

# The effect of social distancing on the reproduction number and number of contacts in the UK from a social contact survey

## Report 15

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### Summary:

- The overall estimate of  $R_0$  for the UK is 0.80 (95% CI 0.47 to 1.16), though there is some evidence of differences between the nations of the UK, with Scotland and Wales reporting generally lower  $R_0$  estimates over time, whereas some regions of England have seen a gradual increase over recent weeks, as has Northern Ireland (though trends for NI are difficult to interpret due to small numbers).
- The North East and Yorkshire and the South West regions have median estimates of  $R_0$  above 1. The North West, East of England and South East regions have median estimates of  $R_0$  of 1.
- 25% of participants in England, who are under 40 years of age reported visiting the pub on or after 4th July, whereas only 7% of older participants reported visiting the pub. 9% of participants under 40 visited a restaurant, whereas only 2% of older participants did. There were low levels of visits to other newly permissible settings, such as cinemas etc,

### Results

#### *Social contacts and basic reproduction number*

We estimate  $R_0$  to be 0.80 (95% CI 0.47 to 1.16) for the UK and 0.83 (95% CI 0.47 to 1.21) for England, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> July, calculated by truncating contacts to a maximum of 100 per participant (Table 1). The  $R_0$  estimates including all data are 1.04 (95% CI 0.54 to 1.84) for the UK and 1.14 (95% CI 0.55 to 2.13) for England, though these estimates are skewed by a few participants reporting large numbers of contacts. The interquartile range remains 1 to 3 for the number of contacts per person.

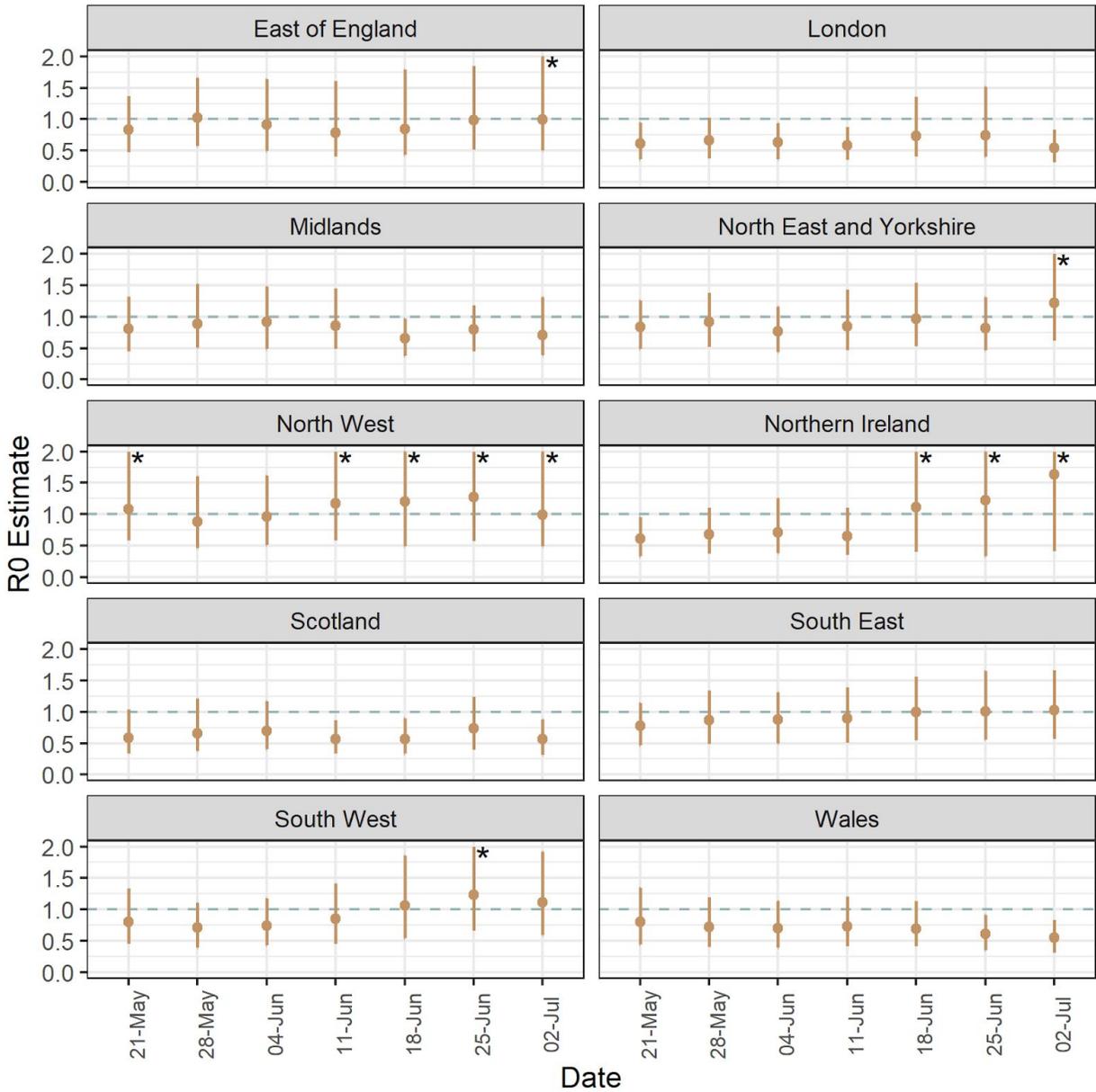
The median  $R_0$  estimates for the different regions and countries of the UK are presented in Figure 1 and Table 2. The North East and Yorkshire and South West have median estimates above 1. Three other regions have median estimates of  $R_0$  at 1. Median estimates of  $R_0$  for the North West have been at or above 1 for a number of weeks. Overall,  $R_0$  estimates for England and Northern Ireland appear to have increased over recent weeks, whereas estimates for Wales and Scotland have remained relatively low and stable. All regional/country level estimates have

wide confidence intervals, especially recent estimates for Northern Ireland. The width of the intervals are strongly driven by a small number of individuals with a high number of contacts.

**Table 1. Numbers of participants, reported contacts and reproduction numbers.** Numbers of participants in each panel, their average number of contacts reported and the estimate of the reproduction number,  $R_0$  for the first two weeks of the survey (immediately after lockdown) and the most recent two weeks of the survey.

Group	Week	Panel	Dates	Observations	Contacts	Mean (IQR)	HH size	$R_0$ mean (95% CI)
UK	1,2	A & B	24/03 to 10/04	3,376	8,943	2.64 (1 to 3)	2.72	0.60 (0.35 to 0.85)
UK*	14	B & D	25/06 to 01/07	1,208	4,908	4.06 (1 to 3)	2.67	1.05 (0.57 to 1.71)
UK* (truncate 100 contacts)	14	B & D	25/06 to 01/07	1,208	3,995	3.30 (1 to 3)	2.67	0.87 (0.52 to 1.29)
England*	14	B & D	25/06 to 01/07	1,016	3,857	3.79 (1 to 3)	2.69	1.03 (0.58 to 1.77)
England* (truncate 100 contacts)	14	B & D	25/06 to 01/07	1,016	3,369	3.32 (1 to 3)	2.69	0.89 (0.51 to 1.36)
UK*	15	A & C	01/07 to 08/07	1,842	7,464	4.05 (1 to 3)	2.82	1.04 (0.54 to 1.84)
UK* (truncate 100 contacts)	15	A & C	01/07 to 08/07	1,842	5,996	3.26 (1 to 3)	2.82	0.80 (0.47 to 1.16)
England*	15	A & C	01/07 to 08/07	1,553	6,297	4.05 (1 to 3)	2.82	1.14 (0.55 to 2.13)
England* (truncate 100 contacts)	15	A & C	01/07 to 08/07	1,553	5,096	3.28 (1 to 3)	2.82	0.83 (0.47 to 1.21)

\* observations includes Panel C or Panel D, as indicated, in which adult participants were asked to answer contact questions on behalf of one child in their household



**Figure 1.  $R_0$  estimates by countries of the UK and NHS regions of England.** The week starting 2nd July contains data between 2nd July and 9th July. The other estimates for prior to 2nd July are a combination of the prior week and the current week. For example the survey sent out on the 21st of May includes the survey data sent out on the 14th of May through the 28th May. Data prior to the 21st of May is not presented as we did not collect information on children's contacts prior to the week before the 7th May. We assume that the baseline  $R_0$  estimate followed a normal distribution with mean 2.6 and standard deviation 0.54 for all regions over time. \* indicates that the data extends past the limits of the plot, see table 3 for estimates.

**Table 2.  $R_0$  estimates by region in the UK.**  $R_0$  scaled assuming that the baseline  $R_0$  estimate followed a normal distribution with mean 2.6 and standard deviation 0.54. The data is a rolling average of two weeks in order to increase the sample size for the regional estimates. Data before. Date in brackets corresponds to date given in the graph above.

Region	R0 median (95% CI) 28 May to 11 June (4 June)	R0 median (95% CI) 4 Jun to 18 June (11 June)	R0 median (95% CI) 11 June to 25 June (18 June)	R0 median (95% CI) 18 Jun to 1 July (25 June)	R0 median (95% CI) 2 July to 9 July (2 July)*
East of England	0.91 (0.49 to 1.64)	0.78 (0.4 to 1.61)	0.84 (0.43 to 1.79)	0.98 (0.51 to 1.85)	0.99 (0.5 to 2.15)
London	0.63 (0.36 to 0.93)	0.58 (0.35 to 0.87)	0.73 (0.4 to 1.36)	0.74 (0.4 to 1.52)	0.54 (0.31 to 0.83)
Midlands	0.92 (0.49 to 1.48)	0.86 (0.49 to 1.45)	0.66 (0.38 to 0.97)	0.8 (0.45 to 1.18)	0.71 (0.39 to 1.31)
North East and Yorkshire	0.77 (0.44 to 1.16)	0.85 (0.47 to 1.43)	0.97 (0.53 to 1.54)	0.82 (0.47 to 1.31)	1.22 (0.62 to 2.38)
North West	0.96 (0.51 to 1.62)	1.17 (0.58 to 2.44)	1.2 (0.49 to 2.83)	1.27 (0.57 to 2.65)	0.99 (0.49 to 2.22)
Northern Ireland	0.71 (0.38 to 1.25)	0.65 (0.35 to 1.1)	1.11 (0.4 to 4.15)	1.22 (0.33 to 5.27)	1.64 (0.41 to 5.37)
Scotland	0.7 (0.4 to 1.17)	0.57 (0.33 to 0.87)	0.57 (0.33 to 0.9)	0.74 (0.39 to 1.24)	0.57 (0.31 to 0.88)
South East	0.88 (0.5 to 1.31)	0.9 (0.51 to 1.39)	1 (0.55 to 1.56)	1.01 (0.56 to 1.65)	1.03 (0.57 to 1.66)
South West	0.74 (0.43 to 1.17)	0.85 (0.45 to 1.41)	1.06 (0.54 to 1.86)	1.23 (0.66 to 2.08)	1.11 (0.59 to 1.92)
Wales	0.7 (0.39 to 1.13)	0.73 (0.41 to 1.2)	0.69 (0.41 to 1.13)	0.61 (0.35 to 0.91)	0.55 (0.31 to 0.83)

\*Due to change in lockdown restriction the R estimate for the week 2 July to 9 July was calculated as one week only.

### *Visits to settings*

On 4th July visits to restaurants, bars, cinemas etc became permissible in England. Table 3 shows the fraction of participants who reported visiting these settings at any time in the previous week by the day of the survey. Younger participants (18-39 years) were much more likely to visit pubs than older participants (40+ years). Visits to other settings remained uncommon, despite the easement to restrictions.

**Table 3. Participant activity summary.** Reported visit to settings at any time within the week prior to the survey, by date of survey and age group of the participant.

Event	Dates	Ages	Visited	Total	Proportion
Cinema	1/7 to 3/7	Age < 40	5	215	0.02
	1/7 to 3/7	Age >= 40	3	743	0
	4/7 to 8/7	Age < 40	6	64	0.09
	4/7 to 8/7	Age >= 40	0	103	-
Restaurant	1/7 to 3/7	Age < 40	6	215	0.03
	1/7 to 3/7	Age >= 40	4	743	0.01
	4/7 to 8/7	Age < 40	6	64	0.09
	4/7 to 8/7	Age >= 40	2	103	0.02
Pub	1/7 to 3/7	Age < 40	10	215	0.05
	1/7 to 3/7	Age >= 40	8	743	0.01
	4/7 to 8/7	Age < 40	16	64	0.25
	4/7 to 8/7	Age >= 40	7	103	0.07
Sport - Participant	1/7 to 3/7	Age < 40	4	215	0.02
	1/7 to 3/7	Age >= 40	12	743	0.02
	4/7 to 8/7	Age < 40	6	64	0.09
	4/7 to 8/7	Age >= 40	2	103	0.02
Sport - Attendee	1/7 to 3/7	Age < 40	2	215	0.01
	1/7 to 3/7	Age >= 40	3	743	0
	4/7 to 8/7	Age < 40	1	64	0.02
	4/7 to 8/7	Age >= 40	0	103	0

## Methods

CoMix is a behavioural survey, with a study sample recruited to be broadly representative of the UK adult population. It was launched on 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 and this analysis includes data

collected up to the 1st of July, with contact data representing the day prior to the survey date. Data is collected weekly, using two different panels each for adults and children who are interviewed using the same questionnaire in alternate weeks. The questionnaires for children are completed by a parent within their household as a proxy. Participants recorded direct, face-to-face contacts made on the previous day, specifying certain characteristics for each contact including the age and sex of the contact, whether contact was physical (skin-to-skin contact), and where contact occurred (e.g. at home, work, while undertaking leisure activities, etc). Further details have been published elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. The contact survey is based on the POLYMOD contact survey. The BBC social contact survey is now used as a baseline for social mixing in the UK under normal conditions<sup>2</sup>. Previously we used POLYMOD. In two additional panels (C and D), participants are asked to answer the contact questions on behalf of a child in their household, and returning participants will be asked about the same child each week. The panels started with a sample size of 1,816 in Panel A, 1,560 in Panel B, 564 in Panel C, and 507 in Panel D.

We calculated the average number of contacts in the settings home, work, school, and other. We sample uniformly between the minimum and maximum age reported for the contact, as we do not record exact ages for contacts. We set the age bands for under 18s to 0-4, 5-12, 13-17 to be consistent with the BBC Pandemic study. We take the mean of reciprocated contacts to form symmetric matrices.

We assume that  $R_0$  prior to physical distancing measures were in place follows a normal distribution with a mean of 2.6 and sd of 0.54. We then apply a scaling factor of the ratio of dominant eigenvalues between CoMix and BBC contact matrices to estimate  $R_0$  under the observed contacts patterns in our study following the approach found in Wallinga et al.<sup>4</sup> This assumes that all other elements of the Next Generation Matrix remain constant, such as transmissibility by age group, which may not be the case. Uncertainty in the estimates of reduction in  $R_0$  is obtained using 200 bootstrap samples of the CoMix and BBC contacts matrices, and applying these ratios to the corresponding number of sampled values of  $R_0$ .

### *Estimating $R_0$ by region*

Each regional estimate of  $R_0$  is a combination of the week reported and the week prior. For example, week 9 includes data from week 8 and 9, week 10 includes data from week 9 and 10. This was chosen to maximise the amount of data we have per region. It does mean that the estimate will be slower to react to a jump in reproduction number but as can be seen the uncertainty is quite large around the estimates and calculating for one region for a single week would lead to greater uncertainty. Since the 9th of May (week 7) we have collected contacts on children by proxy by asking their parents to report on their contacts. We no longer impute the children data from POLYMOD but calculate the contacts directly. In addition to this we have moved to using the BBC as the main comparison for the contact matrix as it allows for consistency between overall and regional  $R_0$  calculations.

## References

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