

# Advice on questions / survey tools relevant to suicide prevention research in relation to COVID-19

The aim of this document is to provide interested researchers with a selection of measures which could be used in suicide prevention research studies. A huge thanks to Dr Duleeka Knipe with input from Dr Olivia Kirtley for pulling this together

The document is structured in two parts:

- 1) Outcome (i.e. suicidal behaviour) assessment
- 2) Exposure assessment

#### 1. Outcome assessment

There are several measures available for assessing suicidal behaviour in population-based research. Note in all questionnaires, we recommend you include signposting to local sources of help / crisis helplines

These have been reviewed and evaluated, and the findings are available here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270514172\_A\_Systematic\_Review\_and\_Evaluation\_of\_Measures\_for\_Suici dal\_Ideation\_and\_Behaviors\_in\_Population-Based\_Research

#### The main recommended questionnaires were:

- Depressive Symptom Index Suicidality Subscale (DSI-SS) https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0005796701000171
- Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire—Revised (SBQ-R)
   <u>https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/107319110100800409</u>
- Suicidal Ideation Attributes Scale (SIDAS) https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24612048/

In addition to those reviewed above, additional measures include:

- Question 9 of the Patient Health Questionnaire (<u>https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10568646/</u>)
- The suicide attempts and self-harm questions from the UK Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (pages 44 to 46 and 101 <a href="https://files.digital.nhs.uk/pdf/4/j/appendix\_d\_phase\_one\_questionnaire.pdf">https://files.digital.nhs.uk/pdf/4/j/appendix\_d\_phase\_one\_questionnaire.pdf</a>)
- The Columbia severity scale (<u>https://depts.washington.edu/ebpa/sites/default/files/C-SSRS-LifetimeRecent-</u> <u>Clinical.pdf</u>)



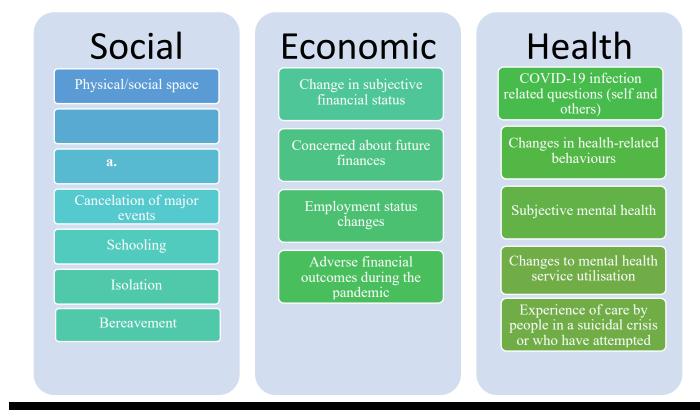
#### 2. Exposure assessment

A selection of COVID-19 relevant exposures for suicide research are presented below. The questions have been selected from longitudinal surveys and are suggested here to allow for datasets to be comparable. Only questions related to exposures are presented here, however, questions related to possible mitigating factors are also available from the surveys listed below. We recommend, where possible, that research studies use measures being used in other existing longitudinal studies. If using any of the questions from the questionnaires outlined below, it may be appropriate to alter the term "lockdown" when used, to a term that has meaning in the context in which it is to be operationalised (e.g. "stay-at-home orders" in the US) and note that as time goes by lockdown restrictions have eased in many countries, but may be re-introduced at a later stage, so it might be important to specify a discrete time period / range of dates. The questions presented in this document have been selected from the following sources:

- Wellcome longitudinal population studies (LPS) (website pending)
- COVID-Mental Health tracker (COVID-MH) (<u>http://www.suicideresearch.info/tracking-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-mental-wellbeing-study-covid-mh</u>)
- UCL COVID-19 Social Study (UCLSS) (<u>https://www.covidsocialstudy.org/</u>)
- The Coronavirus Health Impact Survey (CRISIS) (<u>http://www.crisissurvey.org/</u>)

The diagram below are broad groupings of possible questions with links to the relevant section in this document

(hover over the relevant text in the document and ctrl+ click to follow the link).





**a.** Physical/social space

Questi	on	Source
Who d	COVID-MH	
	select ALL that apply	
0	live alone	
0	with spouse / partner	
0	with own / step children	
	with parents	
	with siblings	
	with extended family	
	with roommate/companion	
0	other (please specify:)	
	ur living arrangement changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic <sup>1</sup> ?	LPS
Please	tick all that apply	
0	I moved to my current address temporarily because of the COVID-19	
	pandemic	
0	Another adult (e.g. sibling, adult, child, parent) has moved into my	
	address because of the COVID-19 pandemic	
0	Adults I live with have moved elsewhere because of the COVID-19	
	pandemic	
	My living arrangement has not changed	
	type of place do you live in?	COVID-MH
Please		
	House	
	Room(s) in shared house (e.g., lodger)	
0	An apartment or flat in a block	
0	Student Halls	
0	Residential Home	
0	Other (please specify:)	
	nany rooms are in your home?	COVID-MH
	cluding any bathrooms or toilets. If you live in a shared house only count	
	ms that are open to you to use. If you live in a block of flats, only count	
	in your flat.)	
	our home have a safe outdoor space (e.g., a garden or yard) where you	LPS
can ex	ercise or play?	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> These questions are taken from existing cohort studies habitual household composition is already recorded. Other studies might want to collect this specifically.

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### **b.** Violence

Questi	Question	
Since	Since [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>2</sup> , how often have	
been p	hysically harmed or hurt by somebody else	
0	Not at all	
0	One or two days	
0	More than half the days	
0	Nearly every day	
Since	INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>2</sup> , how often have	UCLSS
been b	ullied, controlled, intimidated or psychologically hurt by someone else	
0	Not at all	
0	One or two days	
0	More than half the days	
0	Nearly every day	

c.

#### d.

#### e. Family relationships

Questi	on	Source
Since [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE], has the quality of		CRISIS
the rel	the relationships between you and members of your family changed?	
0	A lot worse	
0	A little worse	
0	About the same	
0	A little better	
0	A lot better	

## f. Cancelation of major events

Question							Source
How much has cancellation of important/major events in your life been lifficult for you <sup>3</sup> ?						CRISIS	
	Not	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely	N/A	
	at all						
Weddings							
Funerals							
Graduation							
Proms							
Holidays							
Other (please							
specify:)							

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This has been altered from the original survey which was designed to be asked on a weekly basis.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Altered question/format to allow the assessment of the impact of cancellation on specific events. Modified from original questions which asked "how often have you been bothered by: being physically harmed or hurt by somebody else" / "how often have you been bothered by: being bullied, controlled, intimidated or psychologically hurt by someone else"

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# g. Schooling

Question – adults wi	ith children			Source
e e	more children in full time e courses and includes child		· · · · ·	LPS
	ockdown was announced, ho best answer)	ow was each chil	d being	LPS
	Was going to a school/college/university in person	Was enrolled on a distance learning course	Was schooled at home	
My youngest child My second youngest child				
My third youngest child My fourth youngest child				
Any other children [opens free text box]				
Free text:				
	kdown was announced on   E HERE] <sup>4</sup> , how has each cl			LPS
	Was going to a school/college/university in person	Was enrolled on a distance learning course	Was schooled at home	
My youngest child My second				
youngest child My third youngest child				
My fourth youngest child Any other children				
[opens free text box] Free text:				

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This has been altered from the original survey to allow for international use

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Question – adu	ılts with children	Source
	ial lockdown was announced has your child or children had oblems accessing education? <i>(tick any that apply)</i>	LPS
0 0 0	Difficulty adapting to online learning Limited quality or quantity of online lessons Lack of device or internet connection for accessing online lessons No suitable place in the home to learn	3

## h. Isolation

Question				Source
How often do you feel like this since the start of lockdown on [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>5</sup> ?				
	Hardly ever	Some of the time	Often	7
How often do you feel you lack companionship?				
How often do you feel left out?				
How often do you feel isolated from others?				
How often do you feel alone?				

#### Bereavement i.

Question	Source
Have you experienced any of the following since the official lockdown was	UCLSS
announced on the [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] 6? (tick all	
that apply)	
• You lost somebody <sup>7</sup> close to you due to COVID-19	
<ul> <li>You lost somebody close to you due to another reason</li> </ul>	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This has been altered from the original survey to allow for international use. The original survey also asks this question twice, once to assess current isolation/loneliness and then was repeated asking how often they felt like this before lockdown

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This has been altered from the original survey to allow for international use and separates out COVID-19 deaths

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Users may want to alter this phrase to be culturally/context specific or use more direct terminology e.g. "Somebody close to you died due to COVID-19"

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j. Change in subjective financial status

Question	Source
Before the official lockdown was announced on the [INSERT START OF	LPS
LOCKDOWN DATE HERE], how well would you say you personally were	
managing financially?	
<ul> <li>Living comfortably</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Doing all right</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Just about getting by</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Finding it quite difficult</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Finding it very difficult</li> </ul>	
Overall, since the official lockdown was announced on the [INSERT START	LPS
OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] how would you say you personally are	
managing financially? <sup>8</sup>	
<ul> <li>Living comfortably</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Doing all right</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Just about getting by</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Finding it quite difficult</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Finding it very difficult</li> </ul>	

# **k.** Concerned about future finances

Questi	on	Source
I'm wo	I'm worried about my future financial situation	
0	Strongly agree	
0	Agree	
0	Neither agree nor disagree	
0	Disagree	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Original questionnaire asked: "Overall, how do you feel your current financial situation compares to before the official lockdown was announced on the [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE]?"



# **I.** Employment status changes

Questi	on	Source
	of these best describes what you were doing just before the lockdown [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE]	LPS
	? If you were doing more than one activity, please choose the activity that you	
	nost time doing.	
0	Employed	
0	Self-employed	
0	In unpaid/ voluntary work	
0	Apprenticeship	
0	Unemployed	
0	Permanently sick or disabled	
0	Looking after home or family	
0	In education at school/college/university	
0	Retired	
***		LDC
	of these would you say best describes YOUR current situation now?	LPS
0	Employed and working the same number of hours (pre-lockdown)	
0	Employed and working reduced number of hours	
0	Employed but on paid leave (including furlough)	
0	Employed and on unpaid leave	
0	Apprenticeship	
0	In unpaid/voluntary work.	
0	Self-employed and currently working	
0	Self-employed but not currently working	
0	Unemployed	
0	Permanently sick or disabled	
0	Looking after home or family	
0	In education at school/college/university	
0	Retired	



# m. Adverse financial outcomes during the pandemic

Questi	Question	
	Have you experienced any of the following since the official lockdown was announced on the [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] ?? (tick all	
that ap	ply)	
0	Lost your job / been unable to do paid work	
0	Your spouse/partner lost their job or was unable to do paid work	
0	Major cut in household income (e.g. due to you or your partner being	
	furloughed / put on leave / not receiving sufficient work)	
0	Unable to pay bills / rent / mortgage	
0	Evicted / lost accommodation	
0	Unable to access sufficient food	
0	Unable to access required medication	
0	Somebody close to you is ill in hospital (due to Covid-19 or another	
	illness)	
0	You lost somebody close to you (due to Covid-19 or another cause)	
0	None of the above	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> This has been altered from the original survey to allow for international use



# n. COVID-19 infection related questions (self and others)

Question	Source
<ul> <li>Have you been in close contact with anyone with COVID-like symptoms i the last [XX]<sup>10</sup> weeks?</li> <li>Yes, I was in contact with a confirmed/tested COVID-19 case</li> <li>Yes, I was in contact with a person with COVID-19 symptoms</li> <li>No, not to my knowledge</li> </ul>	n LPS
<ul> <li>Do you think that you have or have had COVID-19?</li> <li>Yes, confirmed by a positive test</li> <li>Yes, suspected by a doctor but not tested</li> <li>Yes, my own suspicions</li> </ul> If yes, when were you told/when did you think you first had COVID-19?	LPS
DD/MM/YYYY Have you been hospitalised as a result of COVID-19? Please select o Yes o No	COVID-MH
Ho         Ho         Ho         Ho         Yes diagnosed and recovered         •       Yes diagnosed and still ill         •       Yes diagnosed and died         •       Not formally diagnosed but suspected         •       Don't know         •       No	Modified from COVID- MH
Are you regarded as a high risk group (e.g., aged 70+, underlying health condition)? Please select • Yes	COVID-MH
<ul> <li>No</li> <li>How often do you actively seek out information on COVID-19?</li> <li>Please select <ul> <li>Less than once a day</li> <li>1-5 times a day</li> <li>6-10 times a day</li> <li>11-20 times a day</li> <li>21-50 times a day</li> <li>More than 50 times a day</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	COVID-MH
<ul> <li>Are you working in any of the current roles? (select all that apply)</li> <li>Health, social care or relevant related support worker (e.g. doctor, nur NHS volunteer)</li> <li>Teaching or childcare worker</li> <li>Key public services (justice, religious staff, journalist or mortuary)</li> <li>Local and national government</li> <li>Food and other necessary goods (production, sales, delivery)</li> <li>Public safety or national security worker (police, armed forces)</li> <li>Transport worker</li> <li>Utility worker (energy, sewerage, postal service)</li> <li>Utilities, communication and financial services</li> </ul>	se,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The original survey asked about the last two week (reflecting the incubation period of the virus)

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#### o. Changes in health-related behaviours

Question					Source
Since the official lockdown was announced on [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>11</sup> , have any of the following aspects of your life changed?				LPS	
	Decreased	Stayed the same	Increased	N/A	
Amount you sleep					
Amount of physical activity/exercise you do					
Time spent in green spaces such as parks or gardens					
Amount you smoke/vape					
Amount of alcohol you drink					
Number of hours you work in usual workplace					
Number of hours you work at home					
Time spent talking to family/friends inside my home					
Time spent talking to family/friends outside my home					
Time spent talking to work colleagues					
Practising			1		
relaxation/mindfulness/meditation					
Time spent listening to the news					
Time spent using devices with a					
screen					
Time spent doing hobbies/things I enjoy					
Amount of money you've spent					

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Altered from the original survey to be consistent with other questions in this document. The original question also asks about diet related changes too

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# **p.** Subjective mental health

Questi	on	Source
How was your mental health before the official lockdown was announced on		COVID-MH
the [IN	SERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>12</sup> ?	
Please	select	
0	Very good	
0	Good	
0	Fair	
0	Poor	
0	Very poor	
0	Don't know	
How is	your mental health since the official lockdown was announced on the	COVID-MH
[INSEI	RT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE] <sup>9</sup> ?	
Please	select	
0	Very good	
0	Good	
0	Fair	
0	Poor	
0	Very poor	
0	Don't know	

 $<sup>^{12}</sup>$  This has been altered from the original survey to allow for international use

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# **q.** Changes to mental health service utilisation

*Note to researcher: we recommend that these questions are asked in conjunction with questions in the following section (r)* 

ection (r) Question	Source
<ul> <li>O.1 Before the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DAT HERE], did you have any mental health difficulties? <ul> <li>Yes</li> <li>No (please go to Q O.2 below)</li> <li>Don't know (please go to Q O.2 below)</li> </ul> </li> <li>If yes, before the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DAT HERE], did you receive support for your mental health difficulties? <ul> <li>Yes</li> <li>No (please go to Q O.2 below)</li> </ul> </li> <li>If yes, before the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DAT HERE], did you receive support for your mental health difficulties?</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>No (please go to Q O.2 below)</li> </ul> <li>If yes, who did you receive support for your mental health difficulties from?</li>	E ICSPRC
<ul> <li>(tick all that apply)</li> <li>Health care professional</li> <li>Online helpline/service</li> <li>Crisis hotline</li> <li>Family/friends</li> <li>Other: please specify</li> <li>None of the above</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>O.2 Since the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE], have you had any mental health difficulties?</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> <li>Don't know (please go to the next section - Experience of care by people in a suicidal or who have attempted suicide)</li> </ul>	
If yes, since the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATHERE], have you tried to access services to support your mental health difficulties? <ul> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> </ul>	ГЕ
If yes did you seek support from any of the following sources?         (tick all that apply)         •       Health care professional         •       Online helpline/service         •       Crisis hotline         •       Family/friends         •       Other: please specify	
<ul> <li>Did you have any difficulty accessing support?</li> <li>Often</li> <li>Sometimes</li> <li>Seldom</li> <li>Never</li> <li>N/A - Did not access care</li> </ul>	



Questi	on	Source
If you	accessed support from a health care professional in what setting did this occur?	
Tick al	l that apply	
0	Face-to-face in primary care / general practice	
0	Face-to-face in general hospital	
0	Face-to-face in acute/psychiatric hospital	
0	Face-to-face elsewhere – please specify:	
0	By phone	
0	By video-link	
0	Other, please specify:	
during Please 0 0	<b>ould you rate the ongoing support you are receiving for your mental health difficulty</b> <b>lockdown?</b> select Very good Good Fair Poor Very poor	
	oes it compare to the support you received before the official lockdown was announced RT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE]?	
Please		
0	Much better	
0	Somewhat better	
0	Stayed the same	
0	Somewhat worse	
0	Much worse	

r. Experience of care by people in a suicidal crisis or who have attempted suicide

These questions are designed to assess an individual's service utilisation during the lockdown period. In order to assess suicidal behaviour, we recommend that the tools outlined above (page 1) are used (Outcome (i.e. suicidal *behaviour) assessment)* 

Question -	Source
Since the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE], have you had thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way but have not actually done so <sup>13</sup> ? • Yes • No	ICSPRC
Since the official lockdown was announced [INSERT START OF LOCKDOWN DATE HERE], have attempted suicide or hurt yourself in some way on purpose? <ul> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> </ul>	ICSPRC

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Amended from question 9 of the PHQ-9 questionnaire

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Note to resear	cher: if using either of the two questions above, those answering "yes" should be signposted to	ICSPRC
v O	set of questions.	
	ou seek support from any of the following sources?	
(tick all that		
	th care professional	
	ne helpline/service	
	s hotline	
	ily/friends	
o Othe	r: please specify	
o None	e of the above	
Did you hav	e any difficulty accessing support?	
• Ofte		
o Som	etimes	
o Seld	om	
o Neve	er	
o N/A	- Did not access care	
If you acces	sed support from a health care professional in what setting did this occur for your	
	ment/interaction?	
	-to-face in primary care / general practice	
	-to-face in general hospital	
	-to-face in acute/psychiatric hospital	
	-to-face elsewhere – please specify:	
o Byp		
	ideo-link	
	r, please specify:	
How would	you rate the initial assessment/interaction you had with the healthcare	
professional	?	
Please select		
o Very	good	
o Goo	1	
o Fair		
o Poor		
o Very	poor	
If you moosi	red follow-up support from a health care professional in what setting did this	
occur?	eu tonow-up support n'om a neatth care professional in what setting uld this	
Tick all that	apply	
	-to-face in general hospital	
	-to-face in acute/psychiatric hospital	
	-to-face elsewhere – please specify:	
o Byp		
	ideo-link	
	r, please specify:	
	-,	
How would	you rate your follow-up support with the healthcare professional?	
Please select		
o Very	good	
o Goo	1	
0 Fair		
o Poor		
o Very	poor	

