

Update from Subgroup on Behavioural Change for NPHE meeting 05/5/2020

- The Subgroup is meeting weekly and last met on Thursday 30th April.
- A one-page poster communications tool, on **handwashing at home**, developed arising from the Subgroup's research and advice has now been disseminated nationwide to households. Questions were included in the most recent Amara tracker to gauge if people received the poster (more than 50% said they did) and if they noticed any change in their handwashing behaviour (50% noted positive change in handwashing behaviour) since receiving the poster.
- Communications tools have been developed to support **self-isolation planning and compliance**; these were developed based on the ESRI study which found a significant number of people appeared to struggle with confidently identifying correct symptoms and recalling self-isolation advice. Circulation of these new communications tools commenced on social media in the past week. Further interventions to support awareness and compliance on symptoms/self-isolation will be critical in future phases.
- A rapid online behavioural study to test **expectations and attitudes around lifting of restrictions** was conducted by the ESRI, which included testing hypothetical announcements of adjusting the current measures for compliance and comprehension, as well as perceptions of fairness, feasibility and acceptability. The findings will help inform communications approaches to future announcements.
- In terms of general findings of this study, the overall expectations of those tested showed that they are largely realistic and in line with scientific knowledge about expected time frames. A majority of those tested would expect and prefer a gradual lifting of restrictions, starting with least risky measures. The study suggested that a "silent majority" are trading off progress against reassurance, and that there is substantial nervousness and worry about the next phases of the pandemic and the possibility of a second surge. However, the study noted that a targeted communications and support approach would also be important for the minority of around 10-15% of people who may find it more difficult to comply or agree with measures.
- The Subgroup continues to advise that emphasising the **collective experience** and speaking to 'everybody' is important in ongoing communications, as well as constantly acknowledging the significant impact that the adoption of key behaviours has made, and will continue to make. Focussing on 'non-compliance' can be unhelpful as it leads people to perceive there is more of it happening than may be the case and it may erode solidarity and ongoing willingness to comply.
- Supporting and enabling compliance with key public health behaviours through the **physical environment** continues to be a focus. The Subgroup have now developed a survey with DBEI to assess the readiness and **capability of business** to comply with measures and this is being piloted this week, following consultation with business representative groups which was facilitated by DBEI. The Subgroup is also considering how behavioural insights can support

the development and implementation of guidance for business and other sectors on the placement and use of **hand sanitiser stations** in line with WHO interim guidance.

- A second 'day reconstruction study' has been conducted by UCD, to help track **mental wellbeing** of the population, is showing ongoing low levels of overall life satisfaction and mental wellbeing. Overall life satisfaction is reported as 5/10, lower for younger cohorts, as compared with a typical level pre-Covid of 8/10. Feedback in relation to the daily activities which promote wellbeing remain similar to the first study conducted in March, including exercise, time outdoors, gardening, hobbies. These studies are being used to inform the Wellbeing campaign.
- The Subgroup have been consulted on the content and design of the **Covid Tracker App**, and so contribute to the next phase of pre-testing and development of the App.
- Following the publication of the Government roadmap, the Subgroup will be considering how behavioural insights, research and evidence can best support some key elements of the next phases, including supporting guidance on **wearing of face coverings/masks**, and on **micro-communities**.
- Further information on the work of the Subgroup is available at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/3008f6-the-national-public-health-emergency-team-nphet-covid-19-subgroup-be/>