



COVID-19: The Impact on Qualitative Research - A blip in time?

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Qualitative Research and Innovation Webinar Series
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01

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Why I conducted this research

02

FOCUS OF THIS WEBINAR

Impact of COVID-19 on research

03

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

From the survey and follow-up in-depth interviews

04

DISCUSSION

Your experience of the impact of COVID-19 on your research

April QSR COVID-19 Webinars



Deborah Lupton



Janet Salmons



Christina Silver



Sarah Bulloch



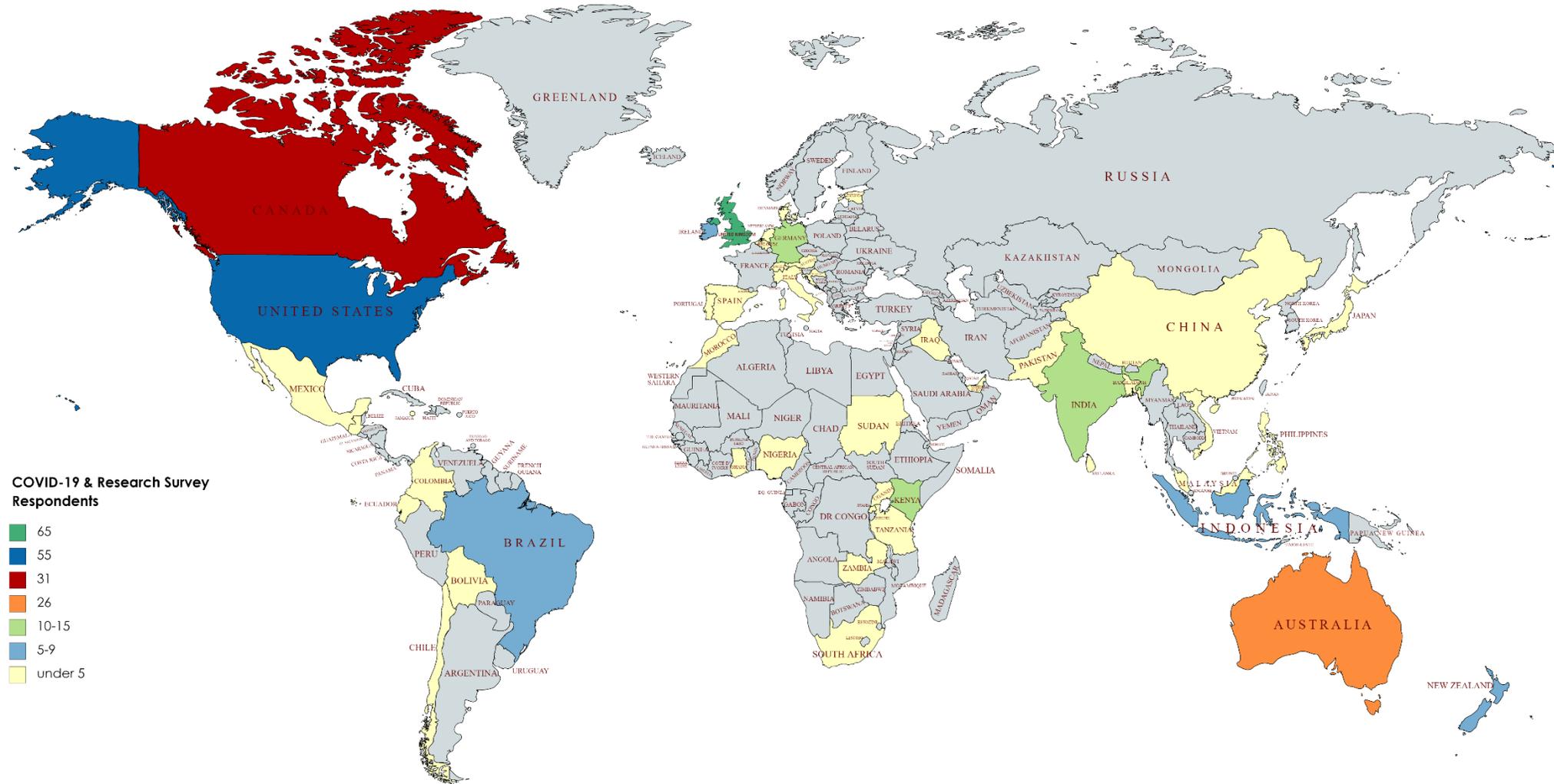
Chareen Snelson



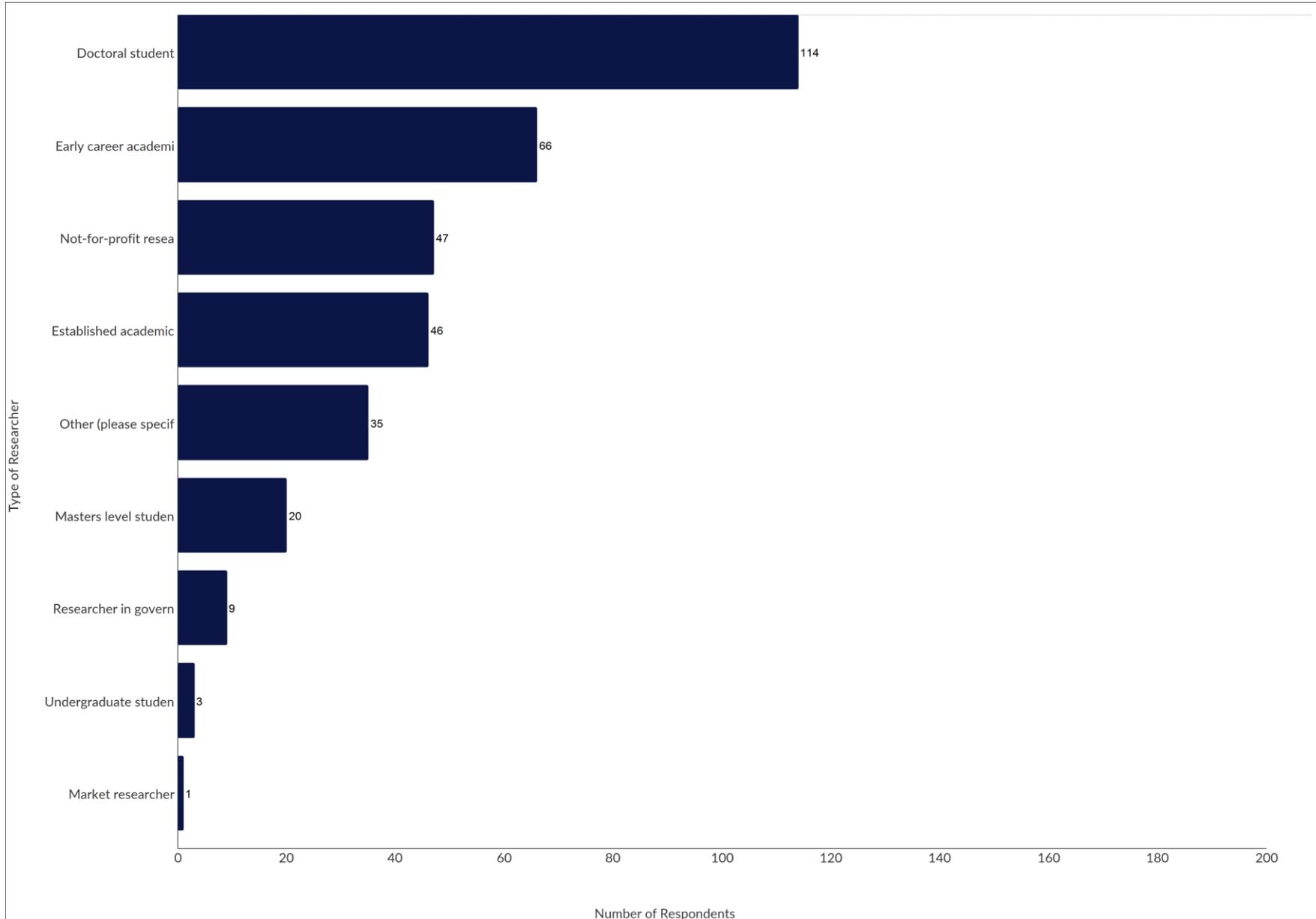
Christine Hines

Qualitative Researchers and COVID-19 Survey

28 April 2020 - 8 May 2020 - 346 respondents



Type of researcher



Impact of working from home

The background is a vibrant blue gradient. It features several decorative elements: a large, light blue, semi-transparent wave-like shape that curves across the lower half of the image; a pattern of small, light blue, four-pointed starburst or spark-like shapes scattered throughout; and a series of thin, light blue, curved lines that sweep across the bottom portion of the frame.

Working from home



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"64/365 - Moose is so helpful when I work from home" by [thelittleone417](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)



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Productive work space at home - 42%



I'm fortunate to have my own home office (as I often work from home). My children are old enough to work independently and have their own rooms/IT so they can do so. My husband has repurposed our dining room as his study.

Home office. Not much different to work but less time on commute and more time in online (rather than face-to-face) meetings. Admin has reduced as others are dealing with reduced working hours (due to having children at home etc.). I actually have more time in some respects.

I have the space and technology available to do research writing

Inadequate home workspace - 24%



Difficult. There hasn't been anywhere to work. I tried my bedroom but with a degenerative lumber issue, this was not good.

My spouse and I are both working from home with a dog in a one bedroom apartment. We don't have space to set up distinct home offices so he works off the bed most days and I am on the couch/dining table.

I do not have a desk, so have to do my work at the dinner table. I share the flat with my partner which has made finding a private area to conduct my interviews in difficult.

Hard to work with children - 20%



In Kenya, we have not been on a total lockdown, although movement is restricted. We are encouraged to work from home. **My situation has been trying to juggle between homeschooling our teenage children and my school work.**

House full of children, very hard to concentrate, **interruptions all the time**

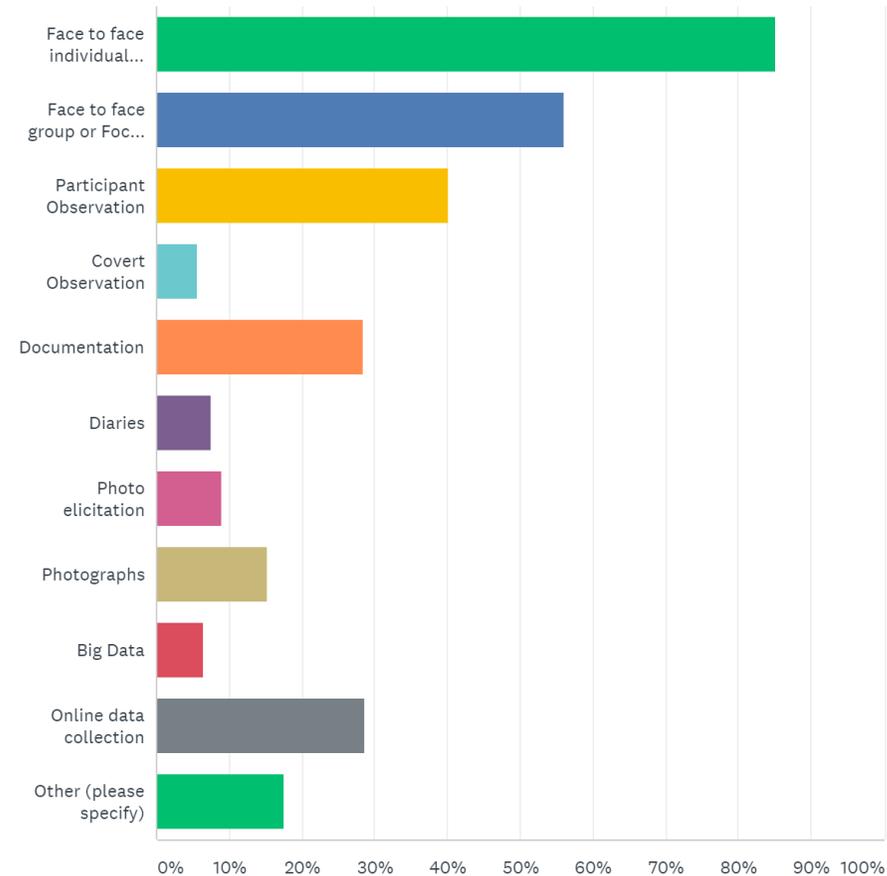
We have two small children at home. My husband's work took priority during normal working hours as he works for the government. **I had to do my work in the evenings and weekends, or plan meetings when my husband was available. This was tiring. I was not being efficient in or effective at my work.** We finally decided to put our children in emergency daycare as they considered my husband's work as essential.

Impact on doing research

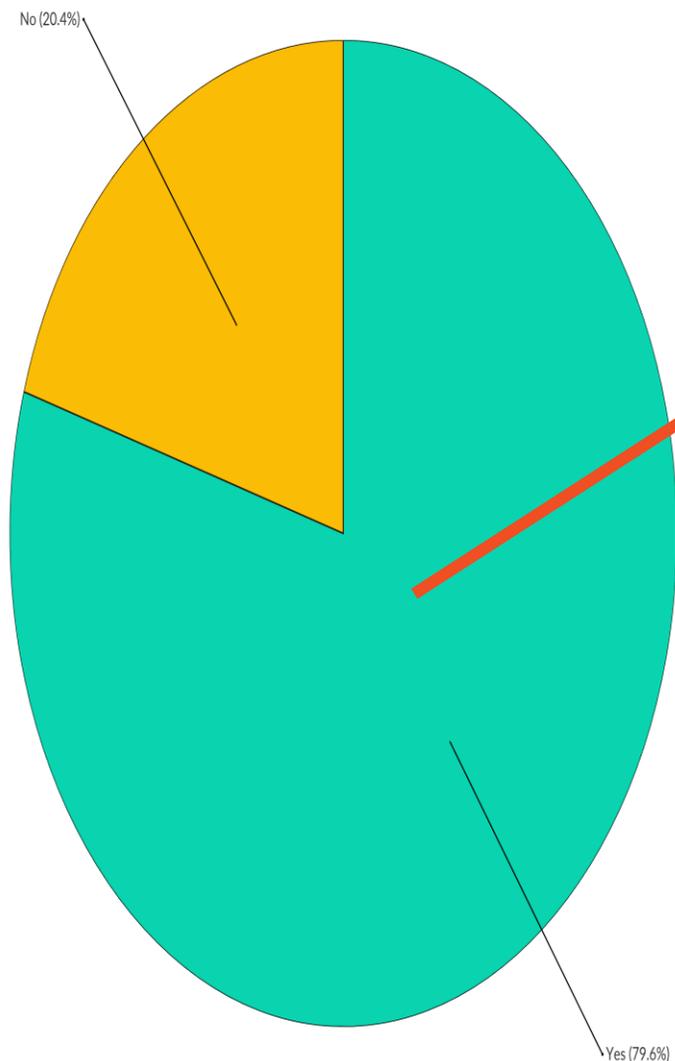
Types of data collection methods planning to use

What kind of data collection methods WERE you planning on using before COVID-19? (tick all applicable)

Answered: 341 Skipped: 1



Are you considering changing your research in any ways



Researchers considering changing their research

- Change to online data collection - 38%
- Extending timeline/postponing - 22%
- Change research questions - 8%
- Change to phone interviews - 8%
- Change research design - 7%

Research Disruption: on whole study - 24%

My topic research has become obsolete

Clinical pilot study on hold due to institutional priorities

We work with rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa, in research collaborations between UK and African researchers. For one of our projects, the main period of fieldwork was being planned for April-October this year, but now **all fieldwork has stopped until at least the in-country teams are able to move around the countries again and safely interact with participants in the rural communities in which we work.** We currently have no clear idea of when this will be, so **we are facing the reality of having to request a significant costed extension from our funders (which we are not sure is likely) or drastically reducing the scope of the whole project and the final impacts being significantly weakened.**

I was due to be interviewing senior managers in the tourism sector. They have bigger concerns right now than participating in research. **The research is on indefinite pause** as we wait to see how those business evolve (and ultimately, even, which ones survive).



"Vanishing Storm" by David Kingham is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)

Research Disruption: Impact on data collection - 48%



I have to redesign my data collection and apply for ethics again.

I support qualitative research projects. Some have been brought to a halt or slowed significantly in terms of data collection. While others wish to proceed remotely so now they are **changing their methodology** from say, in-person focus groups to online.

I have **stopped my fieldwork** and my current research is stalled. Right now I'm only doing theoretical work and literature reviews.

Research Disruption: Silver Linings



On the contrary. Open[ed] new lines of research which are in working process right now, including edit[ing] a book.

No it didn't. On the contrary I had more time to write my research.

On the other hand, collaboration and knowledge sharing is at all time high and we all try to help each other so there is a silver lining to this! Online data collection has not been affected, **it has become easier to recruit some hard-to-get populations as they spend more time online and are more open to research probably due to the "unity" and "be kind" message from our Prime Minister (New Zealand)**

Looking ahead

The background is a gradient of blue, transitioning from a lighter cyan on the left to a deeper blue on the right. It features several abstract, flowing lines and patterns. There are numerous small, light blue starburst or spark-like shapes scattered across the lower half of the image, some appearing to be part of a larger, faint, repeating pattern.

Looking ahead to October 2020 - Late April early May perspective



- Research
 - Impact on data collection
 - Delays to research
- Funding
 - Research funding
 - Uncertainty securing research funding
 - Research funding shifting to COVID-19
 - Uncertainty extending fixed term contracts
 - Less money for universities
 - Reduction in jobs
- Teaching
 - Push to online teaching
- Students
 - Decrease in number of enrolled students
 - Fall in number of international students
 - Negative impact on early career researchers

Follow-up interviews

9 June - 6 July 2020

Candidate characteristics - Totals - 25

Discipline	Numbers
Health (All)	11
Sociology	7
Education	7

Home Working Conditions	Numbers
Productive	15
Inadequate	10

Country	Numbers
UK	8
Other Europe	4
Canada	3
USA	2
Australia	2
Asia	2
South America	2
Africa	1
Unknown	1

Position	Numbers
Established Academic	1
Early Career Academic	9
Not for Profit Researcher	3
Doctoral Student	12

Interviewed- Totals - 12 (9 June - 6 July 2020)

Discipline	Numbers
Health (All)	5
Sociology	2
Education	3
Other	2

Home Working Conditions	Numbers
Productive	7
Inadequate	5

Position	Numbers
Established Academic	1
Early Career Academic	4
Not for Profit Researcher	2
Doctoral Student	4
Government Researcher	1

Country	Numbers
UK	4
Other Europe	3
Canada	1
USA	3
Australia	1

PostGraduate students

- Very different experiences according to institutions
 - International student, 1st year PhD at an Irish university - lots of support from institution; weekly meetings with supervisors; University set up WhatsApp group for PostGrads; very aware of need to support international students
 - 1st year PhD student in UK - hardly any support from university, students without laptops were not provided with any; infrequent meetings with supervisors; not helpful with how to adapt research
 - 3rd year PhD student and Research Officer in Australia; had practice with online teaching during the bush fires so was ready but knows not all teachers in university were ready; But can't go back to office until 27 July and then first term probably online - her tutoring and research office contracts end in October - not likely to extend tutor job but Research Officer post should continue - but not all the funding is in for these projects.

Shift in how look at research and self as a PhD researcher



- **Online was new so didn't have to pretend to be a 'grown up' researcher**
- **Could just chat with respondents**
- **Didn't have to pretend to know all the answers with fellow students**
- **We're learning together**

It shifted how I looked at my research. It went from sort of - me trying to appear professional - almost, it almost felt like I stopped acting because as a PhD researcher, sometimes it can feel like you're kind of having to act like this big grown-up researcher when you're still cutting your teeth...there were very few people that I talk to who'd done this sort of stuff online. It's sort of almost felt like, oh, well, OK, so I can make this my own a little bit. I can look after my participants and we can have it as a chat more than an interview. (PhD, UK)

We were all very focused on sort of career development and how we could make ourselves seem more professional and more sort of, you know, just sort of more part of the research community. Whereas [now] it was more. It felt more open. We didn't have to pretend like we knew everything. We asked questions...it feels like it's made us less elite almost - it feels like we're now able to ask questions because we're all in the same boat (PhD, UK)

Online research becoming viable



- Moving all relationships online, makes me more confident in building professional relationships online
- Opens up new possibilities
 - International research
 - Using social media as sources of data collection
- Widen number of people to recruit
 - Include those who do not like F2F
- A money saving option

I think that will open up the questions that we can ask...because suddenly we can do international studies. We don't have to be in the same country as the people we're interviewing. (Phd, UK)

The positive is that we are potentially opening up to - to respondents who might not have been comfortable or capable of participating in face to face interviews (PhD, Australia)

But my hunch is we will do a lot more using Zoom rather than going in person just as a money saving measure. Funding is a little unstable now because we don't know what the funders budgets will even look like going forward. (NFP, USA)

Negative side of online research



- Participants not comfortable with tech
- Participants might not have equitable access to tech
- Participants may not be able to talk confidentially in small homes
- People are zoomed out now

What does that mean in terms of people who are less comfortable with technology; respondents who might not have equitable access, particularly as I work within the criminology sphere and think of the ways in which people might be suspicious of technology. What does it mean for them to participate in research? (PhD, Australia)

But the families that we're working with usually may not have access to some technologies, and they might be living in a small house where the confidentiality of being able to speak about issues among within their family makes it a bit more difficult. (ECR, Austria)

People can be a bit - maybe even are now sort of zoomed out. You know, they've just had to be in so many meetings and stuff. That's in order to keeping in contact, you know, with family and friends this way that maybe they don't want to do that. (EstAc, UK)

A blip in time?



- Senior scholars will push to restore the traditional ways to do research
- COVID highlights the importance of face to face interaction
- A temporary solution - not a substitute for F2F
- Scepticism on how can develop relationships remotely

COVID to me, is highlighting the importance of face to face interactions. Still, I think long term, what COVID might teach us is - just how important those face to face being together interactions are. And so I would not be surprised...If face to face research is not stronger as a result of this, because...there's something about being face to face that is different than the virtual - there's body language - the human presence. (ECR, USA)

I think particularly for a lot of senior scholars, and they are the ones who give the recommendations and take the students, sit on the boards and do the grant reviews, they still would like to see this is a blip...so they'll push back against it. And because they drive the way the sector works and the way students work and the way early career researcher work, they'll just keep reproducing - that old model. (ECR, Ireland)

It will not be a substitute for face to face interaction. It can be a temporary solution, and it may be that we start doing more hybrid research. So I think that could happen. It may be that for certain programs that were maybe once face to face weekly...it's face to face every other week with sort of a virtual session in between. There might not be this sort of disdain of technology as a result of this. It may be that we realize that certain things can be done remotely and virtually. But I think there's going to be sort of a - yes for this realization that the face to face pieces - it is crucial for health and well-being. (ECR, USA)

Established senior academic - UK

I think it's going to be **very hard for early career researchers**....you know, people say, oh, well, it was a waste of money, people going to **conferences** and things, but that **that's how people made connections** and “oh, you know, I've really, you know, interested in your work “...like in the networks or, you know, **special interest groups**. ...maybe you can think about things you could bring to the conference next year and **that really help me in my career**. So I worry about **early career researchers that they're not getting the chance to meet other people to help their their career**. And then also that there's just not the opportunities. I think there's going to be just going to **end up being redundancy**.

Discussion - Your experiences

Deaths within 28 days of positive test

Daily Total
671 89,261

Deaths with COVID-19 on the death certificate

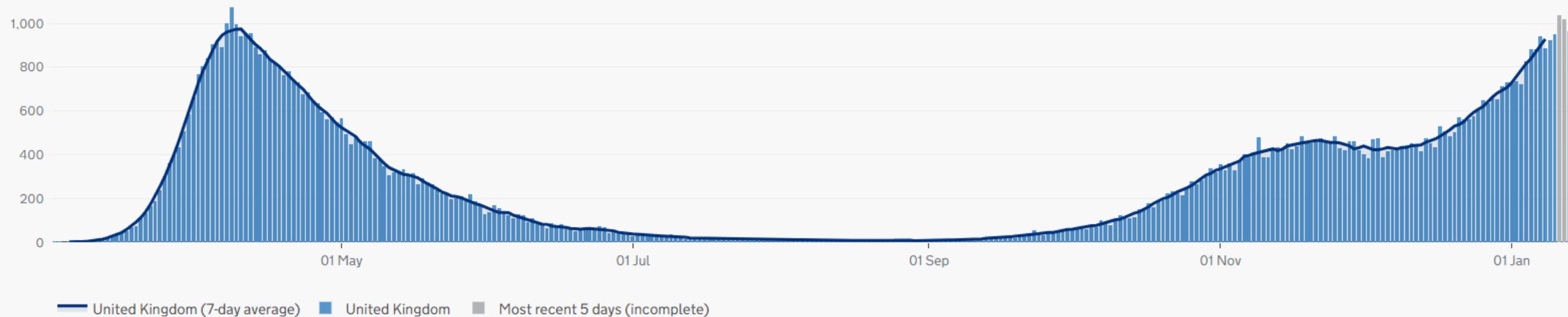
Weekly Total
3,417 89,243

Deaths within 28 days of positive test by date of death

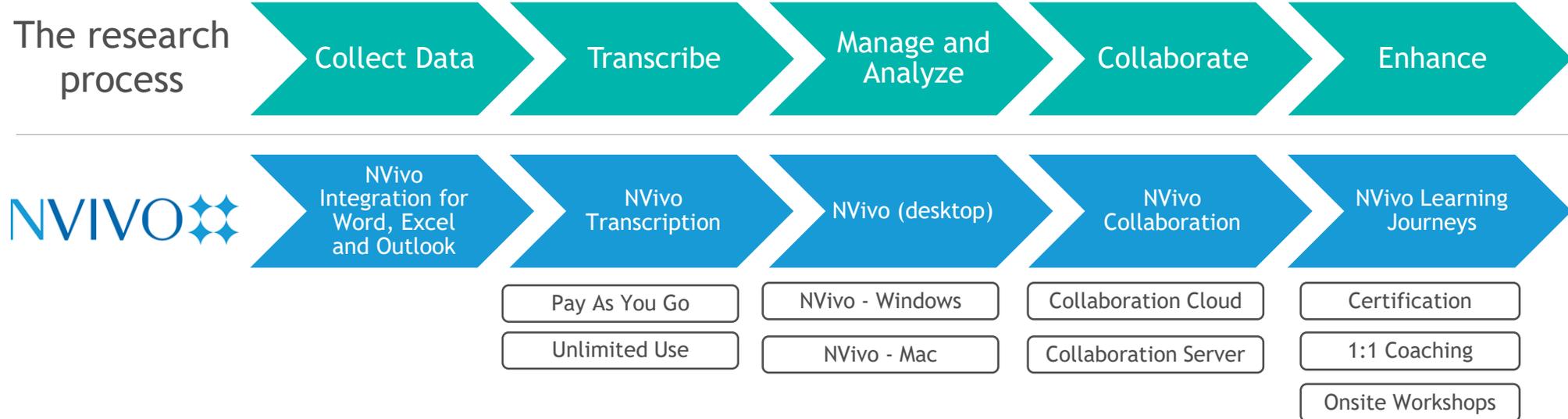
UK total By nation

Number of deaths of people who had had a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test. Data from the four nations are not directly comparable as methodologies and inclusion criteria vary. Data for the period ending 5 days before the date when the website was last updated with data for the selected area, highlighted in grey, is incomplete.

Daily Cumulative Data About



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Presenter	Organization	Topic	Date
Silvana di Gregorio, PhD Research Director	QSR International	COVID-19: The Impact on Qualitative Research - a blip in time?	January 21
Dr Sweta Rajan-Rankin Dr Erin Sanders-McDonagh Dr Dawn Lyon	University of Kent, UK	Working with visual and sensory methods to research materiality, mobility and rhythm	February 5
Lydia Hooper	Lydia Hooper Consultancy	Creative Ways to Visualize Qualitative Data	March 4
Sebastian Karcher Lori Frohwirth Jennifer Mueller	Qualitative Data Repository and Syracuse University The Guttmacher Institute	Theory and Practice of Transparent Qualitative Health Research	March 25
Lindsay Giesen	Westat	Lessons in managing and supporting a team of qualitative coders	April 15
Erin Singer	JSI	Survey Methods as an Opportunity for Analytic Integration in Mixed Methods Evaluation	May 6

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