Barriers to Covid-19 Self-Isolation Research

Introduction

This study was commissioned by Hertfordshire's Health Protection Board in order to better understand Hertfordshire residents' experiences of self-isolation, barriers to adherence and to identify local support needs.

Aim

The aim was to use the findings to inform the development of interventions, communications, and services to support residents with self-isolation, improve adherence and ultimately reduce transmission of Covid-19.

Method

A mixed methods approach was adopted.

- 317 respondents completed a short online survey

- 4 respondents completed a 20–30-minute telephone interview

- All respondents were Hertfordshire residents, aged 18+ who were required to self-isolate between Jan 2021 – August 2021

- Data collection took place between 19th July – 20th August 2021

Background

The test, trace and isolate system is a crucial component of the government's strategy to reduce the transmission of Covid-19.

Findings from several studies suggest that full adherence to self-isolation amongst the UK population is low[1,2].

Reasons often cited for contravening isolation requirements are:

- financial hardship

- childcare duties

- lack of understanding of Covid-19 requirements

- working in a key sector role[3].

Receiving support from someone outside your household is associated with better adherence to self-isolation[1].

This highlights the potential for local councils to improve adherence through provision of appropriate practical, financial, and emotional support

i HertsHelp
Local advice, information and support to make life easier

Get the £500 self-isolation
Test and Trace Support Payment
HM Government   We must keep on protecting each other.   HANDS FACE SPACE   NHS

Findings

80% of survey respondents were female and 92% were from a white ethnic background meaning the sample was not representative of all Hertfordshire residents

Proportion of respondents who left home during self-isolation

Yes test only, 7%
Yes, 15%
Prefer not to say, 1%
No, 78%

Base: all survey respondents (n=317)
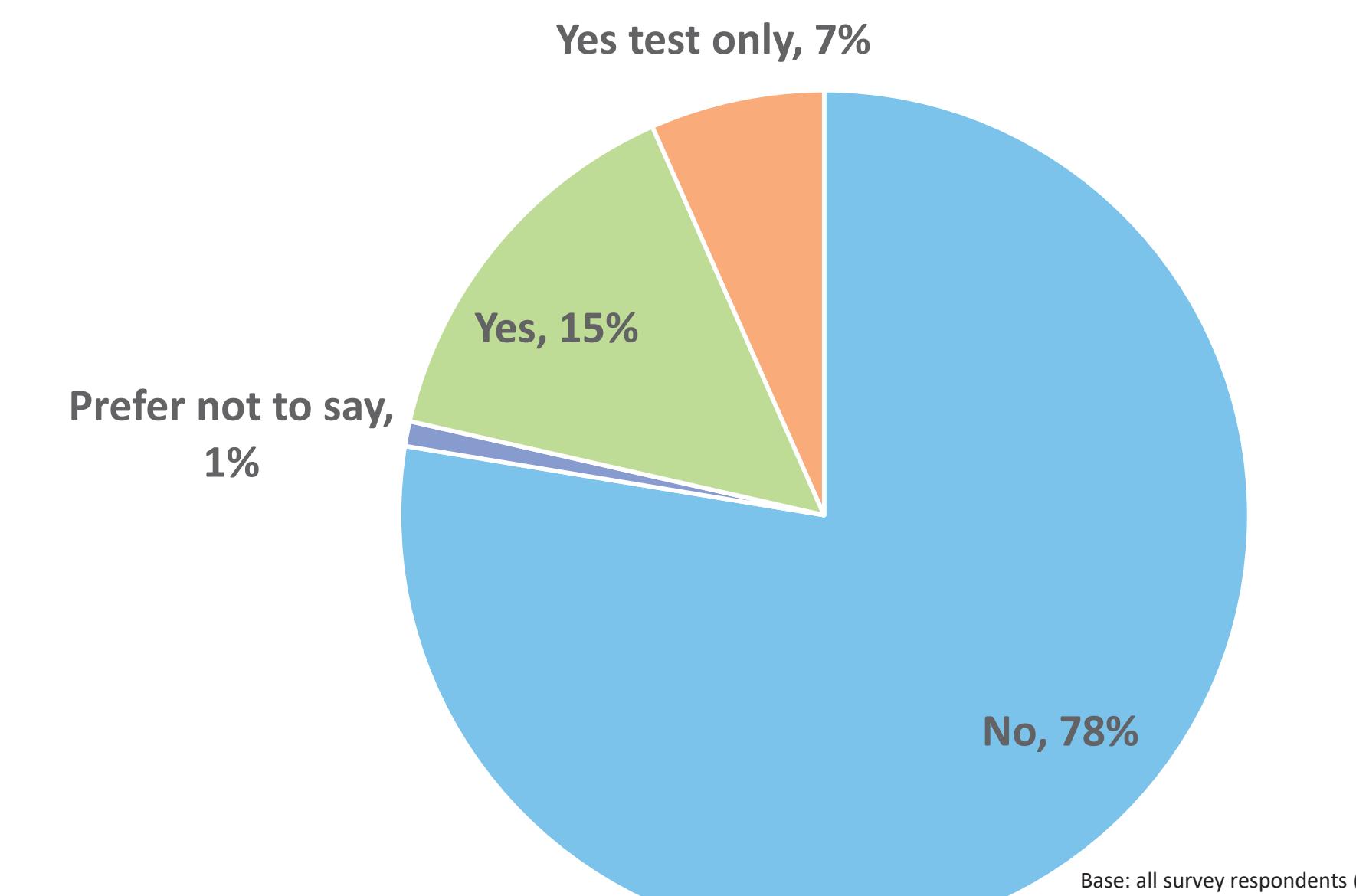
Reasons for leaving home

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they complied with self-isolation requirements. 15% left home for reasons other than to get a PCR test, namely to exercise, to shop for essential items and to care for a pet.

Four themes on motivation for self-isolation

1. To protect others
2. Following the rules / law
3. Testing positive
4. I did it even though.....

> "I wanted to keep my family, friends and wider public Safe" (S45)

Two themes on rationale for leaving home

1. The was no / low risk of transmission
2. It was necessary / driven by need

> "I just felt I had to get out, there are fields near us and things, so it wasn't like I was in contact with anyone, and I wore a mask as well, actually to be honest, just in case and I did test myself every day." (I2)

Self-isolation was challenging. Residents were most likely to receive practical and emotional support from friends, family or neighbours.

17% of respondents were aware of HertsHelp and 50% were aware of the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Some residents experienced financial hardship due to self-isolation despite not being eligible for the support payment.

Recommendations

1. Minimise the financial impact of self-isolation as it may impact future adherence
2. Perform wellbeing checks on those self-isolating
3. Raise awareness of HertsHelp
4. Support residents to meet their caring responsibilities
5. Adopt a model of incentivising self-isolation
6. Use altruistic communication message

References

1 Smith, L., Amlôt, R., Lambert, H., Oliver, I., Robin, C., Yardley, L., & Rubin, G. (2020). Factors associated with adherence to self-isolation and lockdown measures in the UK: A cross-sectional survey. *Public Health*, *187*, 41-52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2020.07.024
2 Smith, L. E., Potts, H. W., Amlôt, R., Fear, N. T., Michie, S., & Rubin, G. J. (2021). Adherence to the test, trace, and isolate system in the UK: Results from 37 nationally representative surveys. *BMJ*, n608. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n608
3 Patel, J., Fernandes, G., & Sridhar, D. (2021). How can we improve self-isolation and quarantine for COVID-19? *BMJ*, n625. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n625

Evaluation team: Catherine Haylock, Becky Moakes & Wendy Tooke