

Information for participants: Interviews

Solidarity in times of a pandemic: What do people do, and why? A comparative and longitudinal study

Dear participant,

We would like to invite you to participate in the study mentioned above.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate, or withdraw your participation at any time, without having to give a reason. There will be no negative consequences for you if you refuse to participate or if you withdraw from this study early.

This study is necessary to gain new, reliable *academic* research results. Your consent to participate in the study is an indispensable prerequisite for us to conduct this study. You do not have to give your consent now. If you decide to participate in the study, we will obtain your consent verbally at the beginning of the interview. We will audio record your consent. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and do not hesitate to ask questions.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

Sadly, we are currently facing a major public health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic poses unprecedented challenges for policymakers, public health officials, and societies. The social and economic effects are likely to be felt for years to come. In this study, we will explore how citizens respond to the pandemic, what actions they take and do not take, for what reasons, and what they think about the measures recommended or prescribed by authorities in their countries.

We will use a variety of different research methods (interviews, focus groups, diaries) for this study. Insights from the study will probably inform a large-scale survey study at a later point.

2. What is the procedure of the study?

We will carry out interviews with around 70 people in Ireland, the United Kingdom, in Austria, in Germany, and in other EU countries. Interviews will take place virtually (e.g. via video- or audio-link) or via telephone. We will audio-record the interviews (this means that even if we do interviews via video-link, we will not record your image, but only your voice). We expect interviews to last for 30-60 minutes.

If you agree to be interviewed, we will ask to speak to you twice, once in April/May 2020, and once about six months later.

We will ask everyone who agrees to be interviewed whether they would also be willing to keep diaries about their actions and thoughts relating to the pandemic and share them with us; if you do not want to keep a diary, you can still participate in the interviews.

3. What are the benefits of participating in the study?

Countries across the globe have implemented various measures to slow down the spread of the COVID-19. These challenging circumstances call for research not only on the compliance of the public with policy measures, but on the motivations of people to follow advice, or not, and on the actions taken that may go above and beyond government advice. Comparing insights from different countries will enable us to identify similarities and differences in how societies have responded to restrictive measures that have been introduced, and to map these against different crisis management strategies in different EU countries. We are already seeing policymakers eager to learn from each other, and we hope that the study we propose will inform this learning process.

4. What are the possible risks of taking part this study? Could participants experience any discomfort or other side effects?

Because interviews will take place online, there will be no health-related risks for you. The risk that we foresee is that it may be unpleasant or even depressing to discuss the pandemic. If you feel that the interview makes you anxious, or if there is anything else that will make you want to end the interview, this will not be a problem – you can stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

We will not ask questions about intimate private aspects of your life, and we will not ask any questions about topics such as illness and death.

To take part in the study you need to be 18 years or older and live in Ireland. Minors and persons who are not able to give consent for other reasons are excluded from the study.

5. In what cases is it necessary that participants withdraw from the study early?

If during the interview we feel that continuing the interview would be harmful to you – for example, because the conversation makes you anxious, we will take the initiative and suggest to end the interview.

6. How will the data collected in this study be used?

We will analyse what our respondents tell us in interviews to derive information that could be beneficial for researchers and help policy makers make better decisions in the future. We are only interested in what you tell us, not in your name or address for this purpose. Your name, address, or other identifying details will not be part of any research papers or anything else that people outside of the research team will read. If your situation is so specific (e.g. if you suffer from a rare disease) that you or we are worried that people could identify you even without your name being mentioned, we will omit this piece of information from our research papers.

We will keep your name and contact details for the duration of the project so that we can contact you; nobody outside of the research team will see this information. After the end of the project we will write to you and ask whether you would like to see our findings. After that, we will destroy the file with your name and contact details.

7. Will there be any costs for the participants? Will they receive reimbursement or remuneration?

Participating in this study will not cost you anything. You will not receive payment for participating in this study either.

8. Possibility to discuss further questions

Please contact the study coordinators, Prof Susi Geiger and Dr Ilaria Galasso, in case you want to participate in the study. They will then arrange a suitable time for the first interview with you.

Do not hesitate to contact us in case of any further questions. Prof Susi Geiger and Dr Ilaria Galasso will be happy to answer any further questions you might have about the study and your rights as participants.

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Contact details for support during the COVID-19 crisis

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/news/supports-and-services-during-covid-19.html>