



Experiences of Social Distancing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in participating in our online survey!

Before you can get started, first we need to tell you a bit about what we want to know, why we want to know it, and how we will look after you and your information, so let's get started!

Please click the "Next" button to open the **Information Sheet**.



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Information Sheet (page 1/3)

1. Background and goals of study

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries have imposed social distancing rules. These have included keeping apart from other people when out, closing shops, restaurants, schools and workplaces, wearing face-masks, stopping events and telling people to stay at home. People have also been told to self-isolate if they have symptoms or been exposed to the virus. These measures have had a huge impact on people's lives all over the world.

This project will investigate how these measures have affected, and continue to affect, how people think and feel about other people, society, and themselves. To do so, we will draw on ideas from Philosophy and other academic subjects, concerning how we experience other people and the world that we share with them. Our goals are as follows:

- a) To investigate how our lives are shaped by the way we relate to other people, and also how we are affected by disruptions to our normal relationships;
- b) To better understand the short- and long-term effects of social distancing measures on how people experience everyday life, other people, and themselves;
- c) To identify any negative effects of social-distancing measures on well-being and improve attempts to reduce or treat these effects;
- d) To identify any positive effects of social-distancing measures on well-being and see how they might be maintained when those measures are no longer in place.



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Information Sheet (page 2/3)

2. Conditions of participation

2.1 Study method

We want to hear about how social distancing measures have affected people, and so we invite you to answer questions in an online survey about your own experience of social distancing.

What does answering the questions involve?

You will answer questions in a survey hosted on the SurveyMonkey website. Topics include your experience of other people, everyday life, moods and emotions, the way time passes, your sense of trust or doubt, and any experiences you may have had during this pandemic that seem new or strange. We will ask you to provide general information about yourself, including your age and country of residence. This is important because it may show that people from different groups have different experiences. There are also optional sections with questions about whether you have been ill with COVID-19 and about experiences of grief and loss.

Please do not include information in your responses that may identify you or any other person. Any such information will be removed from your responses.

To complete the questionnaire, you will first need to agree to participate in this study and fill in your name and email address in an Informed Consent form. You will then be able to start the questions.

Given that we are interested in learning about how you personally experienced social distancing, most of the survey consists in open text questions. You can skip any questions that you prefer not to answer, and you can write as much or as little as you like. The time taken to complete the survey varies, but it could take you around 30 minutes to respond to the main sections.

Period of data collection

We want the personal experiences reported in the survey to be as fresh as possible. The online questionnaire will therefore only be open for participation until the end of July 2020.

2.2 Participation

Can I participate?

You can take part if you are at least 18 years old and have been affected by social-distancing measures.

Do I have to take part?

No, you are not required to take part. Participation is entirely voluntary, and is up to you.

Can I withdraw my participation?

Yes, if you have provided responses in the survey but later want to withdraw from our study, please contact us via email at covid-19-survey-contact@oist.jp from the email address you used to sign the consent form, and we will delete your record from SurveyMonkey. You do not need to give a reason, nor will any disadvantage be caused by your withdrawal. Withdrawal is only possible until the end of the data collection period (end of July 2020).

The age at which people cease to be minors is not the same in all countries. If you are over the age of 18 but are still considered a minor in your country, it means that your parents or legal guardian can also contact us to request the deletion of your record.

Are there any risks, burdens, or benefits associated with my participation?

This study will encourage you to reflect upon your personal experience of social distancing in the current pandemic. There is a risk that this might evoke challenging emotions, especially if you or people close to you have been negatively affected. It is important to remember that you can skip questions you feel uncomfortable with, and you do not need to open the optional sections.

There is also a small burden involved in dedicating time to the questionnaire. However, please keep in mind that you can spend as much or as little time as you like answering the questions.

There are no concrete benefits associated with your participation. However, answering the questions provides an opportunity for self-reflection, which may help you better understand your personal experiences.

2.3 Data management

Will you collect any personal information?

The most sensitive personal information that we will obtain is your name and email address as a confirmation of your informed consent. This personal information will be stored together with your responses to the questions on SurveyMonkey servers during the data collection period and will be accessible to the principal investigator and the technical support person at OIST.

After the data collection period, all data will be downloaded and deleted from SurveyMonkey and securely stored on computers at OIST. Your personal information (name and email address) will be split from your survey responses and the two kinds of information will be stored in two separate files. Only the Principal Investigator at OIST can access both your survey responses and your personal information. The data in these two files will only be linked if you agree to be contacted regarding your potential participation in a follow-up study based on your responses (checkbox on the last page of the survey).

Will I be identified in the study or in any publications?

No, none of your personal information will appear in our research or in publicly available resources. While we may include your general characteristics in our analyses, like age, gender, and nationality, any information that could identify you or anyone else will be removed.

Will you share my responses with anyone else?

Members of the research team will all have access to your survey responses. After ensuring that your responses do not contain any potential personal information they will be made available as a resource to other researchers and also, via a website and repository, to the general public. Project members may quote your responses, in whole or part, but always without personal information.

How will you keep my data secure?

During the data collection period (until the end of July 2020) your data will be stored on the SurveyMonkey server, which follows industry standards in terms of privacy. After the data collection period, your personal information will be separated from your responses to the survey and stored on the principal investigator's computer at OIST, which is password-protected and fire-walled following OIST's information security regulations.

Will my data be transferred internationally?

During the data collection period any data collected by SurveyMonkey may be transferred to various countries, including the United States and other locations where SurveyMonkey has offices (consult the [SurveyMonkey Privacy Policy](#)).

After data collection, survey responses will be shared between members of the project, based at universities in Japan and the UK, and with their colleagues. Eventually, the survey answers will be turned into an online resource that is publicly available to other researchers and the general public. However, your personal information (name and email address) will not be transferred outside of OIST.

How long will you keep my data?

The survey responses that we collect will be made freely available to researchers and a wider public potentially for an unlimited time, and for at least ten years, via a website and online storage known as the [Open Science Framework \(OSF\)](#). The file with your name and email will be deleted on March 31, 2023.

How will my survey responses be analyzed and how will I know the results?

All survey answers will be analyzed statistically and using computational techniques from natural language processing. Some, but not all, responses will also be interpreted by members of the project using concepts from cognitive science and philosophy. The full research protocol will be made available to read on the [project website](#) after the conclusion of the data collection period.

The project website will also provide links to publications of the research findings. Eventually, the goal is to make all the responses and related studies publicly available as an online resource on a dedicated project page on the Open Science Framework website.



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3. Research Institutions

The Research Team

- Dr. Tom Froese, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST) Graduate University, Japan (Principal Investigator) [[link to homepage](#)]
- Dr. Tomoari Mori, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, Japan
- Prof. Matthew Ratcliffe, University of York, UK [[link to homepage](#)]
- Prof. Havi Carel, University of Bristol, UK [[link to homepage](#)]
- Dr. Alice Malpass, University of Bristol, UK [[link to homepage](#)]
- Prof. Matthew Broome, University of Birmingham, UK [[link to homepage](#)]
- Dr. Clara Humpston, University of Birmingham, UK [[link to homepage](#)]

Technical support

- Dr. Federico Sangati, Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University, Japan [[link to homepage](#)]

Ethical approval

This study was approved by the OIST Human Subjects Research Review Committee.

Who should I contact if I have a question, concern, or if I want to delete my data?

Please contact the Principal Investigator via the project's email address: covid-19-survey-contact@oist.jp



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Informed Consent (form 1/2)

* 1. Clicking "**agree**" below indicates that:

- You confirm you are 18 years old or older.
- You confirm you have read the "Information sheet" and were satisfactorily informed about the study and the potential benefits and risks involved.
- You know who to contact if you need more information about the study or wish to withdraw your data.
- You know that you have the right to stop filling out the survey at any time and without giving a reason.
- You know that you have the right to request the deletion of your data until the end of the data collection period without having to give a reason.
- You know that choosing to opt-out from the survey or requesting the deletion of your data will not cause you any disadvantage.
- You know that your responses to the questions will be stored and analyzed for scientific purposes.
- You know that your anonymized responses to the questions will be shared among the members of the project, their colleagues, and the public.
- You have carefully considered your participation in the experiment.
- You participate of your own free will.

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree



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Informed Consent (form 2/2)

Please provide your name and email address as a confirmation of your informed consent to participate in this study.

We will treat this personal information as strictly confidential. Our research will only be based on your responses to the questions of the survey. We will not contact you, unless you decide to opt-in to be contacted for a follow-up study based on your responses (that is, if you select the corresponding checkbox on the survey's final page).

Please make sure to provide your name and e-mail address correctly, as we will need to verify this information if you later decide to request the deletion your data.

* 1. Your full name:

* 2. Your e-mail address:



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Survey (section 1/4): Personal characteristics

These questions ask you to provide some general characteristics and context about yourself that will help us to better interpret your responses to the rest of the questionnaire.

1. What is your age (in years)?

2. How many people do you live with? Please write the total number of people in each age group. (Leave a field empty if there is no one in that age group.)

Less than 1 year	<input type="text"/>
1 year old	<input type="text"/>
2 years old	<input type="text"/>
3 years old	<input type="text"/>
4 years old	<input type="text"/>
5 years old	<input type="text"/>
6 years old	<input type="text"/>
7 years old	<input type="text"/>
8 years old	<input type="text"/>
9 years old	<input type="text"/>
10 years old	<input type="text"/>
11 years old	<input type="text"/>
12 years old	<input type="text"/>
13 years old	<input type="text"/>
14 years old	<input type="text"/>
15 years old	<input type="text"/>
16 years and older	<input type="text"/>

3. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4. What is your nationality?

5. What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White / Caucasian
- ☐ Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)

6. What is your country of residence?

7. What is your occupation or job, if any?

8. What is your highest educational qualification?

9. Can you describe your diagnosed physical and/or mental health conditions, if any?

NOTE: Your responses will be automatically saved when you click the "Next" button, and you can revisit them later by returning to this page using the "Back" button.



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Survey (section 2/4): Social experience

These questions aim to help you describe various aspects of your social experience since you started following social-distancing measures.

1. What kind of social distancing measures have you been under? How restricted is your contact with others at the moment?

2. Around which date did you start to have significant reduced social contact with people outside your household?

Please give an estimated date in DD/MM/YYYY format (or click the calendar icon and select a day):

Date

 

3. If the strictest social distancing measures have already been lifted in your area, around which date were they lifted?

Please give an estimated date in DD/MM/YYYY format (or click the calendar icon and select a day):

Date

 

4. How do you feel about social distancing? Do you think it is appropriate?

5. Are any of the people in your household especially vulnerable to illness? If so, has this affected your experience of social distancing in any way?

6. How, if at all, has social distancing affected how you experience and relate to other people? Do the people you live with or other people seem different in any way?

7. How, if at all, has your ability to trust other people changed in the context of the pandemic?

8. Have you felt lonely or isolated? If so, how have you tried to cope with this?

9. Have you been connecting with others on-line more often than you did before? If so, what has your experience of using on-line communication technologies been like?

10. If social distancing has been relaxed to some degree in your country/region, what has it been like to re-engage with social contact?

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Survey (section 3/4): General experience

These questions aim to help you describe various aspects of your general experience since you started following social-distancing measures.

1. Has the pandemic added any uncertainty to your life? If so, how has this affected you?

2. When you go outside, do familiar places seem different in any way? How, if at all, has the way you experience the world as a whole changed?

3. Have you noticed any effects on your ability to think, or on what you think about?

4. Have you felt more anxious or calmer than usual? Have your moods and emotions been affected in any other ways? If so, how?

5. Have you had experiences, of any kind, that seemed strange or unfamiliar? If so, please try to describe them.

6. Have you had any experiences or thoughts that scared or worried you? If so, in what ways?

7. Have you noticed any changes in what you eat, your exercise habits or your sleep patterns?

8. Have you noticed changes in your experience of time?

9. When you think of the future in light of the current pandemic, what do you think about and what do you hope for?

10. Are there things that you have been doing to better cope with the situation?

NOTE: Your responses will be automatically saved when you click the "Next" button, and you can revisit them later by returning to this page using the "Back" button.



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Survey (section 4/4): Other experiences

The following questions aim to help you describe other aspects of your experience since you started following social distancing measures.

1. How has your free time changed, and how did this affect your experience of the situation?

2. Have you noticed any positive changes in how you experience your life, your relationships with others, or your self?

3. Are there any important aspects of how your experience has changed that we have not asked you about?

NOTE: Your responses will be automatically saved when you click the "Next" button, and you can revisit them later by returning to this page using the "Back" button.



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Optional section (1/2): Illness experience

This is an optional section about your experiences related to illness, testing, and breathlessness.

The questions will only be displayed if you select "Yes" below. Otherwise you can select "No" to skip this section entirely.

* 1. Are you willing to answer some questions related to illness?

☐ Yes, show the questions of this section.

☐ No, skip this section.



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Optional section (1/2): Illness experience

These questions aim to help you describe illness-related aspects of your experience that you have noticed since you started following social-distancing measures.

1. To your knowledge, have you contracted COVID-19?

- ☐ Confirmed
- ☐ Suspected
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ No

2. If a medical professional suspected or confirmed that you had contracted COVID-19, please could you tell us what your experience of the illness was like.

3. If you have been tested, did the test results match your experience of symptoms, if any?

4. If you think you had COVID-19 but are unsure, were there any symptoms that made you think you had it? And why do you have doubts?

5. Have you been more aware of your breathing? If so, in what ways?

6. Have you experienced breathlessness, even if unrelated to an illness? If so, what did it feel like?

NOTE: Your responses will be automatically saved when you click the "Next" button, and you can revisit them later by returning to this page using the "Back" button.



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Optional section (2/2): Grief experience

This is an optional section about your experiences related to grief and loss.

The questions will only be displayed if you select "Yes" below. Otherwise you can select "No" to skip this section entirely.

* 1. Are you willing to answer some questions related to grief?

☐ Yes, show the questions of this section.

☐ No, skip this section.



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Optional section (2/2): Grief experience

Please describe your experience of grief in the context of social-distancing measures.

1. If you had a loved one in hospital, what was it like to follow social distancing in that situation? What did you do to cope?

2. Has anyone close to you died due to COVID-19? If so, what was your relationship with that person or those people?

3. Has your ability to grieve for someone who has died been affected by social-distancing measures?

4. Have you felt any sense of grief or loss over other aspects of life that have changed because of the pandemic? If so, what has affected you most?

NOTE: Your responses will be automatically saved when you click the "Next" button, and you can revisit them later by returning to this page using the "Back" button.



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You've reached the end of the survey!

Thank you for your time!

Before you click "Finish", please let us know if we can reach out to you regarding future studies.

We are planning to invite a small number of selected participants for qualitative interviews about their experiences. Another possibility is that we invite you to a survey in the future to find out if there have been any further changes to your experience.

1. Can the Principal Investigator of this project contact you by e-mail (at the address you provided at the start of the survey) to invite you to a follow-up study?

☐ **Yes**, I agree that the Principal Investigator can contact me by e-mail to invite me to take part in a follow-up study related to my survey responses.