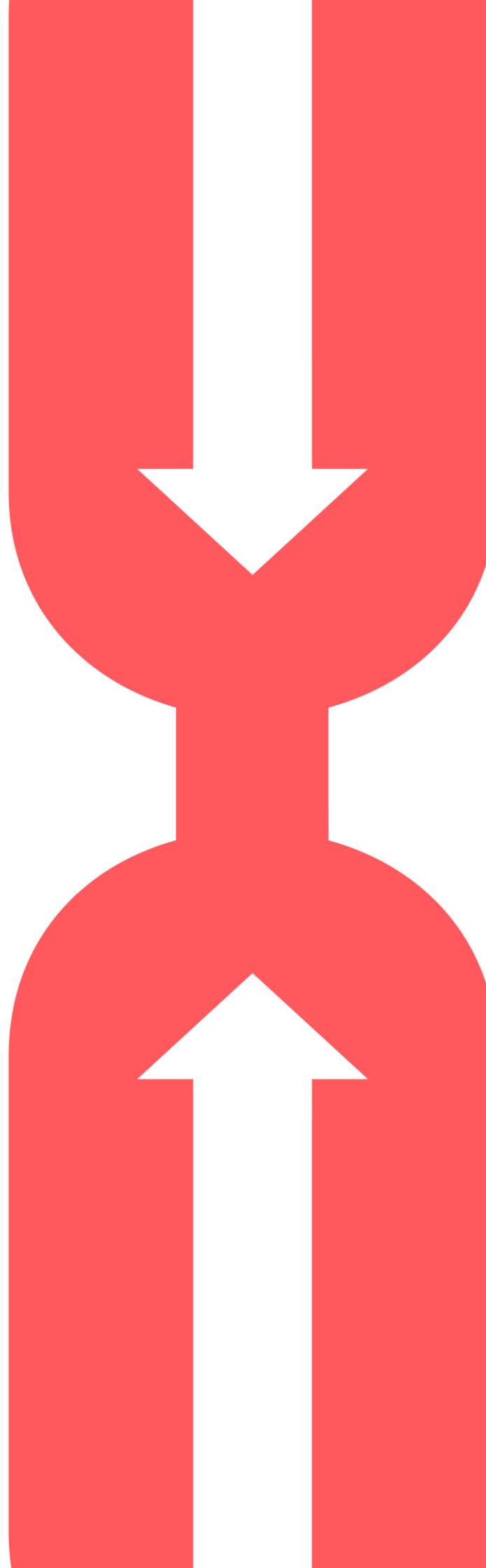


**EQUALLY
OURS**

Building A Better Future

Public perceptions of equality and
human rights in the context of
Covid-19

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Public perceptions of equality and human rights in the context of Covid-19

As the Government plans how to rebuild the economy, a new poll from Savanta ComRes for Equally Ours shows that people want a different future for the UK. Their priority is to build a more equal, just, compassionate, and environmentally-minded society.

Covid-19 has drawn attention to deep-seated inequalities in the UK today, particularly affecting Black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, women, disabled and older people. It has also shown us just how important our shared humanity is, and that we have a responsibility to rebuild a society that works for everyone.

This poll shows that the public think equality and human rights are vital to creating a more compassionate, resilient and just UK. And that the public want the Government to do more to tackle inequality, advance equality and strengthen human rights in practice.

We are therefore calling on the Government to use equality and human rights to underpin all measures to respond to the virus and rebuild the UK.

Creating a different future

Covid-19 has had an impact on all people's lives and livelihoods, but it has also made people more aware that risks and burdens are not equally shared; that low pay does not mean low skill; and people in low paid work are vital to the economy. With many key workers from BAME backgrounds, for

example, the pandemic has shown the significant contribution that BAME and migrant workers make to the UK economy.

Crucially, Covid-19 has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing weaknesses and inequalities. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that 67% of people want society to be more equal after Covid-19, and only a minority (40%) want it to be like it was.

67%

Of UK adults want society to be more equal after Covid-19.

To create the fair and compassionate society that we all want, we need to address the deep seated, structural inequalities that disproportionately affect women, BAME people, disabled people, older people and others who experience discrimination and disadvantage because of who they are. According to the Poll, 63% of UK adults agree

that the Government should do more to address inequality.

74%

Of UK adults agree that human rights laws and protections must apply to everyone equally.

Human Rights in practice

Human rights are key to the future that most people want in the UK, providing the moral underpinning that will enable us to rebuild a compassionate society that works for everyone. The public recognises this and recognise that the values and principles that underpin human rights speak to who we are as a nation:

- Two thirds of UK adults (66%) agree that human rights values and principles are the basis of our shared values as a country.
- 74% of people agree that to be effective human rights laws and protections must apply to everyone equally.
- Almost two thirds (62%) want the Government to do more to protect and promote people's human rights.

The poll also shows that most people in the UK understand the connection between Covid-19 and human rights.

59% of UK adults agree that the Government and society's response to Covid-19 has shown that human rights are important for all of us.

People agree that this is particularly important for older people (60%), women experiencing domestic abuse (59%), family carers (57%) and disabled adults (56%).

This suggests strong support for a human rights-based response to the pandemic. As we enter the next phase, the Government must understand how measures to control the virus impact on different groups and respond accordingly.

Protecting people's rights must be a priority: no-one should be left without access to food, an adequate income, health care or other essential support as a result of these measures.

A racially just society

This poll suggests that BAME people are more aware of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on their communities, than white people. They are more likely to agree that it has exacerbated race inequalities that already existed in our society, whether in relation to the health service, policing, employment or housing.

Nevertheless, both white and BAME people agree that this is an issue that needs to be addressed, with 61% of UK adults agreeing that the Government should do more to tackle racism and only 12% disagreeing.

As Michael Gove has recognised, 'there can be no doubt that [racial inequalities] reflect structural inequality in our society that needs to be addressed'.¹

59%

Of UK adults want the Government to do more to address race inequalities.

This means taking action across the board, to level up educational and economic opportunity; tackle inequalities in housing and health; prevent hate crime and address discrimination in the criminal justice system. And to create an environment where the contribution of BAME people and migrants are positively valued.

Recommendations

In the short term, the Government must put equality and human rights at the heart of planning the ongoing response to Covid-19.

The Government needs to take action to ensure that measures taken to control the virus provide for all people's human rights. For example:

- Policy-makers need to coordinate across sectors to make sure that at risk and marginalised groups are included in

measures to provide food, health care and other essential support.

- 'Easements' to duties under the Care Act introduced in the Coronavirus Act 2020 must be repealed to safeguard the rights of disabled people.
- No-one should be made redundant because they are disabled, are pregnant or have caring responsibilities, or need to shield for health reasons; nor should they be financially worse off if they have to self-isolate or return to shielding during a local lockdown.

The pandemic has revealed evidence of widespread structural racism that impacts on all aspects of BAME people's lives and has placed them at higher risk of death from Covid-19. The Government must now introduce a Race Action Plan to address this as a matter of urgency, with responsibility for implementation given to a Cabinet-level Minister.

The Government must recognise that the public support equal human rights for all, and the want to see increased action to reduce inequality and promote human rights.

The Government could achieve this by using equality and human rights as the values-base for reshaping the UK and as a practical framework for shaping plans to build back better.

For example, the Comprehensive Spending Review must build equality and non-discrimination into all future government plans and programmes. It must use the opportunity to reset the economy so that prosperity and justice go hand in hand. It should ensure that:

¹ Rt Hon Michael Gove, 2020, *The Privilege of Public Service* (Ditchley Annual Lecture)

- All public procurement, including infrastructure projects, have clear targets and practical actions to create opportunity and drive-up employment rates for women, BAME, disabled people and others facing barriers to employment.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund provides the same level of investment in education, training and employment support for disadvantaged individuals and groups as under the European Social Fund it replaces.
- There is significant and sustainable investment in social infrastructure including the NHS, social care, social security, housing and childcare, to enhance economic participation and productivity, especially for women. Not only will this help create jobs,² it will also remove barriers to work for disabled people, women and others with caring responsibilities who currently face a higher than average risk of redundancy.³

Data were weighted to be demographically representative of the UK by age, gender, region and social grade. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Full tables can be found on the Savanta ComRes website.

Equally Ours is a UK charity that brings together people and organisations working across equality, human rights and social justice to make a reality of these in everyone's lives. They join up research, policy and communications to shift public opinion and policy in positive and powerful ways.

The Government must seize the opportunity to harness public support for equality and human rights to create a more equal and compassionate future for us all.

Notes

Savanta ComRes interviewed 2,085 UK adults online between the 17th and 19th July 2020.

² The Women's Budget Group has estimated that a care-led recovery would create 2 million jobs, increasing overall employment rates and decreasing the gender employment gap. Women's Budget Group, 2020, [*A Care-Led Recovery*](#)

³ Citizens Advice, 2020, [*An Unequal Crisis*](#)

Key tables

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following. After Covid-19 I want UK society to be:

% UK adults	Net: Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Net: Disagree	Don't know
More compassionate	72%	19%	6%	3%
More environmentally-minded	68%	20%	9%	3%
More equal	67%	21%	8%	3%
More Just	65%	24%	7%	4%
Like it was before Covid-19	40%	27%	30%	3%

Base: all UK adults (n=2,085) Net: agree includes those who strongly or somewhat agree Net: disagree includes those who strongly or somewhat disagree

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

% UK adults	Net: agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Net: disagree	Don't know
The Government should do more to address inequality	63%	23%	11%	4%
The Government should do more to protect and promote people's human rights	62%	25%	9%	4%
The values and principles of human rights are the basis of our shared values as a country	66%	22%	8%	4%
I value my human rights and would consider using human rights laws to help solve problems for me or my family if I needed to	60%	24%	10%	6%
The Government should do more to tackle racism	61%	24%	12%	4%
The Government should do more to address race inequalities	59%	25%	12%	3%

Base: all UK adults (n=2,085)

