Under £5,000

Personal debt: None

Managing critical IT projects for a healthcare trust from his kitchen table, Connor's workload has increased significantly during the pandemic. He has adapted relatively well to home working, but worries about easing of the lockdown and how to navigate a changed world have caused him anxiety.

Re-evaluating life's priorities and routines

Connor is using unexpected free time to dedicate to his family and channel into furthering his musical passion. Making more time for family and hobbies is a change in priority he wants to maintain after lockdown.



'I'm using this time, as well as of course spending time with my family, to develop my hobbies like music – I'm a musician in my spare time and have collaborated with people remotely, in ways I never thought I could so that's a nice benefit!'

Connor (page 2 of 2)

We're all vulnerable

Connor told us about moments of anxiety caused by worries about the easing of lockdown and unease being outside the home.

'Today has been tough. Went shopping on my lunch break, having not really ventured into large shops through this pandemic. I think a combination of things, the relaxing of the lockdown, not having eaten, and just general anxiety, made this a big deal. Found myself struggling to follow my wife's fairly simple shopping list and feeling very overwhelmed. Simple things like shopping seem so much more difficult and considered now.'



New forms of enterprise

Connor's wife took the opportunity during lockdown to begin her own business, which has really taken off!

'Wife has started up a side business selling scented candles. She's been a victim of her own success...she's very busy with it but she's doing very well.'

Navigating unlockdown

Connor has sometimes been at odds with his extended family about physical distancing regulations, as people have interpreted them differently. Connor is caught between protecting his family and the desire of others to enjoy leisure.

'Should we be saving money each month (arguably good stewardship) or using that surplus to bless friends and neighbours whose circumstances are tougher than ours?'

'I'm very nervous about interpretations of relaxed lockdown'

Straining digital capacity

With no football matches being televised, Connor wanted to change his TV package to remove sports. However, it became a painful process when his provider's live chat service failed.

Tried going on 'live chat' but it took half a dozen attempts to get through. I ended up having to call them in the end. I prefer avoiding human interaction with these type of things at all costs, because it adds time and is a hassle.'

More compassion please

The pandemic has been a time of reflection. Connor has witnessed a lot of altruism in the local community, and he hopes this may be the beginning of healing in a fractured society.

'We have quite a fractured society at the moment what with Brexit and xenophobic mindsets. I would like a more tolerant society to emerge from the pandemic. We should be doing more in the local area, with our local communities, with a greater emphasis on togetherness.'



How can providers help Connor?

- ▶ Providers should be proactive at times of change to ensure customers aren't paying for inappropriate services
- ▶ Increase investment in smarter, better self-service for complex needs
- ▶ Support micro-entrepreneurship, e.g., by making startup business materials available
- ▶ Employers can assist employees who wish to switch from car dependency to greener, healthier alternatives e.g., by providing cycling infrastructure, subsidised equipment incentives

Jenny

A typical day ...

We're all vulnerable

Jenny needs to restore her income soon, but looking after her son and fear of exposing herself to the virus are discouraging her from seeking employment.

'The biggest challenge for me right now is money. I'm not seeking work due to childcare responsibilities, but also because I don't want to put myself at risk from the virus. I have high blood pressure, kidney disease, a skin condition and being from an ethnic minority I know I'm at higher risk. My son also has asthma.'



For Jenny, understanding what help she was entitled to was difficult. She hasn't yet spoken to her bank about what support is available.

'I haven't spoken to my bank since this situation started. I probably should contact them. [Banks] seem to be doing what they can, but I was denied an overdraft (applied online). They didn't say why, which was frustrating as I want to understand how I can improve my credit rating.'

'In the beginning I lived off savings, but now they've run out. I'm receiving universal credit, but there is a benefit cap on it. At first, I didn't understand any of it. I contacted the council Income maximisation team, they were able to arrange rent support for 3 months – without that I would have had next to nothing.'

Virtualising customs and rituals

Living alone with her son and no work risks social isolation. A new social, dating and broadcasting app has allowed her to make new connections and find solidarity with others in a similar position, virtually.

'I miss the social aspect of work – connecting with colleagues and customers. I started using an app. It's been really good for me, meeting new people. I talk to people all over the world. It's kept me busy, I haven't even watched Netflix that much. It's about feeling connected to people. I suffer from anxiety but when I go on the app I get shown so much love from people.'



Less bias, more compassion

Jenny is looking for future employers to show evidence of having supported employees through the pandemic. Joining a compassionate company which puts workers first is an even more important characteristic for her going forward.

'I will be asking future employers what they did to protect their employees during the pandemic. It will help me see into their culture, see what it would have been like for me. If they have topped up the furlough pay, that will be one sign of a good company.'

Interview Participant

Age: 30

Family status: Single mother with young child

Occupation: Made redundant (previously worked in venue security)

Personal annual income: Supporting herself on savings, universal credit, and help from family

Savings and investments: Under £1,000

Personal debt: £1,000-£4,999

Jenny is a business studies graduate living in an inner city neighbourhood, right on a busy main road. The small flat she rents has no access to a garden. Since work dried up and school closed, she's had no choice but to stay at home to take care of her nine-year-old son. She's struggling to keep up with living expenses

How can providers help Jenny?

- ▶ Consider temporarily lowering lending product eligibility criteria for the duration of the pandemic
- ▶ Utilities and telecoms providers can temporarily reduce of bills for the duration of pandemic
- ▶ Ally with local authorities and charitable organisations to support the unemployed
- ▶ Provide additional outbound support for customers who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic e.g., BAME, single parents, those over 75 years old
- ▶ Proactively help her navigate her financial options and access support she is eligible for

Magda

A typical day...

Homification of work

Working remotely initially was difficult for Magda and her colleagues as they had to get to grips with unfamiliar technology.

'It's proving difficult with colleagues at [my charity workplace] getting a meeting together as they are not so tech savvy [...] only three could figure out the video calling. We set up a call group but has proved very time consuming and slow.'

Magda shares her concerns that charities will suffer as donations and funding dry up during lockdown.

'I feel sad that so many charities will miss out on fundraising or donations as it all adds up. How will smaller charities survive? Applying for funding is not taking place either whilst on lockdown. The last thing people can afford to do now is make monetary donations.'

We're all vulnerable

Magda suffers from a degenerative disease and has reduced mobility. The risk of catching the virus has made her very wary of venturing outside.

'I've started reading more into this and so many people are passing away and I thought I can't deal with this; I've become a hermit'

Virtualising customs and rituals

Magda told us about an art journaling course she's doing, which is helping her manage her anxiety through the pandemic.

'Just received an invite to finish our art journaling course. It will be an experience!'



Navigating unlockdown

Magda is taking a cautious approach to resuming everyday activities, preferring to observe how others are behaving and the impact on infections.

'I'm supposed to go on holiday at the end of July to a caravan park. However, I'm going to see how other people are reacting to social distancing and hygiene before deciding whether or not to go.'

Diary Study Participant

Age: 56

Family status: Married with grown up children

Occupation: Receptionist at charity shop

Personal annual income: £15,000-£19,999

Savings and investments: None

Personal debt: Unknown

Magda works at a charity shop and has been able to continue some of her work remotely. As she suffers from serious health issues, Magda is taking extra caution. She has experienced some low moments in isolation and has dealt with these by drawing on her friends, family and art journaling.

How can providers help Magda?

- ▶ All providers need to design digital experiences with less-digitally literate users in mind (this has been proven to improve the experience for everyone)
- ▶ Design for moments of anxiety, stress and bereavement that may affect her ability to make optimal decisions e.g., waiving penalty fees for overlooking early cancellation fees

Leslie

A typical day...

Leslie is working from home and socialising virtually. However, the loss of freedom and activities he usually enjoys such as theatre and tennis are causing boredom and frustration.

'We are not socialising in person but are going onto online platform groups but even this is getting boring now except with my children and grandchildren. Generally fed up that I can't do what I want. Business is non-existent and bored generally.'



Re-evaluating life's priorities and routines

Leslie's experience working from home during lockdown has made him realise how easily this can be done. He now plans to close his bricks-and-mortar shop and trade remotely until the end of the year. His business has been hit hard by the pandemic, which has caused him to bring forward his retirement date.

'COVID-19 has definitely made my mind up to retire. I will definitely leave the office when my lease expires on 1 September and wind down the business working from home until the end of this year and working from home the last few weeks has made me realise how easy it can be done.'

Sharing spaces and burdens

Leslie is in the fortunate position to be able to assist his daughter financially to help her through the pandemic.

'We're helping our daughter and her husband financially. They've just moved to the south coast and the pandemic has caused all sorts of complications for them.'

Leslie received discounts with some of his business service providers, including telecomms and merchant payment services. However, he was frustrated that he had to proactively contact them and negotiate the discounts.

'I contacted [his service providers] as unfortunately nobody nowadays does anything without you having to ask. I know it's cynical but it's the way things are. Measures are in place, but you have to ask yourself.'

'The first steps out of lockdown are the hardest'

Navigating unlockdown

Leslie told us that he's content to take a 'wait and see' attitude to re-engaging with services. He wants the safety to be proven by others before taking the risk himself, especially given his age.

'It's not worth it to go through all the measures to avoid contracting virus and then blow it all. The first steps are the hardest ... if I have a good initial experience, I expect I will gradually start participating in things again.'

Diary Study Participant

Age: 65

Family status: Married with grown up children

Occupation: Business owner – small travel agency

Personal annual income: £85,000

Savings and investments: £110,000

Personal debt: Unknown

Leslie is a small travel agency owner living with his wife in the home they own outright. The declining demand for travel has caused his business to dry up and he plans to retire early. Leslie has experienced a range of emotions during lockdown, from boredom at the lack of leisure activities, to deep gratitude to his wife for supporting him.

How can providers help Leslie?

- ▶ Help small business customers protect cash flow e.g., by providing more time to pay bills
- ▶ Provide retirement planning services which take into account the impact of the pandemic on stock markets and investment strategies
- ▶ Develop low-touch service models to give him the confidence to resume using services with physical touchpoints



Edition 4

Initial insights from our survey

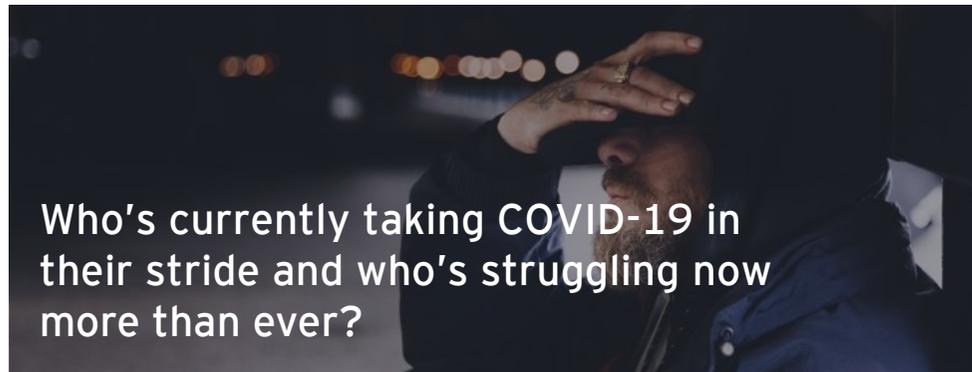
The key headlines from our early analysis

A first glance at our national quantitative survey

EY Seren teams will reveal more of this in our next edition, but these are the first headlines from our analysis work:

1. Everyone has lost something

In edition 2, EY Seren teams came up with the four mindsets of people going through the crisis, depending on their levels of capacity and access. In our quantitative study EY Seren teams decided to understand how the UK population is spread across these types, answering the exam question:



Initial findings show that the most severely impacted subgroups are:

- ▶ Low income individuals (<£15k household income)
- ▶ Full-time parents
- ▶ Those on furlough
- ▶ Gen Z (those aged 18-24)

The unemployed (those looking for a job, unable to work due to disability/ill health and those who are currently not looking for a job)

Edition 4 of Human signals will explain the driving forces behind this and identify those who are optimistically adapting.

2. Homification of work

Edition 1 started exploring the implications of remote work, having introduced the 'Homification of work' theme. EY Seren teams used our quantitative study to dig deeper into nation-wide work life experience, aiming to understand:



Employees are saying they want increased flexibility on where they work; 76% say they want to spend at least half the week or more working from home post COVID-19.

While many employees have had to overcome obstacles with working from home (whether personal, resource related or due to lack of physical space), 15% have experienced no challenges at all.

Edition 4 will uncover more of the specifics around remote working 'challenges', 'benefits' and find out what 'support' companies are offering employees and the community during this transitional time.

A first glance at our national quantitative survey (cont'd)

EY Seren teams will reveal more of this in our next edition, but these are the first headlines from our analysis work:

3. Digital everything

In this and previous editions, EY Seren teams explored accelerated digitisation of services across sectors. In our quantitative study EY Seren teams went further to understand:



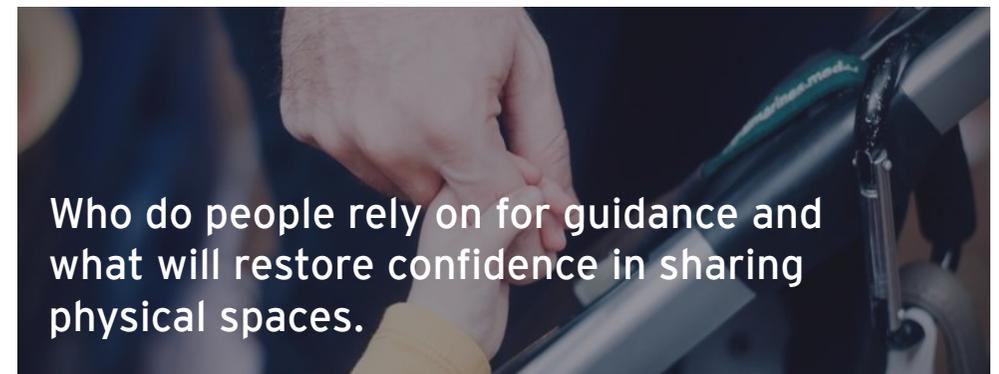
48% of consumers are using banking services (personal or family) more digitally now than before COVID-19 restrictions began, with around four in five customers saying that they are likely to continue accessing this service digitally post COVID-19. However, the same cannot be said for healthcare services, where people expect to return to face-to-face interactions.

When asked about services more generally, consumers stated that the most important thing they look for right now is 'hygiene and safety' but currently services are not doing enough to deliver on this.

The next edition will explore digital usage within other sectors, the triggers/barriers to adoption and the gap analysis (importance vs. performance) of service attributes.

4. Do I trust it?

Edition 1 started exploring the implications of remote work, having introduced the 'Homification of work' theme. EY Seren teams used our quantitative study to dig deeper into nation-wide work life experience, aiming to understand:



Looking at the results, there is divided views on trust. 11% of respondents do not trust any source of information, advice or guidance right now (this includes the government, scientists, family, friends and doctors amongst others).

In terms of sharing physical spaces, the most commonly cited factor consumers said they needed were 'social-distancing markers' (55%) with 6% saying that nothing will help them feel confident in sharing spaces and 8% happy to share spaces regardless of what actions are taken.

EY Seren teams will take a closer look at the concept of 'trust' in the follow-up report (and the notion of 'contact tracing').

A woman with blonde hair is sitting at a wooden table in a kitchen, looking at a laptop. She is also holding a smartphone in her left hand. On the table in front of her is a white coffee cup, a notebook, and a silver plate. In the background, a man is standing near a washing machine, and a young girl is sitting on a kitchen counter. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an evening or indoor lighting.

Edition 5
References
and next edition

What next?

EY Seren teams are taking an iterative approach to this research, working in two-week sprints to continually challenge our assumptions and release what EY Seren teams discover to our community. If you want to share your opinion, get earlier editions or find out more about this research, please let us know.



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Edition 1 and 2 of **Human signals** is still available via the [EY Seren website](#)

Edition 1 themes:

1. New purpose in service
2. Straining digital capacity
3. Health evidencing and etiquette
4. Homification of work
5. Adapting and becoming more adaptive
6. Enterprise agility tested
7. We're all vulnerable

Edition 2 themes:

1. Do I trust it?
2. A new era of leadership
3. We've all lost something
4. Make do and mend
5. Sharing space and burdens
6. Generation Crisis
7. Virtualising customs and rituals
8. Escape from home



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Page 24 – A first glance at our national quantitative study

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