

Title: Agenda Item 6 - Communications Update

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Organisation: Dept of Health & HSE

Date: 13 May 2021

Action required:

For noting

For discussion

For decision

Approved for future publication: YES

NPHET – Communications Update

13 May 2021

Quantitative Tracker

The nationally representative sample of 2,200 people conducted on behalf of the Department of Health by Amarach Research on 10 May 2021 published [here](#) has revealed:

- The level of worry is at 5.4/10, back to the levels seen last Summer.
- Concern for the health of family and friends and the economy are now the highest source of worry.
- The majority, 67% now believe the worst of the pandemic is behind us, 10% believe it is happening now and 7% believe it is ahead of us.
- 35% think Ireland is returning to normal at about the right pace, 26% think it is too quick and 24% too slowly.
- People are disengaging from Covid related news.

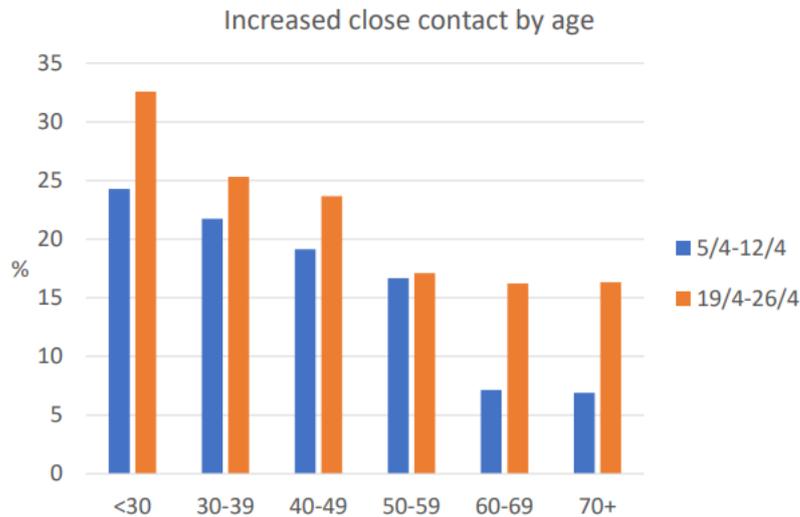
Vaccine Quantitative Tracker

- 51% of the population know someone in their immediate social circle who has had COVID-19.
- 87% (70% definite, 17% probable) say they will get the COVID vaccine when it is offered to them.
- 44% say they have concerns around the vaccine - 35% are worried about side effects of the vaccine, 26% worried about the long-term effects on health.
- GPs are the most trusted source of information on the vaccine for 75% of the population, followed by the HSE (53%), Dept of Health (51%) and Pharmacists (43%)

Social Activity Measure

The Social Activity Measure (ESRI/Department of the Taoiseach), available [here](#) for week beginning Apr 20 reveals:

- There were further increases in mobility and social activity in this time period. The proportions of the population who attended their workplace (34% during the previous week; 18% the previous day), another person's home (37% and 12%), and used transport (53% and 28%) were the highest seen since tracking began at the end of January
- There was a substantial increase in social visits to homes, mainly driven by people who are vaccinated - 26% of vaccinated people had a close contact in the previous day, vs 21% of non-vaccinated.



- Older people had the largest increase in close contacts during April, mostly due to social visits to homes. Among younger people, greater numbers going to work was a larger factor. However, the chance that workers who attend work on a given day experience a close contact has remained relatively stable at around or just below 50% – it is simply that more people are going to work.
- We are seeing changing patterns in the drivers of behaviour. Overall worry about the virus has fallen further and remains a strong predictor of behaviour, but somewhat less so than in previous rounds. This may reflect the influence of vaccination (and perhaps expectation of vaccination), which is increasing the social activity of people who, until now, have engaged in little social interaction during 2021.
- The perceived coherence of the restrictions and how people trade off the burden of restrictions against preventing the spread of Covid-19 both continue to influence behaviour. However, as restrictions are lifted, the influence of the former has grown stronger and the latter somewhat weaker

Qualitative Tracker

Feedback from the qualitative tracker, for the week commencing 12 Apr, focus groups among healthcare workers and young adults reveals:

- Complementary practitioners believe that the pandemic is best seen as an holistic experience, and that re-balancing is at the centre of how we move forward
- Healthcare workers are at a low ebb. Their current challenge is the frustration that protocols have not changed much even though vaccination in their contexts is widespread. They invite decision makers to overcome any fear and move forward for the holistic health of patients
- Young Adults are showing marked adaptability in how they are coping with the pandemic, placing focus on getting outside and on seeing their friends in the real world. They are highly motivated to 'get back on track'
- Young Adults are prepared to play their part in the vaccination programme, as it is a route to get back to normalcy. An ongoing worry amongst a minority is in fertility

concerns, and this should be addressed with clarity and openness

- Post-restriction citizens should be empowered to make positive choices in a simple and intuitive manner, and be reminded that their choices have an impact beyond just themselves

Campaigns underway

- HSE – We can do this (updated protective behaviours)
- HSE Vaccine Campaign calling for online registration by age group
- SciComm Collective – group of young science communicators to communicate the virus and the vaccine to their peers via social media

Campaigns in Development

- Vaccine Booklet to include how to self isolate/restrict movements