



UK Commission
on Covid
Commemoration

THE UK COMMISSION ON COVID COMMEMORATION: FINAL REPORT

March 2023

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Foreword



It has been a great honour to chair this UK Commission on Covid Commemoration. We were set a difficult task of both commemorating the lives lost because of the COVID-19 pandemic and also recognising the efforts and sacrifices of frontline workers, the volunteering and community spirit we saw and the amazing achievement of UK science in developing the vaccines.

I would like to thank my fellow Commissioners for the dedication and sensitivity with which they took on the work of this Commission and the expertise they brought to our work. And I would also like to thank the small and dedicated Secretariat in the Cabinet Office who have assisted us so expertly and thoughtfully.

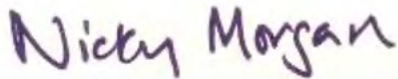
As we say in this report, for many the COVID-19 pandemic is already receding, something not to dwell on. But for others they are still coming to terms with the profound impact COVID-19 has had on their families, their health and their lives. Much of this impact remains very raw. We found in some of our engagement meetings that people, particularly the bereaved, were often speaking for the first time in public about their experiences and loss. The prevention of physical and social contact at a time when normally family and friends would rally round will never be forgotten. The participant at our meeting in Exeter who told me that “Everyone lost something” is completely right.

Those of us who visited the National Covid Memorial Wall in London will not forget the dedication and determination of the formidable volunteers there and the feelings they have invested in the wall and the thousands of red hearts on it.

We are so grateful to everyone who attended our events, who completed our surveys and who sent in their views. We hope we have done justice to the thoughts they shared with us.

When I was an MP and met constituents who had been through deeply distressing incidents, they asked me for help not necessarily to get redress but because they wanted to stop anyone else going through a similar experience. I found the same in the conversations I had as part of this Commission. While people want the space and time to reflect on their individual and collective loss, they also wanted us to look ahead in our recommendations and to try to build resilience in preparation for a future pandemic or other hazardous event.

As Queen Elizabeth II said to the nation in April 2020 “We will be with our friends again, we will be with our families again; we will meet again.” She was, of course, right. But the period when we couldn’t do those things, which we had taken for granted until then, has taken a toll. As I hope this report and our recommendations capture, it is right that, as a country, we take the time to remember the COVID-19 pandemic, to address what happened and then to focus on preparedness for the future.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Nicky Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes

Executive Summary

The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration was established on 21 July 2022. It is independent of Government and wholly separate from the UK COVID-19 Inquiry. We were asked to secure a broad consensus across the whole of the United Kingdom on how we could commemorate the lives lost in the COVID-19 pandemic and mark this distinctive period in our history. This report sets out our findings and recommendations.

The COVID-19 outbreak originated in late 2019 and spread across the entire world in a matter of months. The World Health Organisation declared it a worldwide pandemic on 11 March 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on our society has been unprecedented. It has led to a substantial loss of life, and the economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic has been considerable both across the world and in the UK. Whilst the virus no longer causes as many serious infections as it did at the height of the pandemic, it remains in circulation and continues to affect the lives of many. Although the impact is likely to gradually reduce over time, it is unlikely that there will be a clear end date. Given the scale of loss already experienced, and the unprecedented events of the last three years, now is the right time to consider how to mark and remember this period of our history.

At the outset of our work, we agreed that engaging with the public would be central to producing a set of proposals that would reflect the wishes and needs of people across the UK. As part of our consultation process, we launched an online consultation which ran from 24 October 2022 to 5 December 2022. The consultation received around 5000 responses. Alongside this, we held meetings with various sectors and hosted ten events across the UK inviting bereaved family members, and different organisations and groups that were either affected by COVID-19 or contributed to the response, to share their thoughts and suggestions on commemoration and recognition.

We recognised early on that there were several challenges to this work, and have set some of these out to explain the context within which our recommendations were made.

We were set the task of considering both the commemoration of those lost and the recognition of the achievements, efforts and sacrifices made by people in many sectors. We accepted this would be a difficult task that would need to be addressed sensitively given the different emotions tied to commemoration of loss and to recognising achievements. We also acknowledged bereaved families' concern that we should not conflate the two. We have tried to be mindful of this throughout our deliberations and hope that this is reflected in the recommendations and the rationale laid out in this report.

Our discussions, during the events we hosted, highlighted the degree to which experiences varied from one person to another and one community to another. Although much of the population has or is now trying to move on, the pandemic is not over for certain groups such as long Covid sufferers and the immunocompromised who continue to be affected by the virus. Therefore in making these recommendations, we kept in mind the fact that for many the pandemic remains very much a live issue.

The events we hosted also highlighted the wide range of views on commemoration. Often these views were specific to individual experiences during the pandemic. Given the breadth of the impact from the pandemic and the many different ways people were and continue to be affected, it became clear early on that there would not be one solution that would work for all, and that the Commission should focus on a set of recommendations that fulfil our Terms of Reference.

The Commission agreed on the ten recommendations set out in the Summary of Recommendations section of this report.

The Commission agreed that to mark this period of our history, activities organised across the UK which allow people to reflect and also to understand what we all went through would be important. Recommendations 1 to 5 will play a significant part in achieving this. The establishment of the Covid Commemoration Trust in particular will be key to organising a day of reflection, establishing a symbol and a Covid commemoration website (see recommendations 1 to 3 and 5). Public commemoration of events signals their importance and offers particular respect to those that have suffered. Remembering the events of the COVID-19 pandemic should also help to ensure we are better equipped when facing future pandemics. Tied to this is our recommendation on Education (see recommendation 4). There was widespread support amongst those we engaged with for the pandemic to be taught in schools and colleges as a historical event. This also applied to teaching about the significant role that science played in combating the virus and the importance of building future resilience.

The Commission also agreed that memorials play an important role in commemoration. In the early phases of our work, we considered what it means to commemorate and why it is significant. Remembering the pandemic as a society and through memorials can unify communities across the UK and, importantly, it can ensure that bereaved families do not feel isolated. This is particularly important in the case of COVID-19 as lockdowns, social distancing and self-isolation regulations disrupted the traditional bereavement rituals that are so crucial to those facing the death of loved ones. Easily accessible memorial spaces was also one of the most recurring points made to us during our public consultation. Although the value of a large memorial was acknowledged, the majority of those we spoke with favoured a locally accessible, green space that could bring communities together in remembrance. We agreed that recommendations 6 to 8 would most effectively achieve this balance.

Finally on recognition, those we engaged with felt that a degree of recognition was due to everyone as there were many people in many different lines of work who were unable to stay within the relative safety of their homes but had to go out to keep essential public services running including the exceptional efforts and incredibly challenging experiences of health and social care staff at the peak of the pandemic. We agreed that it is important to remember the experiences we all went through and continue to go through, to remember the solidarity felt amongst many communities and the volunteering spirit that served as a lifeline to so many individuals during this challenging period of our history. We hope our recommendation on the capture of oral histories (see recommendation 9) will serve as an enduring reminder for us and future generations of what everyone went through during the pandemic, and as an important piece of work that will honour the sacrifices and efforts made by many groups and individuals during the pandemic.

We also agreed that the contributions of science must be recognised and found it fitting to put forward a recommendation focusing on supporting researchers to work closely with policy makers in helping to build resilience against natural hazards, namely situations that could cause or threaten serious damage to human welfare or the environment (see recommendation 10).

We hope the implementation of these recommendations will give some comfort to bereaved families and will ensure that this period of our history and the extraordinary experiences we all went through are not forgotten. We firmly believe that these recommendations will also serve to encourage better preparedness and help to build future resilience against natural hazards. We hope the UK Government together with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive will accept these recommendations in full.

Summary of Recommendations

Day of reflection

Recommendation One: A UK-wide day of reflection should be established and held annually on the first Sunday of March.

Symbol

Recommendation Two: The Commission recommends that a new symbol supported by bereaved families and those that continue to be affected by Covid, be created to represent the COVID-19 pandemic and accompany the day of reflection.

Covid commemoration website

Recommendation Three: A Covid commemoration website should be established by the Covid Commemoration Trust to promote the day of reflection, provide details of local memorials and commemorative spaces, and link to Covid related collections in museums including collections of oral histories from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, volunteers, the scientific community and young people.

Education

Recommendation Four: The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive should encourage schools and colleges to teach about the COVID-19 pandemic, including people's experiences, the role of science and the importance of a resilient society. The Covid Commemoration Trust should develop and update teaching materials to ensure they are suitable for the short and long term.

Covid commemoration trust

Recommendation Five: The UK Government, working with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, should establish a Covid commemoration trust to coordinate the day of reflection and other Covid commemoration activities.

Existing Covid commemoration initiatives and memorials

Recommendation Six: The Commission recommends that current plans to preserve the National Covid Memorial Wall should be supported and that other existing initiatives should be valued and recognised for the important role they play in supporting bereaved families and those seeking a tranquil space for reflection.

New memorials across the UK

Recommendation Seven: The Commission recommends that approximately 10 green spaces are identified across the UK and that a new memorial is established at each location as a quiet space of reflection where people can gather.

Local memorials funding scheme

Recommendation Eight: A funding scheme should be set up for local authorities across the UK to establish local commemorative spaces in existing parks or green spaces in their areas.

Oral histories and museums

Recommendation Nine: Oral histories from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, volunteers, the scientific community and young people should be gathered in recognition of all the sacrifices and efforts made during the pandemic, and to serve as a historical record of this period of our time and as an educational tool for future generations.

UK science

Recommendation Ten: The UK Government, working with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, should support a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship programme that will enable early and mid-career researchers to work closely with policy makers to support preparedness for risks posed by natural hazards.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Commission

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an event like nothing within living memory. It has affected every aspect of our lives and every corner of the United Kingdom, often in very different ways. The impact was felt on a global scale with the majority of countries around the world affected in one way or another. As the world continues to adapt to living alongside COVID-19, it is important to acknowledge that the pandemic is not over and many continue to suffer as a result. It is also important to take a moment to take stock of this global event and consider how to remember and record this period of our history.

The UK Commission on Covid Commemoration was established on 21 July 2022 to secure a broad consensus from across the whole of the United Kingdom on how we could commemorate the COVID-19 pandemic and mark this distinctive period in our history at a UK and community level. It is independent of Government and wholly separate from the UK COVID-19 Inquiry. The Commission has worked across the United Kingdom, to build a consensus around the measures which could be put in place to commemorate the COVID-19 pandemic and mark this distinctive period in our history.

The Commission was asked to report to the Prime Minister by March 2023. The Commission's Terms of Reference can be found at Annex A of this report.

1.2. The Commissioners

The members of the Commission were appointed on 21 July 2022. They come from across the UK and have varied backgrounds which are relevant to the work of the Commission. They are the Chair of the Commission, Baroness Morgan of Cotes (Nicky Morgan), Sir Nicholas Coleridge CBE DL, Dr Nadine Cossette, Rt Hon Caroline Flint, Denise Hayward, Felicia Kwaku OBE, General Sir Gordon Messenger KCB, DSO & Bar, OBE DL, Gillian Norton OBE DL, Ndidi Okezie OBE, Professor Keshav Singhal CBE, FLSW, and Professor Sir Mark Walport FRCP FRS FMedSci HonFRSE.

Biographies of the members can be found at Annex B of this report.

1.3. Background

Commemoration events serve as important tools to mark notable periods of our history. There are several examples such as the First and Second World Wars, and the Holocaust which demonstrate how commemorative events such as Remembrance Sunday and the Holocaust Memorial Day can help to build periods of history into British society's consciousness, building a common understanding of events and reminding people of the losses and sacrifices made.

By contrast, there is almost no memorialisation or public reflection in the UK of the global influenza outbreak in 1918-19 (also known as the ‘Spanish Flu’). This is despite the high death toll estimated to be around 228,000 in Britain, and more than 50 million worldwide¹. The impact of the First World War is likely to have played a key part in this, eclipsing the effects of the influenza pandemic. It is also thought that unlike in war, the deaths could not easily be presented as representing heroic sacrifice or being part of national struggle against a common enemy. As is currently the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is also no clear cut end date to a pandemic. The combination of these factors and several others led to a lack of public commemoration and a mostly forgotten pandemic in public life.

And yet, a little over a century after the 1918-1919 pandemic, in modern societies where better nutrition, vaccines, antibiotics and the other tools of advanced medical practice have reduced greatly the burden of illness and death from infectious diseases, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our society in diverse ways and, for many, continues to do so. We believe and have been told it is important to remember these events and the experiences we all went through and continue to go through, particularly in the case of those that continue to be affected by the virus and its effects. It is also important to remember the exceptional efforts of health and social care staff at the peak of the pandemic, the solidarity felt amongst many communities and the volunteering spirit that served as a lifeline to so many individuals during this challenging period of our history.

Remembering this latest pandemic is important for several reasons. COVID-19 impacted everyone across the UK and around the world in one way or another. The scale of lives lost to COVID-19 in the UK is considerable, noting that the death toll continues to increase albeit at a much slower pace than at the peak of the pandemic. There were also many deaths that occurred indirectly from the pandemic, resulting from the interruption to normal health care and the consequences of diseases other than COVID-19 that were diagnosed late or not at all. It is important to remember those people who lost their lives during the pandemic and to offer support to the many bereaved families. Remembering the pandemic as a society and through memorials can unify communities across the UK and ensure that bereaved families do not feel isolated. This is particularly important in the case of COVID-19 as lockdowns, social distancing and self-isolation regulations disrupted the traditional bereavement rituals that are so important to those facing the death of loved ones. Given the number of projects already underway to commemorate the pandemic and those who suffered and died, the Commission believes this is the appropriate time to consider the question of how we mark this period of our history at a national level. We also recognise that public commemoration of events signals their importance in the past, present and also in the future. Ensuring that the COVID-19 pandemic is remembered should also help to ensure we are better equipped when facing future pandemics.

¹ Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)

1.4. Approach to our work

The Commission was set the task of recommending ways in which the UK could remember loved ones lost, honour the work of those health and social care staff who worked to save lives and the courage of frontline workers who have kept our country going, celebrate the genius of those who learnt rapidly the best ways to treat COVID-19, and who created the vaccines, and commemorate the small acts of kindness and the daily sacrifice of millions who stayed at home.

Our approach in meeting this objective was split into three phases. The first phase involved looking at existing initiatives across the UK and the world. Phase two was a public engagement phase that included a public consultation and meetings with bereaved families as well as organisations and groups which were affected by or contributed to the response to the pandemic. This also included engaging with academics specialising in the field of commemoration and memory studies. The final phase involved drawing all of our findings into the set of recommendations presented in this report.

Existing initiatives

The Commission sought to find out more about existing commemoration initiatives in the UK and internationally. We also looked at how other events in our history have been remembered. Alongside our research, a survey was launched inviting members of the public across the UK to share details of Covid commemoration activities near them. We found many initiatives to be already underway in the UK and the Commission was keen that its recommendations should look to complement and build on existing initiatives.

Public engagement

The Commission agreed early on that engaging with the public would play a key role in producing a set of proposals that would reflect the wishes and needs of people across the UK. We launched a UK-wide public consultation whilst also hosting in person and online events.

We launched the public consultation on 24 October 2022 for a duration of 6 weeks. The consultation was derived from our work in the research phase looking at UK and international examples of COVID-19 related commemoration. The consultation took the form of a self-selecting survey, open to the whole of the UK public and was used to get a view of how people felt the pandemic should be remembered. A detailed breakdown of the findings is at Annex C.

Alongside the public consultation, we hosted ten events across the UK inviting various organisations and groups that were either affected by COVID-19 or contributed to the response, to share their thoughts and suggestions for commemoration.

Alongside the events held across the UK, meetings were held with different sectors including business groups, disability groups, education, museums, the scientific community, the transport sector, unions, volunteering and youth groups. Commissioners also held additional discussions and meetings with networks and groups available to them in their professional capacity. The discussions were used to further test and validate the themes and ideas that were emerging from the public events and consultation.

We also spoke to academics and experts in the field of commemoration and memory studies during this phase of work. Their contribution helped us understand the importance of remembering an event like the COVID-19 pandemic and the points to take into consideration when setting these recommendations. They raised important points such as that our relationship to an event changes over time and this must be borne in mind when setting recommendations that may be enduring. We found there was generally a good deal of support for the establishment and work of the Commission among academics researching the field of commemoration, memory studies, pandemic deaths and grief.

At the heart of the Commission's work was our engagement with bereaved families. Their experiences during the pandemic were like none other, notably in the way that usual bereavement rituals and support for grieving were not available to them during the pandemic. We therefore recognised that considering how to commemorate now will be especially important for this group. We also recognised the importance of their involvement in this process and therefore worked closely with them, engaging both at an organisational level as well as with bereaved individuals around the UK.

Throughout this time, we have also received many ideas from the general public and organisations on how COVID-19 could be commemorated and remembered. We are also aware of the many ideas that were sent to the UK Government before we were established. We are grateful to all who sent in their ideas. These were helpful sources of inspiration and were useful references when considering what recommendations we should make.

We are grateful to all who contributed their time and input to this important work. We are especially grateful to those bereaved family members that took the time to share their difficult stories with us and their thoughts on the best way to commemorate the loss of their loved ones.

A list of events hosted can be found at Annex D.

Setting the recommendations

Monthly meetings of Commission members were held to discuss our findings and the progress of our work. A summary of each of these meetings was published soon after on our gov.uk page². The Commission used these meetings to discuss and formulate what we believed would be the most appropriate set of recommendations based on the emerging themes and findings made throughout the public engagement phase of our work. This is covered in more detail in section two of this report.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-commission-on-covid-commemoration>

2. Findings and Recommendations

This section sets out the key findings from the public consultation³ and the many events and meetings we hosted with various groups, organisations and members of the public. Here we set out these findings which have led to our recommendations.

2.1. Context

The Commission recognised early on the challenge of considering both the commemoration of those who died and the recognition of the achievements, efforts and sacrifices made by people in many sectors. We heard from bereaved families that it was important to them that the two must not be conflated and the Commission's recommendations take this into account. We have tried to be mindful of this throughout our deliberations.

We also often heard that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted everyone in some form or another. The impact of restrictions on children and young people, notably the loss of educational and social opportunities at such important life stages must be acknowledged. Most importantly, we recognised that although much of the population has or is trying to move on, the pandemic is not over for certain groups such as long Covid sufferers and those that are immunocompromised. We recognised also that many bereaved families have not been able to move on from the pandemic due to the trauma they experienced. This makes the need for commemoration all the more relevant because research has shown that public recognition can serve to validate and legitimise the experiences of people.

The Commission also heard from groups that expressed scepticism toward the severity of the COVID-19 disease and a great degree of irritation at and opposition to the Government's response and introduction of the various lockdowns, as well as the Commission's plans for commemoration. However, for the reasons set out in this report the Commission strongly disagrees with these viewpoints.

Given the breadth of the impact from the pandemic and the many different ways people were and continue to be affected, it became clear early on that there would not be one solution that would work for all, and that the Commission should focus on a set of recommendations that fulfil our Terms of Reference.

³ The full public consultation results and methodology adopted can be found at Annex C.

In setting the recommendations in this report, the Commission was also keen to ensure that the measures being considered would be enduring and relevant to future generations, and that they could encompass any future pandemics too.

Wider observations

As well as the general context outlined above, the Commission observed the points detailed below.

Bereaved families' anger and frustration

Bereaved families often expressed the feeling that they cannot forget what they experienced during the pandemic. Although many people appear to treat the pandemic as over, the Commission observed a lot of anger continues to be felt by bereaved family members. They often also described a feeling of trauma and a lack of closure. The COVID-19 Inquiry was brought up on many occasions and although we are distinct from and have no ties to the inquiry, families shared their frustrations and their hopes that lessons would be learnt from the inquiry's outcomes. We wanted to reflect that these views had been put to us and that we understand the importance of the inquiry to the families we spoke to.

Long Covid sufferers and immunocompromised

During the public engagement phase of our work, we also often heard from long Covid sufferers and those that are immunocompromised. In many cases, their daily lives continue to be heavily impacted due to their health. Although this issue is outside of the scope of the Commission's work, we would like to draw the attention of the UK Government and the devolved governments to these groups, should there be scope to conduct further research and work in this area.

Bereavement research

Many bereaved families we spoke with referred to the specific challenge of being bereaved during the pandemic and often spoke of the impact of human contact not being allowed and the impact of the disruption to traditional bereavement rituals. The UK Commission on Bereavement was established in June 2021 to look into how well-equipped the UK is to support people through a bereavement, and what can be done to improve that support both now and in the future. Its report was published in October 2022 and made several recommendations. The Commission agreed that their recommendation to conduct "further research to better understand the emotional support needs of people affected by bereavement" would be of great value, particularly if this research specifically examined the impact of the absence of the usual bereavement rituals on the loss suffered by bereaved families in order to offer lessons for the future.

2.2. Key themes

The Commission found several recurring themes emerged from the meetings and events held. These are set out below.

Theme 1: National and local remembering

There was a strong consensus among the people we engaged with that commemoration initiatives should be easily accessible. Local and regional level initiatives, such as dedicated green spaces, were seen to be key in providing locally accessible spaces for quiet reflection. Such spaces were also valued for bringing communities together in remembrance. However, we also heard that an impactful and large-scale national monument was viewed as important in capturing the scale of loss and sacrifice.

Theme 2: Remembering individual experiences

We found there was strong support for accurately capturing the diversity of experiences during the pandemic across all the events we hosted. Many felt that having an awareness of individual experiences and the distinct realities experienced by different groups was essential in remembering the pandemic as a period that impacted everyone. We found this idea was most pronounced amongst bereaved people who felt very strongly that their loved ones should be remembered as “names not numbers”.

Theme 3: Forward looking initiatives

We often found there was a push for the Commission to recommend initiatives that will add value to society. The promotion of volunteering initiatives and research to prevent, mitigate and manage natural hazards are examples of such initiatives. Much of our engagement took place between September and December 2022. During this engagement, we heard concern over the financial hardship faced by many, with a warning against overly ceremonial and costly recommendations and favouring initiatives that would deliver value back into society. The Commission also noted that for many people, commemoration initiatives should be enduring and remain relevant for future generations. There was a sense that these initiatives should not fade or be easily forgotten.

Theme 4: Digitisation

We found there was wide agreement amongst those that engaged with us that a website should be developed as a complement to memorials and commemoration events. Two ideas in particular were favoured; an online resource for finding Covid commemoration events nearby, and the use of digital archives to capture lived experiences through oral stories. Ideas also included providing digital links at memorial sites to provide additional information on a given memorial and to enable the names and stories about those commemorated to be readily accessible online. These digital tools were viewed as crucial in keeping the memory of what people experienced during the pandemic alive.

2.3. Marking this period of our history

Day of reflection

We found there to be widespread support for an annual day of reflection, most notably amongst bereaved families. However, there were many views on exactly what the day should represent.

- *Remembering all those who died:* Most of those we engaged with agreed that the day of reflection should focus on all deaths throughout the pandemic including non-Covid deaths. However, some bereaved families felt the day should be focused on those who died from COVID-19. It is important to recognise that one of the reasons losing loved ones during the pandemic was felt to be even more traumatic was the removal of the usual bereavement rituals. Many people were unable to see family and friends and said they had limited access to formal support after their loved one died. Lockdown, shielding and self-isolation regulations left people feeling alone in their grief. This was further compounded by the lack of face-to-face contact from primary care and community-based services, and bereavement support services. Many of these rituals were removed from all bereaved families, whether their loved ones died of Covid or due to other causes.
- *A day of remembrance or reflection:* In discussing this idea, we gave careful consideration to the terminology used. We considered both a day of remembrance and a day of reflection and felt the latter would be most appropriate. As already mentioned, the Commission recognised early on the challenge of considering both the commemoration of those lost and the recognition of the achievements, efforts and sacrifices made by people in many sectors. We remained sensitive to the fact that for bereaved families, the two must not be conflated. We noted however that many of the discussions we had with both bereaved families and other groups affected or involved in the response to the pandemic referenced the fact that everyone was affected in one way or another during the pandemic. Everyone lost something. At one end of the scale, people lost their loved ones in the most harrowing conditions. Some lost time with loved ones, educational or career opportunities or simply some of the freedoms we are all so used to. These losses were reflected across many parts of the world and not just the UK.
- *A day of reflection:* A day of reflection seemed more fitting as it would allow everyone to reflect on this unique period of our history as well as their own experiences. A day of reflection also allows us to acknowledge that Covid is not yet over and that many continue to be impacted by the pandemic, for example, long Covid sufferers and those who are immunocompromised. Through the public consultation we also found that people felt everyone who worked to keep the country running throughout the pandemic should be recognised for their efforts rather than specific groups. A day of reflection would allow us to recognise everyone for their efforts and sacrifices made during the pandemic. It would allow us to reflect and recognise the tireless work of health and social care workers, the extremely valuable work of all of those that developed effective treatments, and those who created the vaccine to name but a few.

- *The first Sunday of March:* We received many varying views on what the date of the day of reflection should be. The public consultation presented six dates: 30 January, the date of the first confirmed UK case, 5 March, the date of the announcement of the first recorded death in the UK, 11 March, the date the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic, 23 March, the date of the start of the first lockdown and also Marie Curie's National day of reflection, 7 April, the World Health Day and 5 July, the date the NHS was founded. Although some of those we spoke with in person favoured the 23 March, many bereaved families felt strongly that associating the day of reflection to lockdown seemed too political. They favoured a date specific to the pandemic. We noted however that March appeared to be the most relevant month to the pandemic. This was supported by the public consultation which revealed no clear favoured date but showed 3 out of the 4 preferred options falling in March. Given the wide range of views, the Commission agreed that holding the day of reflection on the first Sunday of March would be most appropriate. We agreed Sunday would be particularly appropriate as fewer people tend to work on a Sunday. It would therefore be an easier day for many to take a moment to remember those loved ones lost and reflect on this unique period of our history as well as their own experience.
- *Other Sundays in March:* The Commission noted that the first Sunday of March would on occasion clash with other events and celebrations such as St. David's Day or Mother's Day. We agreed that in those instances, the Covid Commemoration Trust (please refer to Recommendation Five below) who would be responsible for its organisation, would choose a different Sunday in March for the day of reflection.

Recommendation One: A UK-wide day of reflection should be established and held annually on the first Sunday of March.

Symbol

We found there to be widespread support for a Covid symbol amongst both those we engaged with in person and in the public consultation results, which showed more than half of people to be in favour of a symbol. Many people felt the symbol could be used as an identifying mark for local and national commemoration initiatives to show they are linked to the same event.

When we came to consider what that symbol might be, it became apparent in our discussions with bereaved families groups, that there were several symbols that particularly resonated with bereaved families and also that this was a very emotive subject.

- *Heart symbols:* We found the yellow heart and the red heart to be established symbols amongst many bereaved families. The yellow heart was favoured by some bereaved families as a symbol for all those who died with Covid or from other causes during the pandemic. However, others felt that the symbol, and specifically the colour yellow, was too closely linked to Marie Curie who use the yellow daffodil as a symbol. Others we spoke with favoured the red heart which is closely linked to the National Covid Memorial Wall. However, the red heart represents COVID-19 deaths only and does not include deaths from other causes. We also found that the red heart already serves as the symbol for the British Heart Foundation and is of course widely associated as the symbol for love.
- *A new symbol:* It was clear to the Commission that this was an emotive and difficult point of discussion as we found strong emotional attachment to both the red and yellow hearts. We also found that the use of either the yellow or the red heart was not supported by long Covid sufferers and many who continue to suffer from the effects of the pandemic as both symbols represent loss rather than the impact of Covid. The Commission agreed that although a symbol would be needed, we also needed to acknowledge the difficulties in endorsing an existing symbol, given the many differing views. We agreed that a new symbol may be the most appropriate way forward.
- *The Zinnia flower:* Many of those we met favoured the idea of a flower representing the pandemic as a whole. Various flowers have been suggested and the Commission found that the Zinnia flower in particular could be a good choice for a new symbol. The Zinnia has many different meanings and is usually associated with friendship, endurance, daily remembrance, goodness, and lasting affection – all very relevant to the diversity of experiences lived through during the pandemic. Zinnia flowers also bloom in many different shades.

Although the Commission reached the conclusion that a new symbol is needed, we recognised that this will need to be suitably tested with bereaved families and those that continue to be affected by Covid. We agreed that this work would need to be undertaken before a decision is reached on the precise symbol. We also agreed that the Covid Commemoration Trust (please refer to Recommendation Five below) would be best placed to carry out this work.

Recommendation Two: The Commission recommends that a new symbol supported by bereaved families and those that continue to be affected by Covid, be created to represent the COVID-19 pandemic and accompany the day of reflection.

Covid commemoration website

We found widespread support for a Covid commemoration website to act as a source of information on Covid memorials and commemoration activities, with approximately two-thirds of people supporting the idea in the public consultation. Furthermore, since the launch of the Commission, we have observed that there are many local initiatives already in train. However, many of those we engaged with were not aware of even the most local initiatives and were therefore very supportive of the idea of having a comprehensive and accessible website that sets out commemoration and recognition initiatives across the UK.

Many bereaved families we spoke with felt strongly that their loved ones should be remembered in name and not just as a number or statistic. The website could be helpful in this regard too by allowing relatives and friends to contribute commemorative messages and biographies of loved ones who died. The website should be established and maintained by the Covid Commemoration Trust (please refer to Recommendation Five below).

After further consideration and based on the feedback we received, we found that a Covid commemoration website could also serve as a source of information on a variety of Covid related initiatives and should aim to provide at a minimum:

- an interactive map/postcode finder of local Covid commemoration events and spaces;
- a page with links to the many existing initiatives by museums and institutions which seek to document what we all went through during the pandemic, including oral histories from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, volunteers and the scientific community;
- a page which links to an online book of remembrance of those who died during the pandemic; and
- an educational resources page with guidance tailored to each age group (please refer to Recommendation Four below).

Recommendation Three: A Covid commemoration website should be established by the Covid Commemoration Trust to promote the day of reflection, provide details of local memorials and commemorative spaces, and link to Covid related collections in museums including collections of oral histories from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, volunteers, the scientific community and young people.

Education

The importance of educating current and future generations on the diverse experiences from the pandemic was often highlighted to us throughout our engagements. Many felt that such experiences should be taught in schools and colleges across the UK. We found this was supported by the public consultation results, with around three-quarters of people stating that the best way to educate future generations about COVID-19 and other pandemic infections would be through the school system. We also hosted an event with young people aged 11 to 16 to ensure their voices and ideas were heard.

- *Day of reflection and a themed week:* The young people we heard from endorsed the idea of a day of reflection. They also suggested that many educational, community and wellbeing events could be held in the week running up to the day of reflection, given the impact of the pandemic, especially on their learning and mental health. This would also allow them to fully reflect on such experiences.
- *History and science:* We found widespread support for the pandemic to be taught as a historical event, detailing the events that took place, including the scale of loss and sacrifices made. Similarly, there was support for teaching about the important role that science played in combating the virus including how pandemics can emerge, the importance of vaccines and the study of epidemiology. We also heard from those in the scientific community and education sector who gave examples of valuable educational materials developed during the pandemic to support learning in areas such as infectious disease outbreaks and personal and national resilience.
- *STEM Ambassadors:* Many in the scientific community, as well as members of the public suggested that the shared appreciation of the important role that science played should be used to inspire young people to further engage with topics such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics and the social sciences and humanities. The scientific community we spoke to noted the importance of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Ambassadors programme, with representatives from a broad scientific community visiting schools to speak about their experiences and disciplines.
- *Volunteering and community spirit:* Throughout our engagements, many were quick to recognise the volunteering spirit seen during the pandemic. There was a sense that people did their very best to help one another despite all the restrictions in place. There was encouragement for these values to continue to be built into the ethos of schools, with this helping to sustain a cultural shift where acts of community service are seen as a natural part of citizenship.
- *Wider resilience:* Many of those we spoke with also felt that we should learn lessons from this pandemic to support preparedness for future pandemics and crises. The lessons learnt from the pandemic were seen to provide a strong platform to teach the importance of preventing, mitigating and managing risks posed by natural hazards, such as pandemic infections, as well as human threats.

The Commission agreed with the importance of teaching about the pandemic as an historical event, as well as the science related to pandemics to support resilience against future risks. In forming this recommendation, the Commission wanted to ensure that it would be enduring and forward looking, so that future generations can learn about a key period in which everyone was, and many continue to be, impacted.

In the short term, we recognised that the education sector is still in recovery from the disruption to young people’s education during the pandemic. We also recognised that consideration would need to be given to supporting the mental health of young people, especially those experiencing bereavement from Covid, as they participate in such learning.

To support such learning we recommend that the Covid Commemoration Trust (please refer to Recommendation Five below) develop age appropriate resources for schools and colleges to be able to teach about the pandemic in the short and long term. These materials should also be made available to youth and community groups, recognising the different spaces young people go to for learning.

Recommendation Four: The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive should encourage schools and colleges to teach about the COVID-19 pandemic, including people’s experiences, the role of science and the importance of a resilient society. The Covid Commemoration Trust should develop and update teaching materials to ensure they are suitable for the short and long term.

Covid commemoration trust

In making the above recommendations, the Commission felt that it would be advisable to establish a charitable trust that would take ownership of and manage Covid commemoration activities. Other organisations that coordinate the range of events we envisage the Covid Commemoration Trust would coordinate include charities such as the Royal British Legion, Holocaust Educational Trust, and National Aids Trust to name a few. Therefore, the Commission agreed this recommendation is key to ensuring the successful delivery of much of what we have set out in this report.

Specifically, the Trust would be envisaged to take on the following responsibilities at a minimum:

- run, organise and share information on the day of reflection;
- take ownership of and management of the Covid symbol;
- establish and manage the Covid Commemoration website;
- produce educational resources; and
- promote the work of museums with Covid related initiatives and institutions that seek to document the events of the pandemic including those collecting oral histories.

The Commission agreed that the Trust should have clear purposes, its own set of trustees and staff and an annual operating budget. Given that many of the recommendations will sit within the remit of the Covid Commemoration Trust, the Commission believes that the Trust should be established at the earliest opportunity. The sooner it is set up and running, the more likely it is that it will be able to successfully run a day of reflection in March 2024 with the new symbol fully integrated as part of the day. The Commission also agreed that the Trust and its associated responsibilities should be reviewed after a period of 10 years to ensure its activities are still relevant.

Recommendation Five: The UK Government, working with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, should establish a Covid commemoration trust to coordinate the day of reflection and other Covid commemoration activities.

2.4. Commemoration and memorials

The topic of memorials was discussed at great length amongst the groups we met and we found a wide range of views emerging from these discussions. These, along with the results of the public consultations, have led us to make the three recommendations presented below.

Existing Covid commemoration initiatives and memorials

There are many Covid commemoration initiatives already underway across the UK. Many are already built and accessible to the public, whilst others are currently being planned. The Commission believes these existing initiatives should be recognised and valued for the benefits they will bring to bereaved families as well as those impacted by the pandemic seeking a space of quiet reflection. Some notable initiatives are detailed below:

- *National Covid Memorial Wall:* Many of the bereaved families we spoke with felt that in order to keep the pandemic in the public consciousness as time moves on, there must be a prominent memorial. In almost every meeting and event we organised, we heard of the importance of preserving the National Covid Memorial Wall. The phrase most often used was that it was made by the bereaved for the bereaved. The memorial developed organically and has become very symbolic to many bereaved families. The mural of red hearts is maintained by volunteers and there will need to be discussions between the current owner of the wall, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, and other relevant parties as to the future maintenance of the wall itself as well as the memorial. Given the meaning this wall holds for many bereaved families, we recommend supporting efforts to preserve the memorial wall.
- *St Paul's Cathedral:* The Remember Me memorial in St Paul's Cathedral is a new inner portico dedicated to the memory of those who have died during the COVID-19 pandemic. This physical memorial is accompanied by an online book of remembrance. The memorial and book of remembrance are open to people of all faiths and none.
- *The 25-acre living memorial:* This is an important project led by the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) and National Forest Company that looks to create a new living memorial that will recognise service and sacrifice, and remember every person who died as a result of the pandemic. The NMA plan to create an inspirational living landscape including many features such as reflective glades, areas for gathering and play, an inclusive space for contemplation and worship and an expansive lake. There are also plans for an avenue of water to run through the centre of the woodland through a series of water features layered in meaning.

- *Commemorative woodlands in Wales:* The Welsh Government announced the creation of three commemorative woodlands to remember all those who have died during the pandemic. Three sites have been designated for this work. They include a site owned by Caerphilly Council alongside sites at the National Trust Cymru's Erddig Estate in Wrexham and a site identified by Natural Resources Wales at Brownhill in the Tywi Valley in Carmarthenshire. The memorial woodlands are intended to be a symbol of Wales' resilience during the pandemic, and one of regeneration and renewal as the new woodlands grow. It is hoped they will be places of quiet reflection for families and friends to remember lost loved ones. They will also be locations where the public will be able to reflect on the pandemic and the impact it has had on all our lives.
- *Remembering Together programme in Scotland:* Remembering Together is Scotland's Covid Community Memorial Programme. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government managed by greenspace Scotland and is working with local partners to commission artists in all 32 local authority areas to co-create collective acts of reflection, remembrance, hope and healing with communities across Scotland. This programme hopes to provide an opportunity for people to pause, to reflect and to consider all that has happened in their communities.
- *'I remember' memorial walk in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park in Scotland:* This memorial walk includes forty oak artworks that are by or close to paths or surfaced roads.

The Commission recognised the important and much valued role these memorials and many others across the UK serve in providing a space where people can gather to reflect on the impact of the pandemic and remember loved ones who died as a result. Some of those initiatives might also help to fulfil Recommendation Seven.

Recommendation Six: The Commission recommends that current plans to preserve the National Covid Memorial Wall should be supported and that other existing initiatives should be valued and recognised for the important role they play in supporting bereaved families and those seeking a tranquil space for reflection.

New memorials across the UK

As already mentioned, the topic of memorials was discussed at great length amongst the groups we met across the UK. The Commission agreed that memorials will be an important part of the grieving process for many bereaved family members. Although many views were shared on specific ideas, we found several recurring themes that allowed us to reach a conclusion on the recommendation that is likely to reflect the greatest consensus.

- *Multiple memorials:* The great majority of the people we engaged with across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland preferred the idea of a more local memorial that would be easily accessible over that of a single large memorial. We observed a similar trend in the results of the public consultation, where around two-in-five people expressed support for a regional memorial. People also often expressed some reservation against the Commission recommending overly ceremonial and costly commemoration options given the current economic climate.
- *Tranquil green space of reflection:* Those we spoke with felt that Covid memorials should be tranquil spaces ideally set within a green space like a woodland, park or garden where people can gather. This was reflected in the public consultation findings with green memorials coming up as the top choice over physical and online memorials. People we spoke with were also keen for the memorials to reflect what that region had experienced at the height of the pandemic.

The Commission agreed that there should be approximately 10 new memorials established across the UK, each set within an accessible public green space such as a park, garden or woodland. We were mindful of the economic climate and other public spending priorities but given the impact that COVID-19 had on our society, we agreed that there would likely be greater support for a programme involving several new moderately sized memorials situated across the whole of the UK. Such a programme is also likely to complement the many initiatives already underway such as the National Covid Memorial Wall, the planned 25-acre living memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, the three woodlands in Wales and the 'I remember' memorial walk in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park in Scotland. We agreed that these memorials should consist of a new sculpture that would enhance the green environment surrounding it and that there should be a common theme across all 10 memorials. At a minimum, the common theme would be a plaque and the symbol mentioned in Recommendation Two above. We also agreed that it would be ideal for the new sculptures to be designed by local sculptors as they could best capture and reflect the experiences of the area.

The new memorials and sculptures will need to be designed and constructed on several sites across the UK. Care will need to be taken to choose locations which complement existing memorials. The Commission also noted that social inequalities amongst communities across the UK were particularly felt during the pandemic and that the places where those who were disproportionately impacted live should also be taken into consideration when choosing the location of these new memorials.

The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive should work together to provide funding for the programme.

Recommendation Seven: The Commission recommends that approximately 10 green spaces are identified across the UK and that a new memorial is established at each location as a quiet space of reflection where people can gather.

Local memorials funding scheme

Many of those we spoke with were supportive of the memorials referred to in Recommendation Seven. However, we found that people also felt that a quiet space of reflection and commemoration should be accessible at a very local level. Many people wanted to be able to access such a space regularly and without having to travel long distances. Certain local authorities and in some cases volunteers have already funded local projects. Many of these local projects were brought to our attention through the local survey form we launched on the Commission's website soon after the Commission was established. We are grateful to all of those that took the time to complete the form to inform us of the initiatives taking place in their local area. We recognise the benefits that such projects offer to those bereaved.

- *Local community project:* We found many of those we spoke with expressed a desire for engagement at the local authority level in designing memorial sites to ensure once again that the memorials reflected the community's experience. This call for community engagement was reflected throughout the events we hosted across the UK.
- *A green space of reflection for communities:* A great deal of support was also expressed for local reflective spaces with greenery and benches where people might reflect on their own or sit with others. There was a clear sense that people would like such commemoration sites and initiatives to bring communities together, foster a shared spirit and reflect much of that community spirit many of us experienced throughout the lockdowns and the pandemic.

The Commission agreed that a local funding scheme should be made available for local authorities to bid for and to use to establish and maintain a Covid commemoration space in existing parks or gardens across the UK. In order for as many communities as possible to benefit from this scheme, local authorities bidding for funding would be expected to invest some funding of their own into their local project. The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive should work together to provide funding for the scheme.

Recommendation Eight: A funding scheme should be set up for local authorities across the UK to establish local commemorative spaces in existing parks or green spaces in their areas.

2.5. Recognition

As noted already, the Commission was set the challenge of recommending ways in which the country could remember the loved ones lost, but also honour those health and social care workers who worked to save lives and the courage of frontline workers who have kept our country going, and celebrate the genius of those who learnt rapidly the best ways to treat COVID-19, who conducted the vitally important trials that identified treatments that saved lives, and who created the vaccines.

We discussed whether recognition should be carried out on an individual basis through medals, badges or awards, and whether specific groups should be recognised for contributions made during the pandemic. We also acknowledged that there was some support for medals to be awarded to NHS staff and the military in particular. However, in discussing the issue of recognition, it quickly became apparent to us that creating a definitive list of specific individuals or groups that merit recognition was not only challenging but likely to leave out groups and individuals that are no less deserving. We also noted that the people we engaged with often felt that a degree of recognition was due to everyone as there were many people in many different lines of work that were not able to stay within the safety of their homes but had to go out to keep essential public services running around the whole of the UK. This view seems to have been reflected in the public consultation, with half of people agreeing that everyone deserved recognition as opposed to specific groups or individuals.

Although people felt everyone deserves recognition, the Commission acknowledged the distinct and incredibly challenging experiences of health and social care workers who worked hard to save lives potentially at significant cost to their own health and wellbeing. COVID-19 placed extreme demands on health and social care staff and we support the recognition awarded to the National Health Services of the UK through the George Cross presented by Queen Elizabeth II in July 2022. The George Cross was awarded in recognition of 73 years of dedicated service, including for the exceptional efforts and skill shown by NHS workers across the UK in battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

People across the UK also played an important role in the pandemic response through volunteering and social action. Thousands participated in programmes such as NHS Volunteer Responders and Community Champions, and were pivotal to the delivery of the vaccine rollout. Others took part in vaccine trials, used their specific skills to support charities and community groups, and millions of people supported their neighbours. The Commission welcomes initiatives such as the Volunteering Action Plan in Scotland, the Vision for Volunteering in England, and similar strategic development in Wales and Northern Ireland. These initiatives build on a strong culture of volunteering and social action in the UK. The Commission agreed that long term volunteering strategies across the UK should be maintained and developed, to ensure that the spirit of volunteering that was evident throughout the pandemic continues to be supported.

Oral histories and museums

The Commission recognised the work museums are doing by collating Covid related information and adding this to their collections is of great importance. Such collections will play an important role in remembering the losses and sacrifices but also in recognising the efforts and contributions made by so many throughout the pandemic.

Museums and libraries generally were viewed as an important space for public education on the pandemic and it was felt that these could be used to share the diverse range of experiences observed at the height of the pandemic in a highly engaging way. Many of those we spoke with felt that recording oral histories would be a compelling way to do this.

The Commission recognised the important role that recording oral histories in particular plays. Unless we collect and preserve people's memories, these can be lost.

- *Remembering and recognising the diversity of experiences:* There was broad agreement amongst all those we spoke with that recording testimonies from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, scientists, volunteers and young people would be a most effective way of capturing the diversity of experiences people went through during this period of our history.
- *Remembering names and not numbers:* Importantly, we found that bereaved families felt strongly that names should be remembered as opposed to facts and figures. Oral histories would be a fitting way to memorialise what everyone went through during this period of our history and to ensure that names and stories are remembered rather than numbers and statistics.
- *Online archive and exhibitions:* These stories could be shared digitally via a website and could also form parts of Covid-related exhibitions in museums across the UK. The Commission believes that the Covid Commemoration Trust would be the ideal organisation to collate a list of the Covid-related oral history projects already under way and provide links to them on its website. The Trust could also launch its own projects to record the experiences of those groups we might want to hear from and whose experiences have not been captured by other projects.
- *Education:* We also found that many of the people we engaged with agreed that oral histories could be used as an educational tool to demonstrate the extent of the impact of Covid and relay personal stories, highlighting the importance of all the contributions made.

The Commission agreed everyone, irrespective of their background, has a unique story to tell. Oral history allows people whose voices might not otherwise be heard to share their experiences. Recording testimonies from as wide a range of groups as possible will give recognition to all those individuals and groups that made sacrifices and kept essential public services running around the whole of the UK. Recording these testimonies will also give bereaved families an opportunity to share their stories and ensure their loved ones are remembered as a name and not a number. We felt this is an important piece of work that could bring peace to many bereaved family members, honour the sacrifices and efforts made by many groups and individuals during the pandemic, and serve as an important record of this period of our history.

Recommendation Nine: Oral histories from a wide range of groups including bereaved families, frontline workers, volunteers, the scientific community and young people should be gathered in recognition of all the sacrifices and efforts made during the pandemic, and to serve as a historical record of this period of our time and as an educational tool for future generations.

UK science

The Commission noted that the important work of the research community in helping to control the pandemic was highlighted by many of the people we engaged with. We hosted an event including senior figures and researchers from a variety of disciplines and found that views on recognising the advances of science focused on supporting researchers to help build resilience against natural hazards, extreme natural events or situations that could cause or threaten serious damage to human welfare or the environment.

- *Multidisciplinary approaches:* In discussing how UK Science should be recognised, the scientific community widely endorsed the collaboration between different disciplines in supporting the response to the pandemic. They encouraged greater partnership across the UK between research and policy making in science (including the economic and social sciences), technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM), to support decision making processes in government.
- *Horizon Scanning and Data:* The scientific community also praised the quality and speed at which data was gathered and shared during the pandemic. They noted the National Core Studies programme which was set up at the start of the pandemic that identified a number of areas where the UK needed to increase its research effort and increase its infrastructure to ensure critical questions could be answered quickly. There was a shared sense that more could be done to strengthen scenario planning and data mobilisation for current and future areas of risk.

- *Research fellowships:* In our discussions with the scientific community, we found there was a general consensus for a prestigious UK-wide postgraduate fellowship programme for early and mid-career researchers to work closely with policy makers to support preparedness for natural hazards, including those in the areas of human and animal disease. The fellowship should be inclusive of STEAM disciplines and organised as a programme that connects fellows and provides added value over and above their individual and collaborative research programmes. It should enable the researcher to focus on a specific policy question, as well as participation in projects linked to horizon scanning and data mobilisation in the identification and handling of natural hazards. This would all serve to support the relationship between research and policy making.

Recommendation Ten: The UK Government, working with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, should support a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship programme that will enable early and mid-career researchers to work closely with policy makers to support preparedness for risks posed by natural hazards.

Annexes

Annex A - Terms of Reference

Purpose

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an event like nothing within living memory. It has affected every aspect of our lives and every corner of our United Kingdom. There is a solemn duty on our whole United Kingdom to come together and mark this momentous and life-changing occurrence. This UK Commission on Covid Commemoration will be a national endeavour, above party politics and distinct from any public inquiry. It will recommend ways in which the nation can remember the loved ones who perished, honour the heroism of those who have saved lives and the courage of frontline workers who have kept our country going, celebrate the genius of those who created the vaccines, and commemorate the small acts of kindness and the daily sacrifice of millions who stayed at home.

The Commission will work across our United Kingdom and together with the Devolved Administrations to build a national consensus around measures which could be put in place to tell the whole story of this period in our history.

It will report to the Prime Minister by no later than March 2023.

Objectives

In carrying out its remit, the Commission should:

- Empathetically engage bereaved families and examine the range of memorialisation initiatives emerging across the UK to consider how those who have lost their lives should be remembered in our communities and at national level.
- Consider how the wider story of this period in our history should be remembered and commemorated, including:
 - What further commemoration there should be of the service of critical workers;
 - How we recognise the experience of those who were seriously affected by COVID-19;
 - What initiatives could sustain volunteering, acts of kindness and philanthropy;
 - How the advances of British science in this period should be celebrated;
 - What initiatives could capitalise on the way technology has been used to bring people together;
 - How the national spirit through which everyone played their part should be celebrated.

- Learn from how other countries around the world – including members of the Commonwealth – are seeking to remember the pandemic.
- Provide specific opportunities for interested parties and members of the public, including bereaved families, to offer evidence on existing memorialisation initiatives and suggestions on further commemoration plans.
- Shape a broader national conversation and create deep and broad public ownership of recommendations.
- Submit a report to the Prime Minister setting out the evidence gathered and outlining a set of concrete, deliverable recommendations which will ensure this period in our history is appropriately commemorated.

It will be for Her Majesty's Government to consider and take forward the implementation of these recommendations.

Annex B - Commission Membership

Chair of the Commission - Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes

Baroness Morgan was the Conservative MP for Loughborough from 2010 to 2019. She held several ministerial posts including as the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Secretary of State for Education. She became a member of the House of Lords in January 2020. She was a member of the House of Lords COVID-19 Select Committee. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Baroness Morgan volunteered as an NHS Responder and as a Vaccine Centre steward.

Sir Nicholas Coleridge CBE DL

Sir Nicholas was co-chair of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant. He is Chairman of the Victoria and Albert Museum and Chairman of the Prince of Wales' Campaign for Wool. Sir Nicholas is also an Ambassador for the Landmark Trust. He received a knighthood for services to Museums, to Publishing and to the Creative Industries in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2022.

Dr Nadine Cossette

Dr Nadine Cossette is a liaison psychiatrist at the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh. In 2020, she pioneered a report commissioned by the Scottish Government into improving and delivering compassionate mental health treatment for hospitalised COVID-19 patients during the pandemic.

Rt Hon Caroline Flint

Caroline Flint was the Labour MP for Don Valley from 1997 to 2019. She served in a number of Ministerial posts including Minister for Public Health from 2005-2007. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she volunteered at a vaccination centre and has spoken extensively on the recovery from the pandemic. Caroline was appointed chair of Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust in 2021.

Denise Hayward

Denise Hayward has been Chief Executive with Volunteer Now, the lead organisation for promoting and supporting volunteering across Northern Ireland, since August 2017. Volunteer Now played a key role in mobilising and coordinating the community response to the Covid pandemic. Denise is also the Northern Ireland lead on the Mobilising Voluntary Action group which is exploring voluntary action responses to the pandemic across the UK.

Felicia Kwaku OBE

Felicia Kwaku is the chair of the Chief Nursing Officer & Chief Midwifery Officer's (for England) Black Minority Ethnic Strategic Advisory Group which provides invaluable expertise and insight into ethnic disparities across the Nursing & Midwifery profession and healthcare provision. She is an Associate Director of Nursing and the Senior Head of Nursing for Acute Speciality Medicine at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. She received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020 for services to nursing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Sir Gordon Messenger KCB, DSO & Bar, OBE, DL

General Sir Gordon Messenger is a retired Royal Marines senior officer who served as the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff from 2016 to 2019. From October 2020 to February 2021, he supported the establishment of the Community Testing Programme as part of the national Covid response. He led a review into leadership across health and social care in England, which reported in June 2022. He is also a non-executive member of the UK Health Security Agency and a Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset. In August 2022 he became the new Constable of the Tower of London.

Gillian Norton OBE DL

Gillian Norton is the chair for both St George's University Hospital Foundation Trust and Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust. Prior to this, she worked extensively in the public sector, including as Chief Executive of Richmond and Wokingham Borough Councils and is the representative Deputy Lieutenant for Richmond upon Thames.

Ndidi Okezie OBE

Ndidi Okezie is the CEO of UK Youth; a leading national charity with an open network of over 8000 youth organisations across the UK, who collectively reach over 4 million young people. Prior to joining UK Youth, Ndidi's career spans across the education, charity and corporate sectors. Her former roles include teacher, school leader, Executive Director of Teach First and Vice President at Pearson PLC. Ndidi currently sits on the Board of NCS, Teach For All and Sky's Diversity Advisory Council. She received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020 for services to young people during COVID-19.

Professor Keshav Singhal CBE, FLSW

Professor Keshav Singhal is a Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon at the Princess of Wales hospital in Bridgend and the Chairman of the First Minister's All Wales COVID-19 Risk Assessment Group - the group that pioneered the COVID-19 risk assessment tool for NHS, Public sectors and businesses in Wales and it has been used over 100,000 times and helped sustain public services during the height of the pandemic. He is also the chair of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin in Wales and has been instrumental in facilitating trainee doctors from India to join the NHS. He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for his services to medicine and to the community in Wales in the 2023 New Year's Honours list.

Professor Sir Mark Walport FRCP FRS FMedSci HonFRSE

Sir Mark Walport is currently chair of Imperial College Health Partners. He is a non-executive member of the Board of NHS England. He has extensive experience in the life sciences, Government and national research and innovation organisations, including as the founding Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation and as the Director of the Wellcome Trust. Sir Mark served as Government Chief Scientific Adviser from 2013 to 2017.

Annex C - Public Consultation Findings

Overview of Respondents

Total number of responses

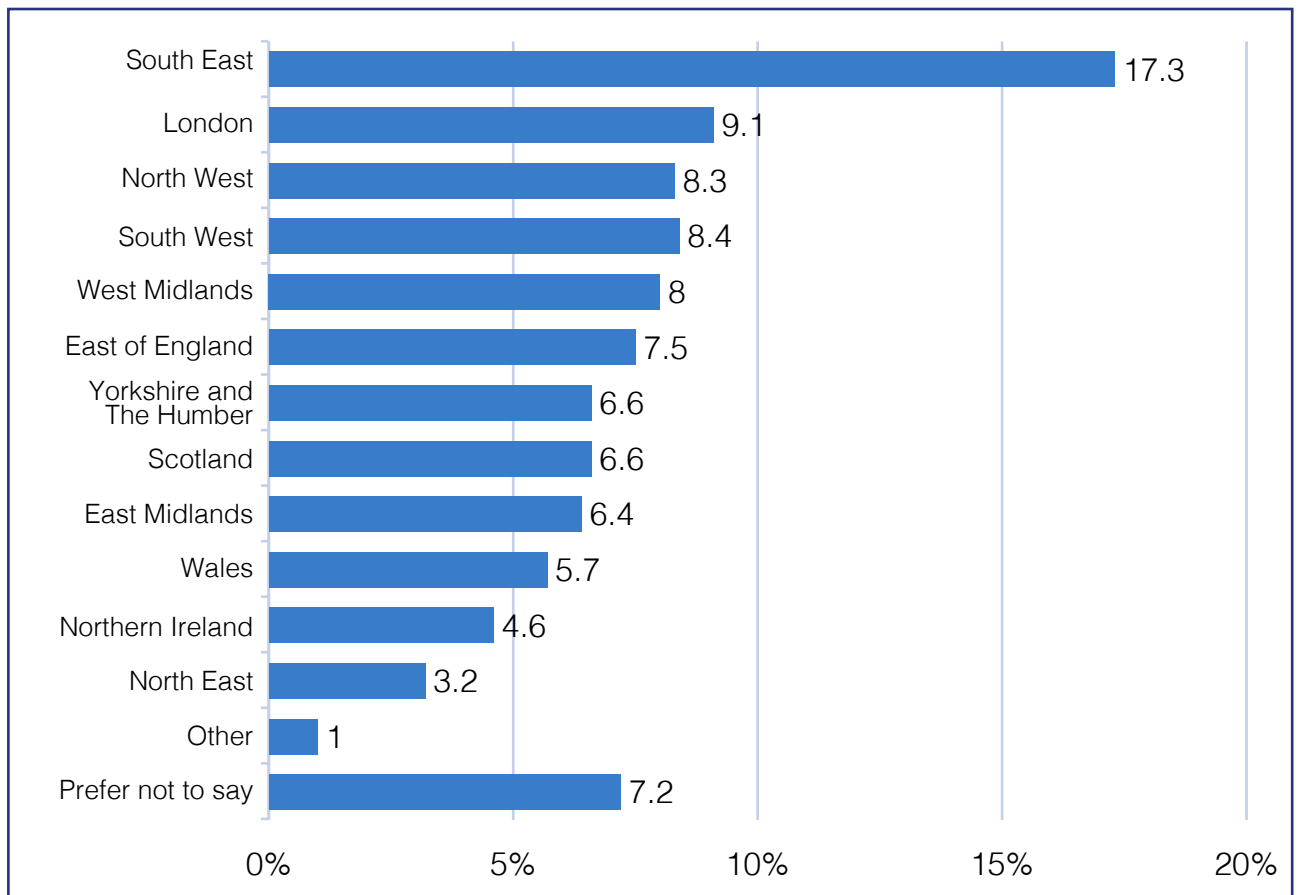
The consultation ran from 24 October 2022 to 5 December 2022. It took the form of a survey which consisted of four demographic questions, eight closed questions and one character-limited free text box.

The consultation was hosted on SmartSurvey. The consultation was also available in various accessible formats including Easy Read, Large Print and PDF. It was also available in Welsh. The consultation received 4,909 responses. The vast majority of responses (96.6%) were submitted through SmartSurvey.

Location of respondents

Respondents were asked to report the country where they lived and, in the case of those residing in the UK, the region in which they lived. By country, respondents lived in the following:

- 74.8% in England
- 6.6% in Scotland
- 5.7% in Wales
- 4.6% in Northern Ireland
- 7.2% of respondents did not want to provide this data

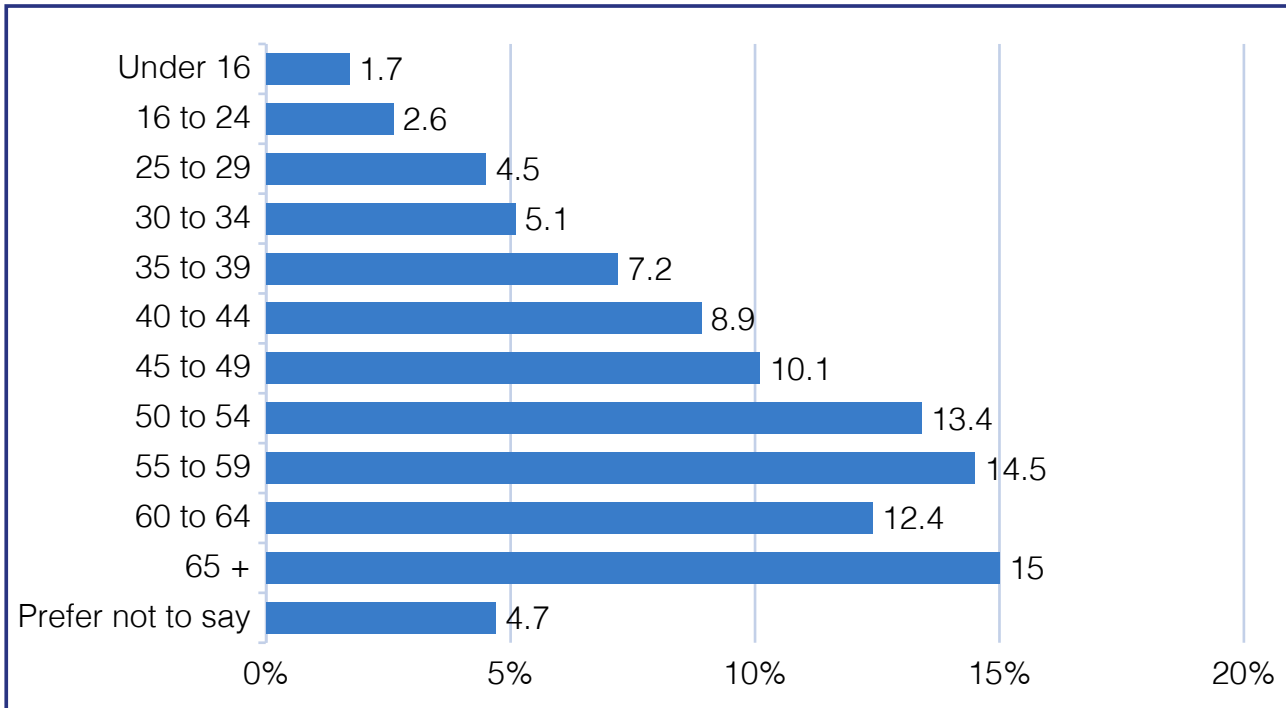
Chart 1 - Location of respondents

Responses from people living in England are under-represented compared with other UK nations. Respondents living in the South East are over-represented compared with other regions.

Age of respondents

Respondents were asked to report their age. Almost two-thirds of respondents to the consultation were aged 45 years or over.

Chart 2 - Respondents by age

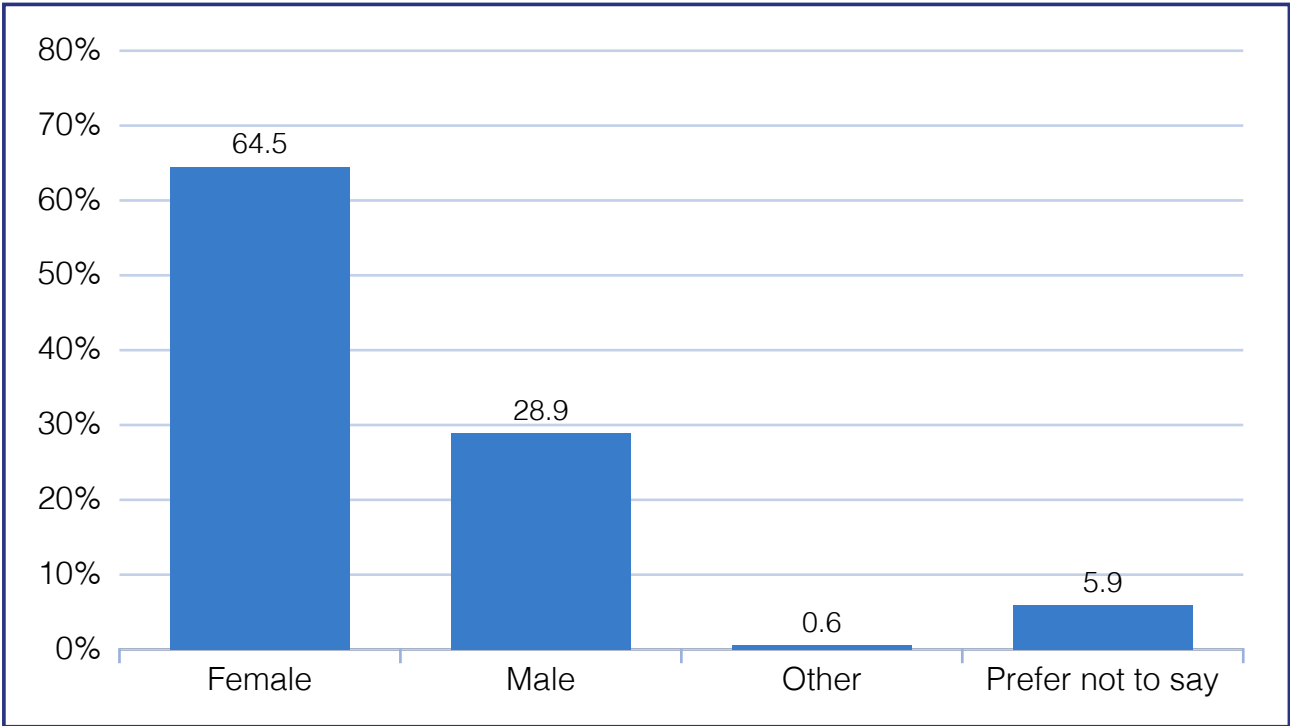


Respondents aged less than 35 years are under-represented in consultation responses, compared with the UK population.

Gender of respondents

Respondents were asked whether they identified as male, female or a different gender. Just under two thirds of respondents reported that they identified as female, and less than a third of respondents identified as male. 5.9% of respondents preferred not to say.

Chart 3 - Respondents by gender

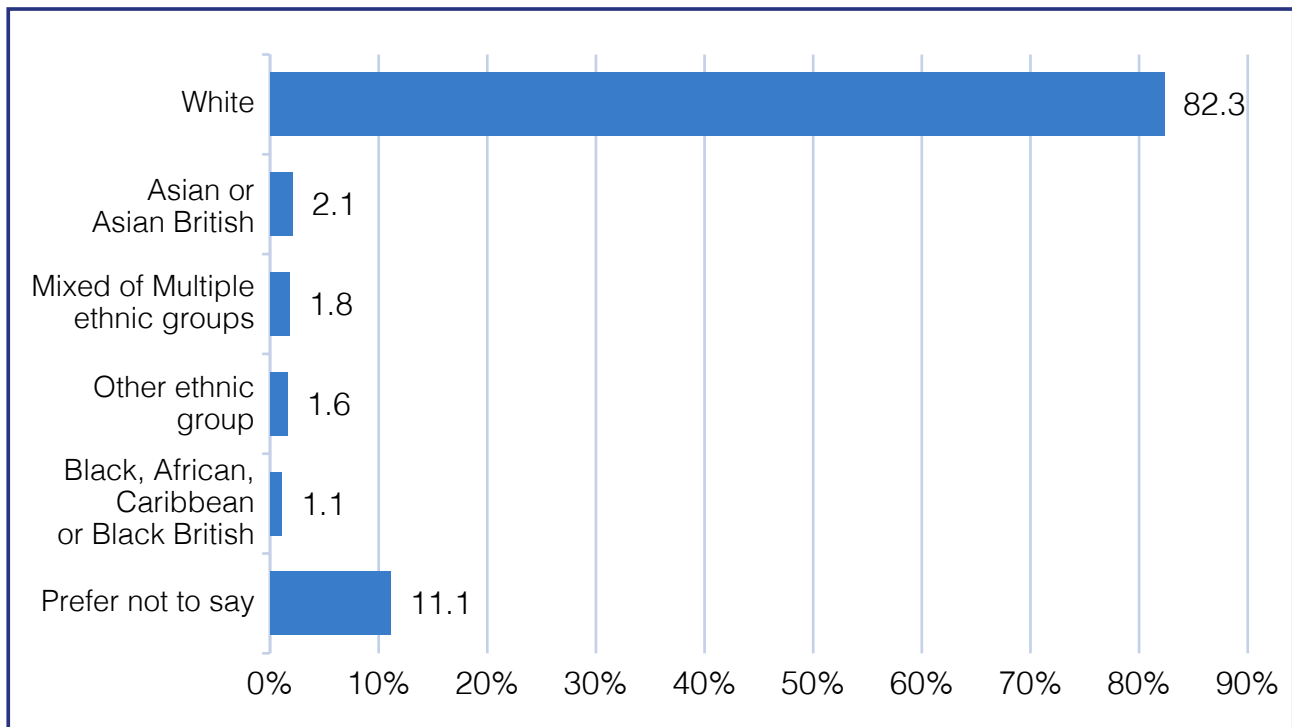


Respondents identifying as female are significantly over-represented in the consultation responses.

Ethnicity of respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their ethnicity. Just over four fifths of respondents were white. 11.1% of respondents preferred not to say.

Chart 4 - Ethnicity of respondents



Respondents identifying as Asian or Asian British, or Black, African, Caribbean or Black British are under-represented in the consultation responses, compared with the UK population.

Methodology

Survey weighting was used to weight the consultation responses to provide estimates representative of the UK population. They are weighted to address the over- and under-representation of different regions, age-groups, genders and ethnicities in the responses received.

All numbers are rounded to 1 decimal place. Because of this, percentages provided in the charts may not sum to 100%.

The statistics beneath each graph show the size of the UK population that is represented by the number of respondents who answered the question. The statistics also show the size of the UK population that is represented by the number of respondents who held no strong view (N.B. for ranking questions, this was not an option), or skipped the question.

Respondents who were aged under 16 years are not included in the weighted graph as there were not enough responses received from this demographic. Respondents who live outside the UK were also not included in the weighted graphs for the same reason.

As part of the consultation analysis, we are displaying two graphs per question: weighted results and unweighted results. The summary for each question is based on the weighted results as these provide a more representative view of the UK population's feedback.

It should be noted that for the three ranking questions (questions 1, 3 and 4), we have provided two different analyses. In these questions, respondents were required to number the options either 1 to 6 (question 1) or 1 to 3 (questions 3 and 4), with 1 representing their preferred choice and 6 (question 1) or 3 (questions 3 and 4) representing their least preferred option. The first method shows the total rank score for each option. This score is calculated by summing the total number of points attributed to each option, someone's first choice (a rank of 1) would be equal to 6 (question 1) or 3 (questions 3 and 4) points and a rank of 6 (question 1) or 3 (questions 3 and 4) is 1 point. The second method looks at respondents top ranked, preferred option, only.

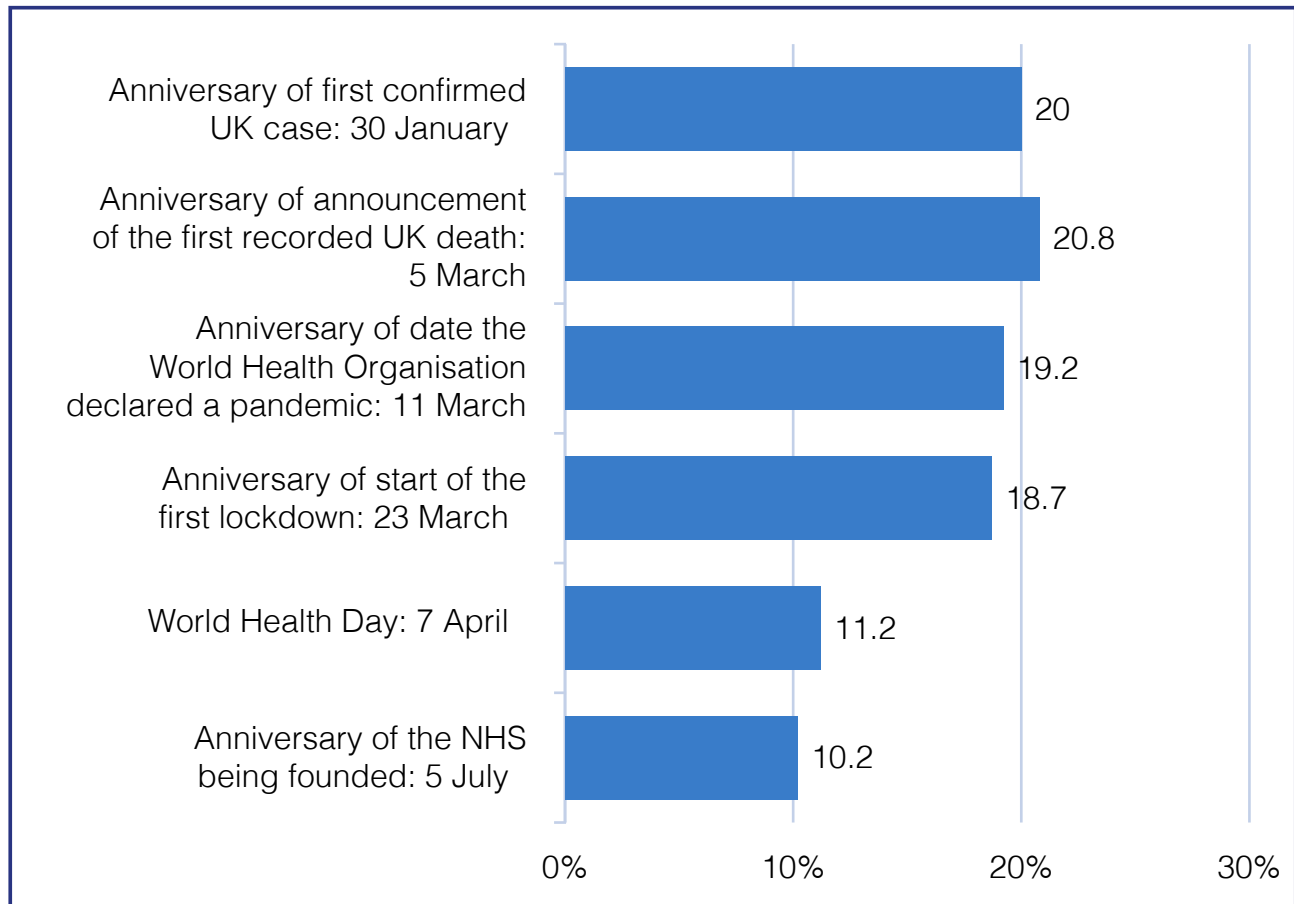
Please note that for question 6 respondents were able to select multiple options as they felt appropriate.

Consultation Analysis

1. The Commission is considering a national day of remembrance. On which date(s), would it be most appropriate to commemorate? (please rank)

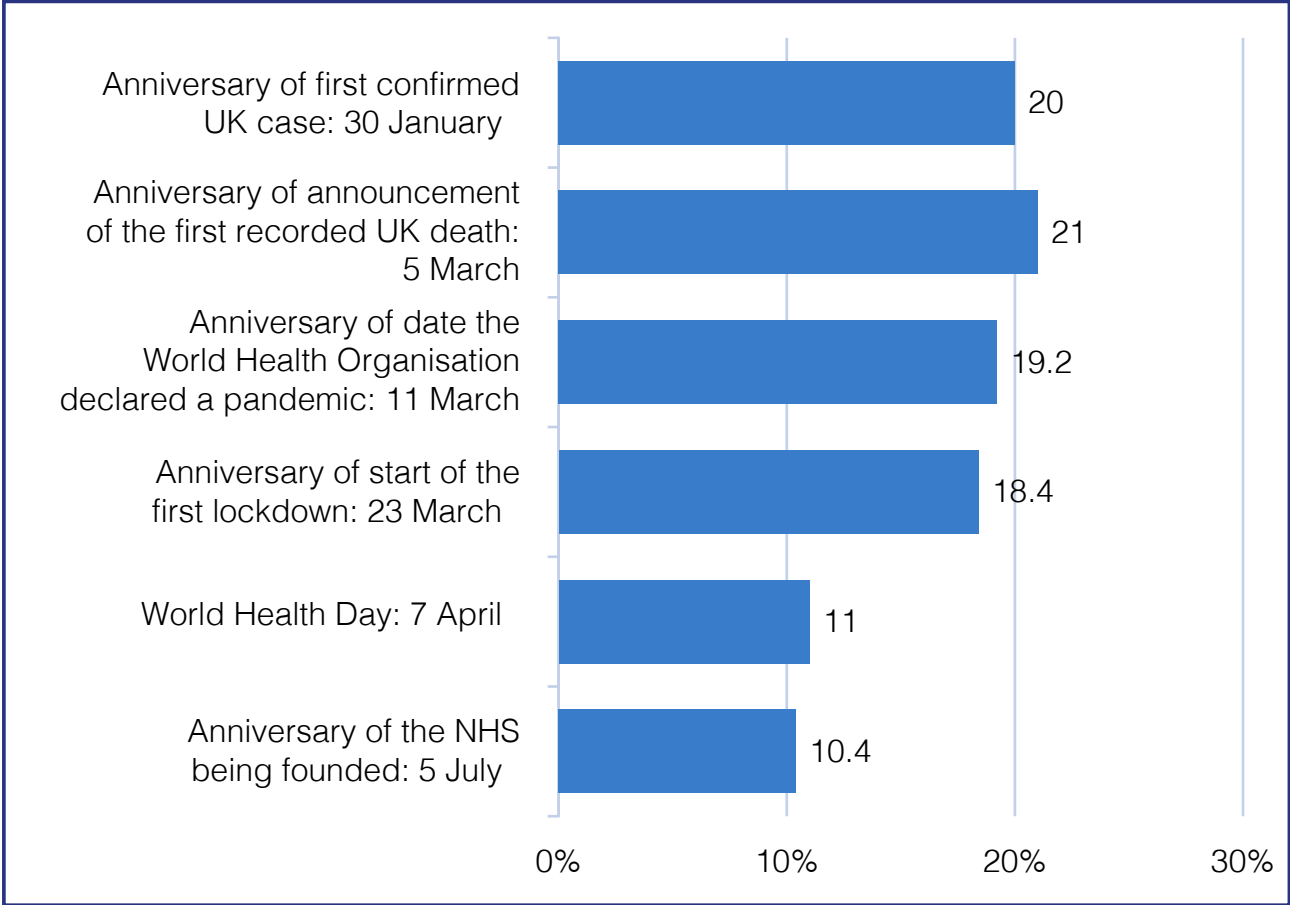
Charts show the percentage by total ranked score:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,425**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **484**

Weighted

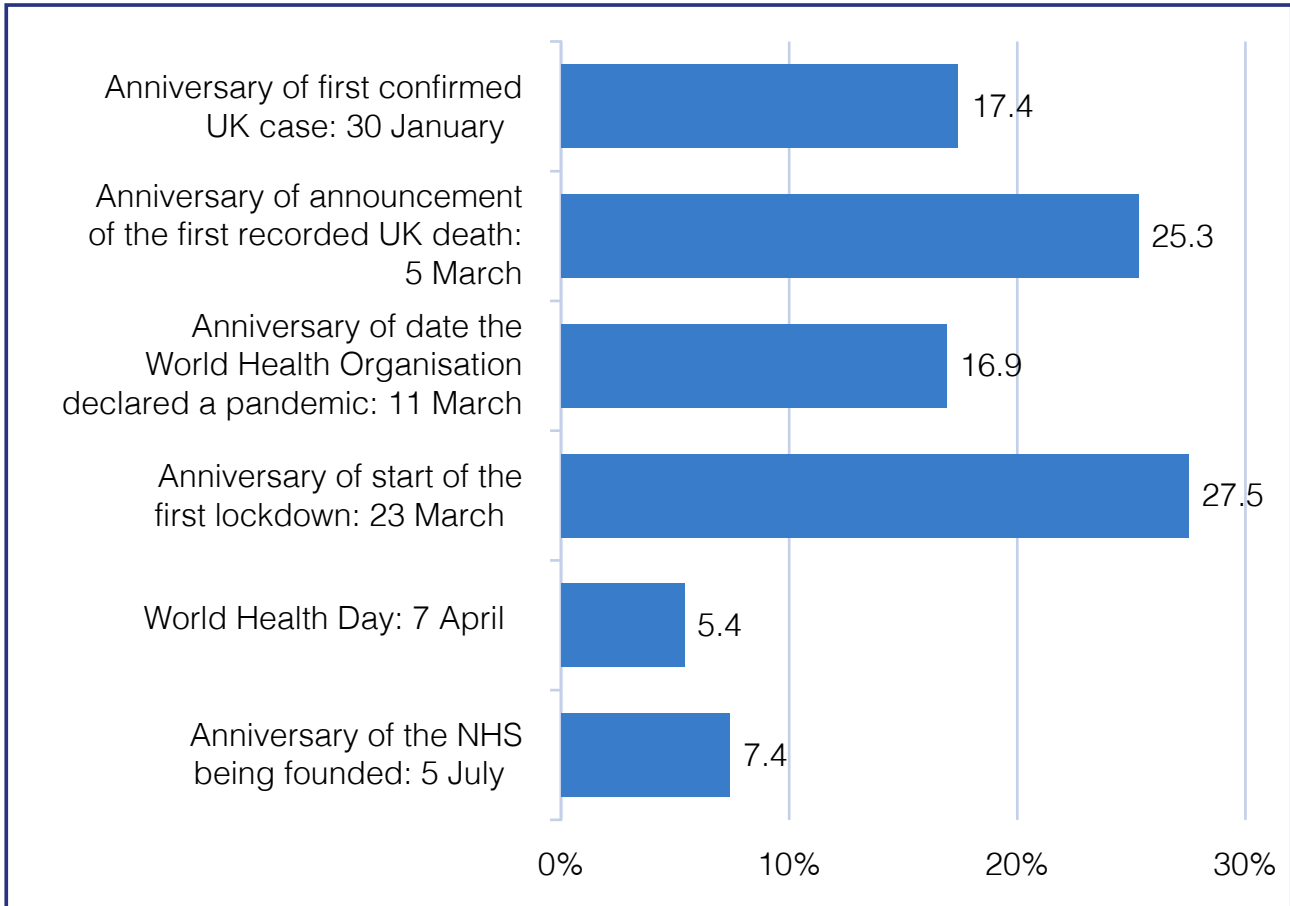


- Number represented: **49.6 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **5.1 mil**

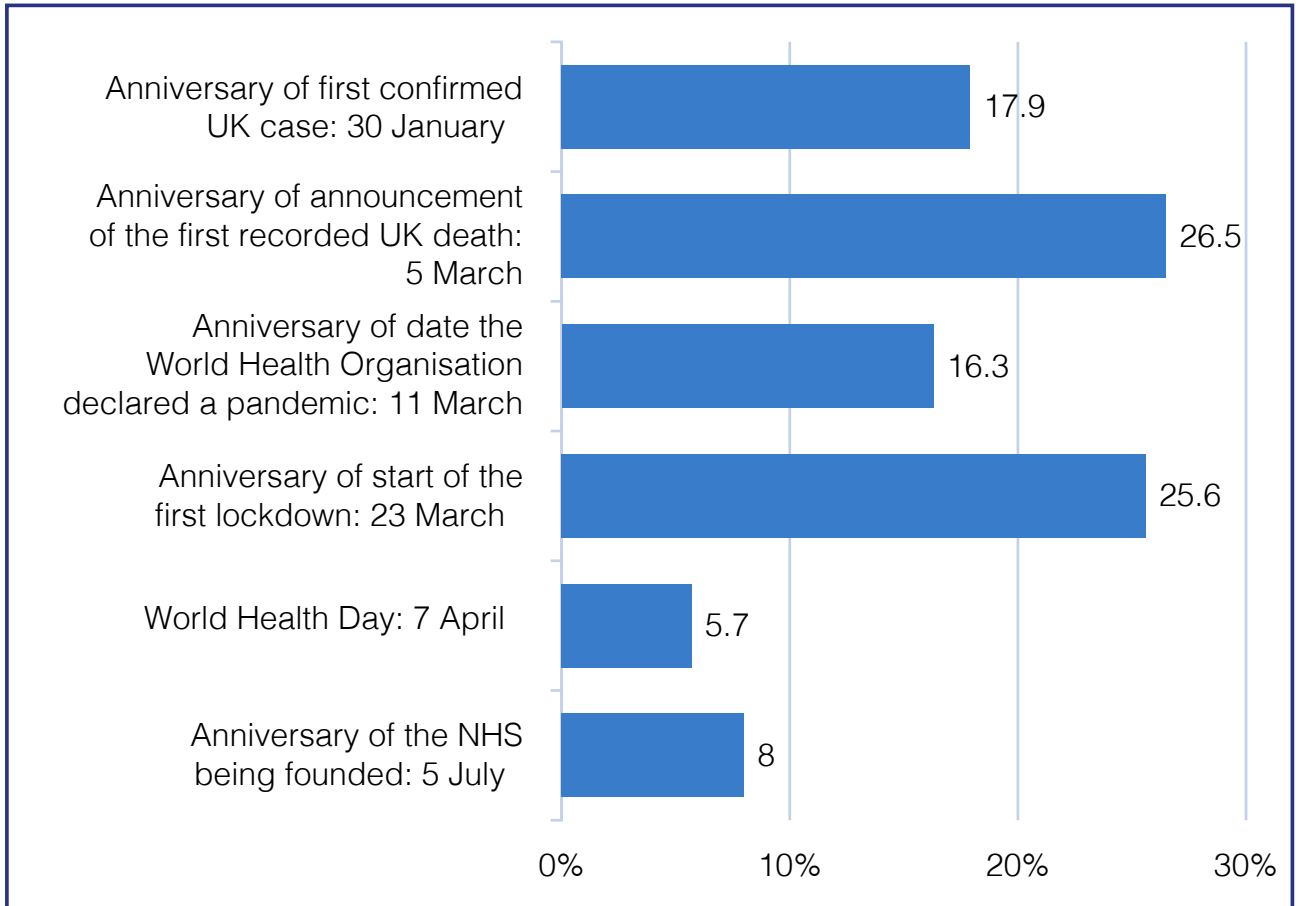
The weighted graph for the total ranked score shows that there was no clear preference for any particular day, although it is clear that the 7 April and 5 July options were the least popular options.

Charts show the percentage by option ranked first:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,425**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **484**

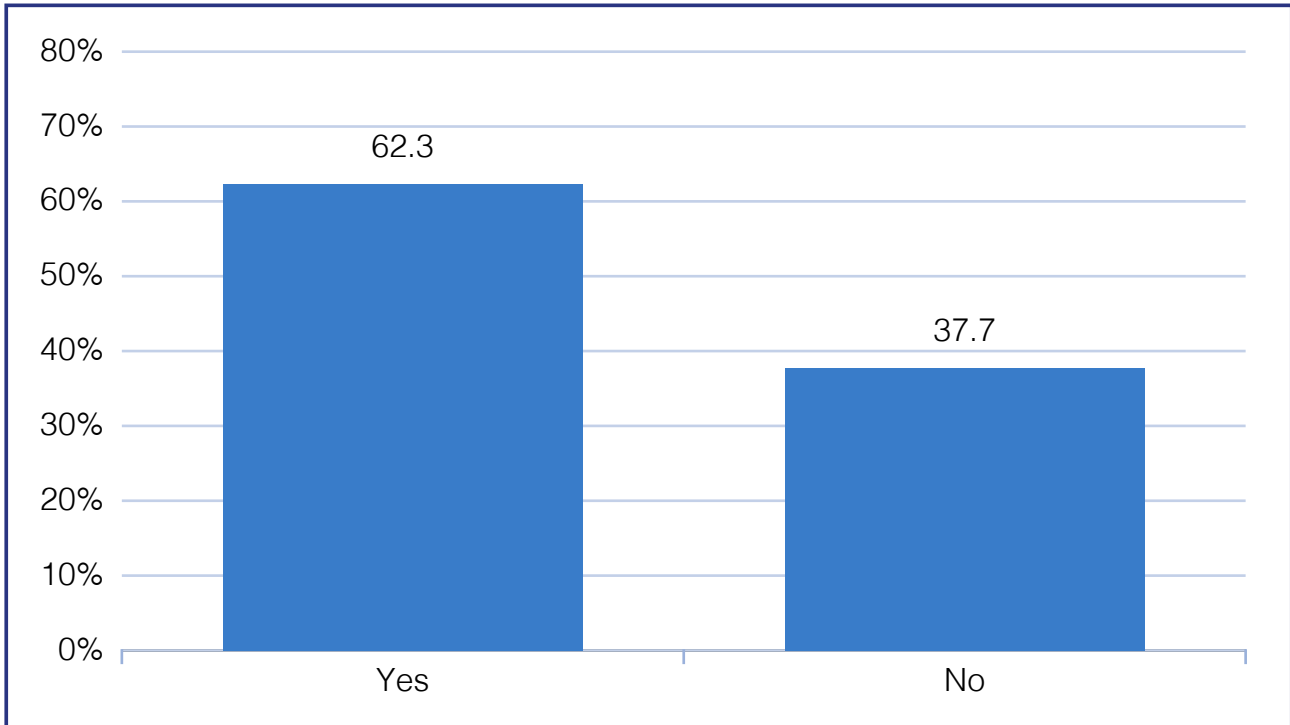
Weighted

- Number represented: **49.6 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **5.1 mil**

The weighted graph shows that there was no clear preference for any particular day, but that the 5 March and 23 March were ranked first more often than the other days. The 7 April and 5 July were least popular. The weighted graph also shows that the two most popular options fall in March.

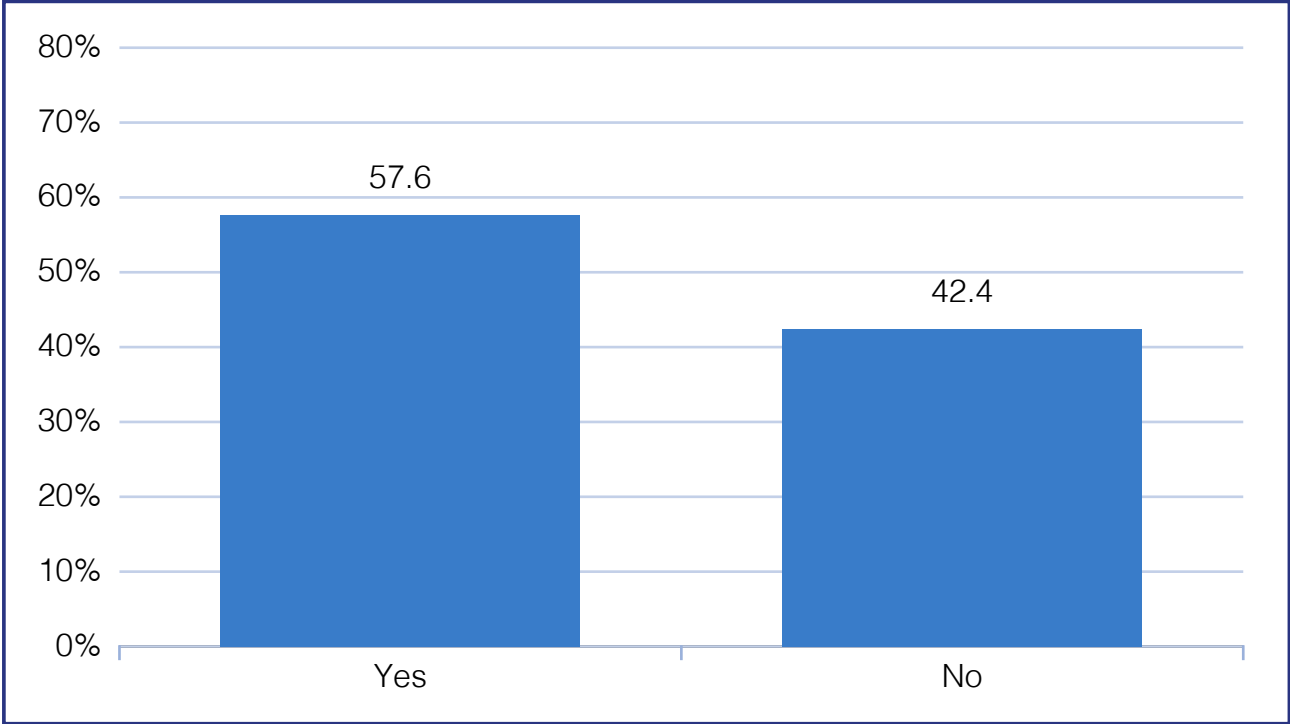
2. Do you think there should be a symbol to commemorate COVID-19 in the same way that a poppy represents Remembrance Sunday?

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,001**
- Number with no strong view: **790**
- Number who skipped question: **118**

Weighted



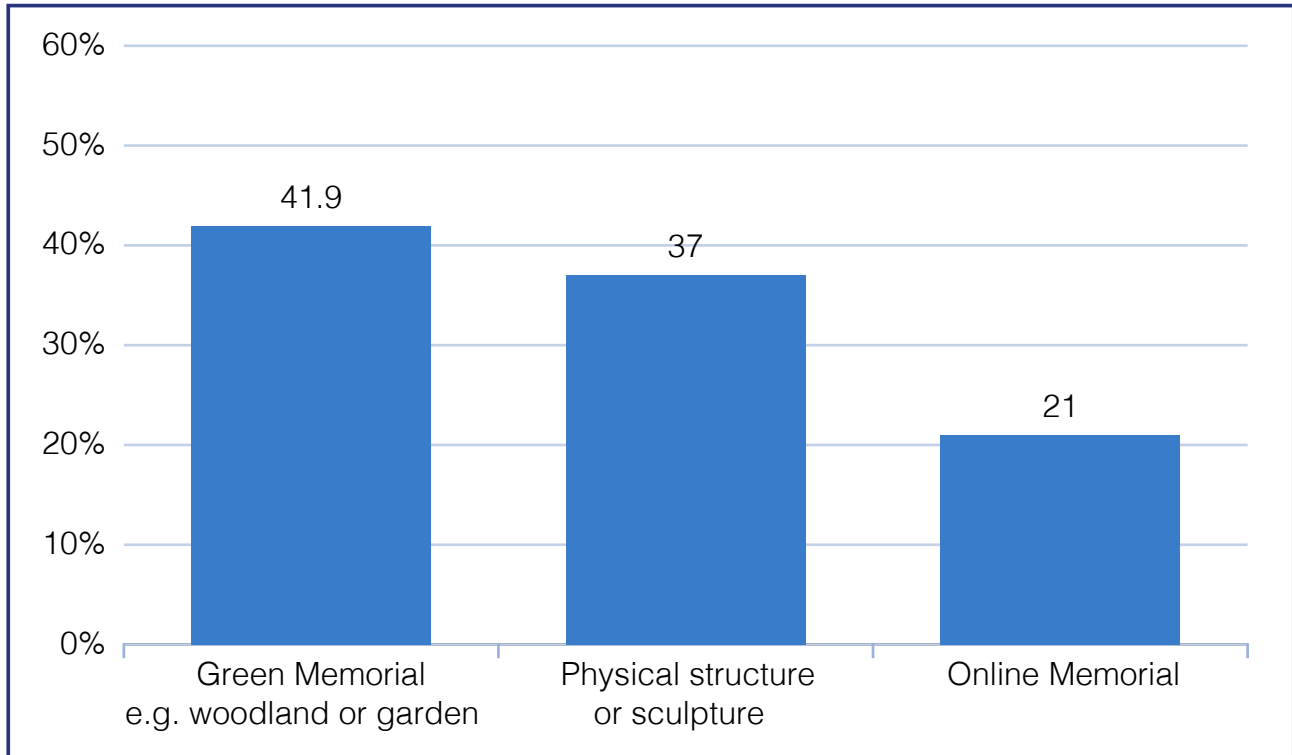
- Number represented: **44.5 mil**
- Number with no strong view: **8.9 mil**
- Number who skipped question: **1.3 mil**

The weighted graph shows that most people are in favour of having a symbol to commemorate COVID-19.

3. Which type of memorials or commemorative space do you prefer? (please rank)

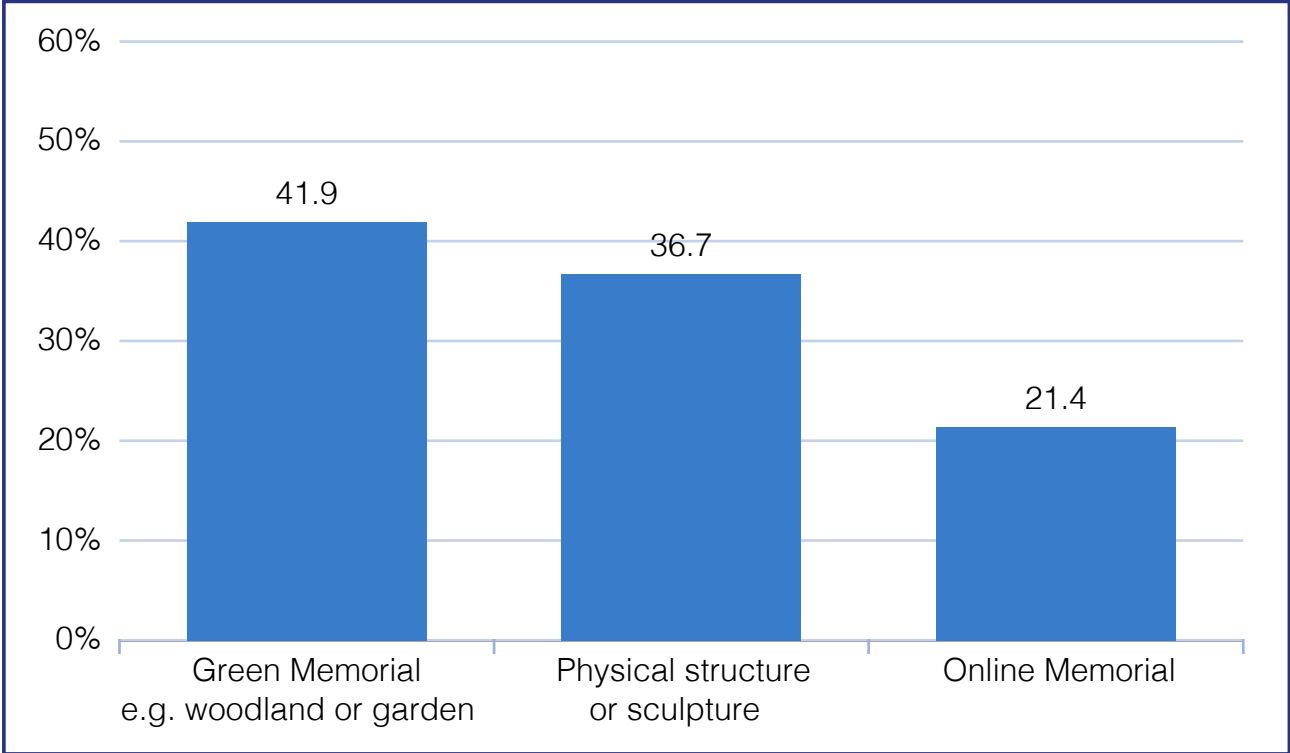
Charts show the percentage by total ranked score:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,156**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **753**

Weighted

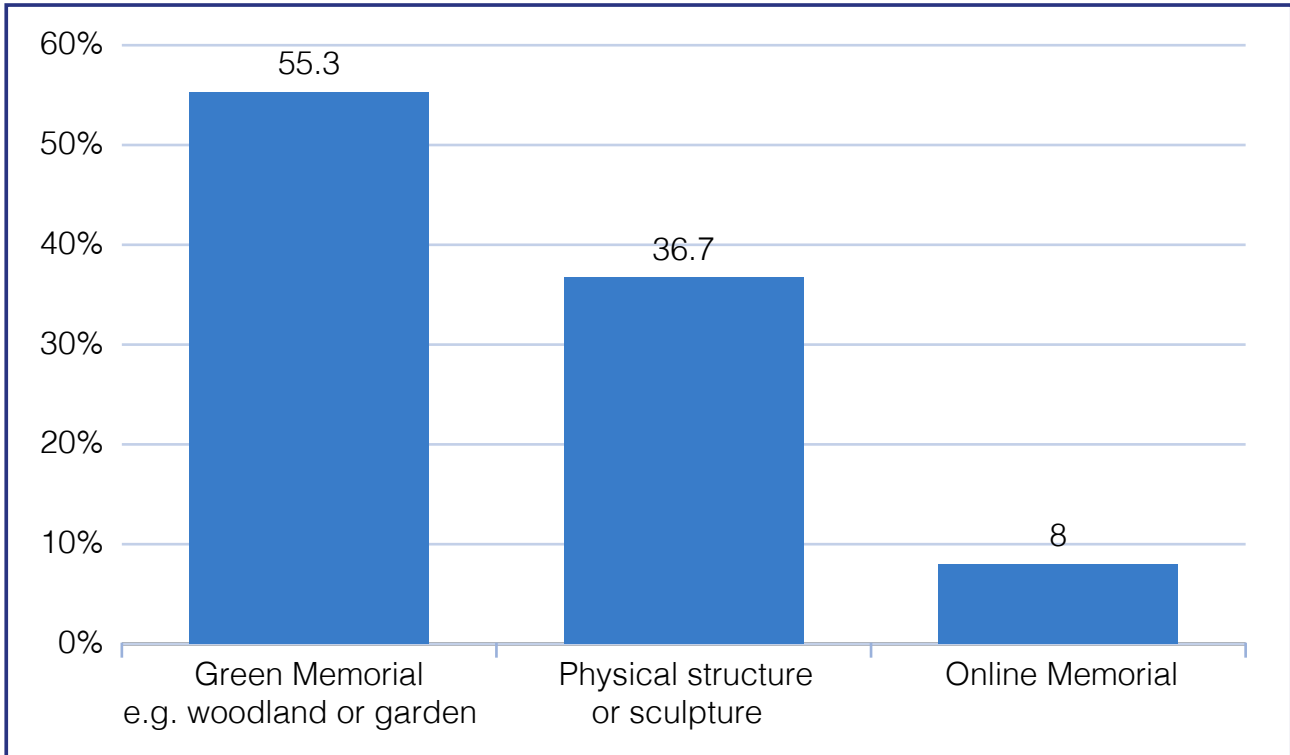


- Number represented: **46.8 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **8.0 mil**

The weighted graph shows that green memorials were favoured over physical structures or sculptures. The online memorial was the least preferred option.

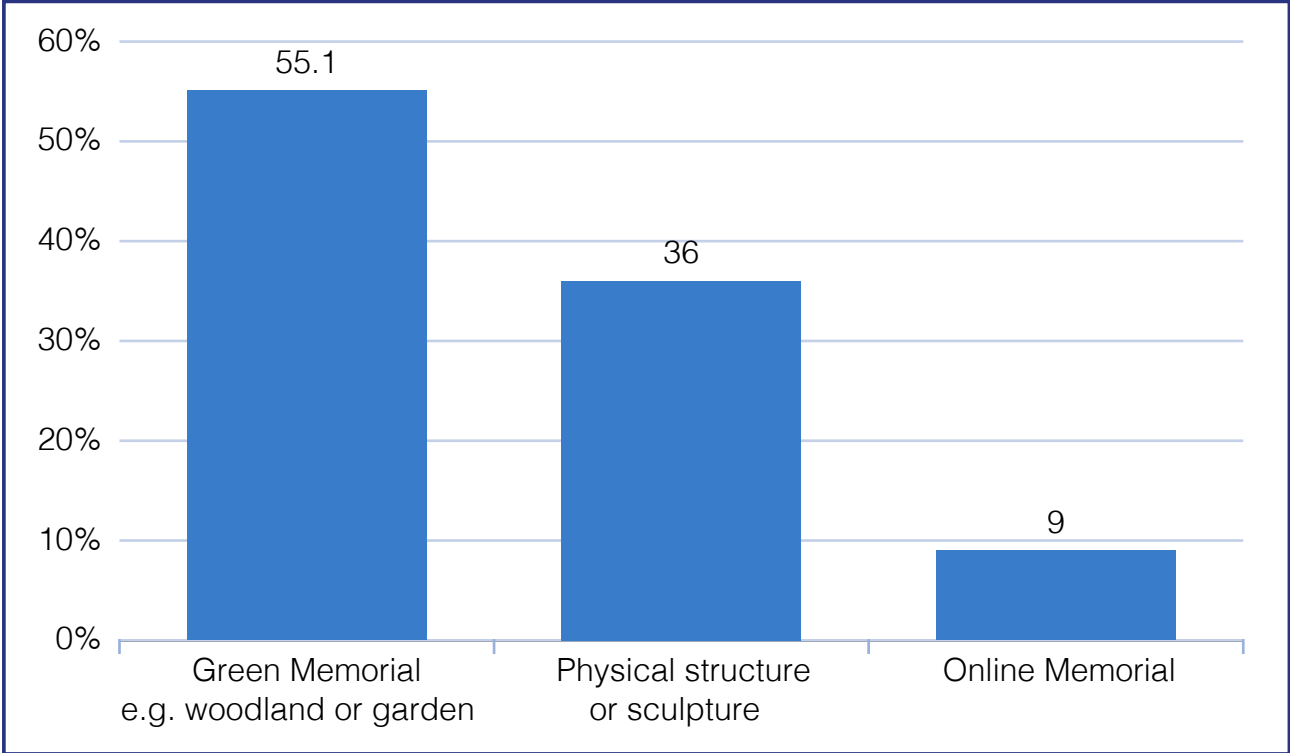
Charts show the percentage by option ranked first:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,156**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **753**

Weighted



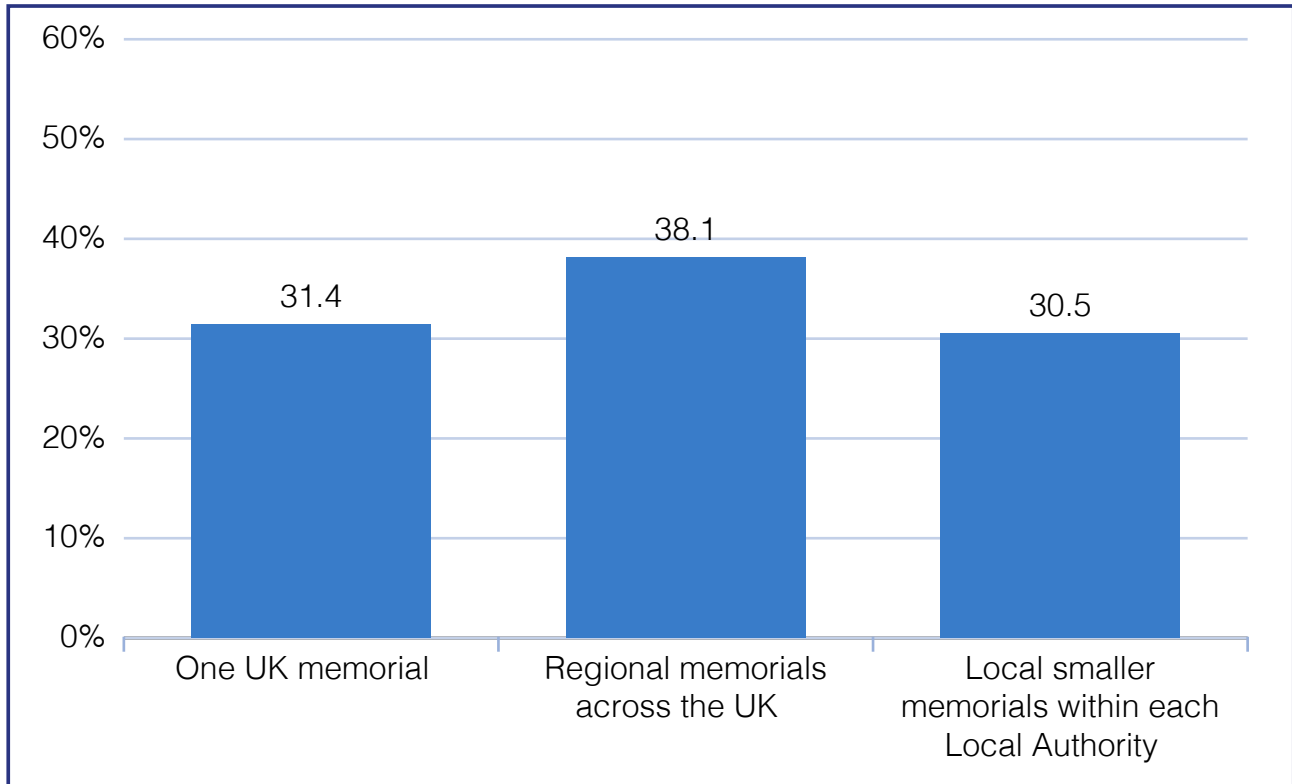
- Number represented: **46.8 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **8.0 mil**

The weighted graph shows that over half of people preferred green memorials. Online memorials were the least preferred option.

4. How many memorials or commemorative spaces do you think we should have across the UK? (please rank)

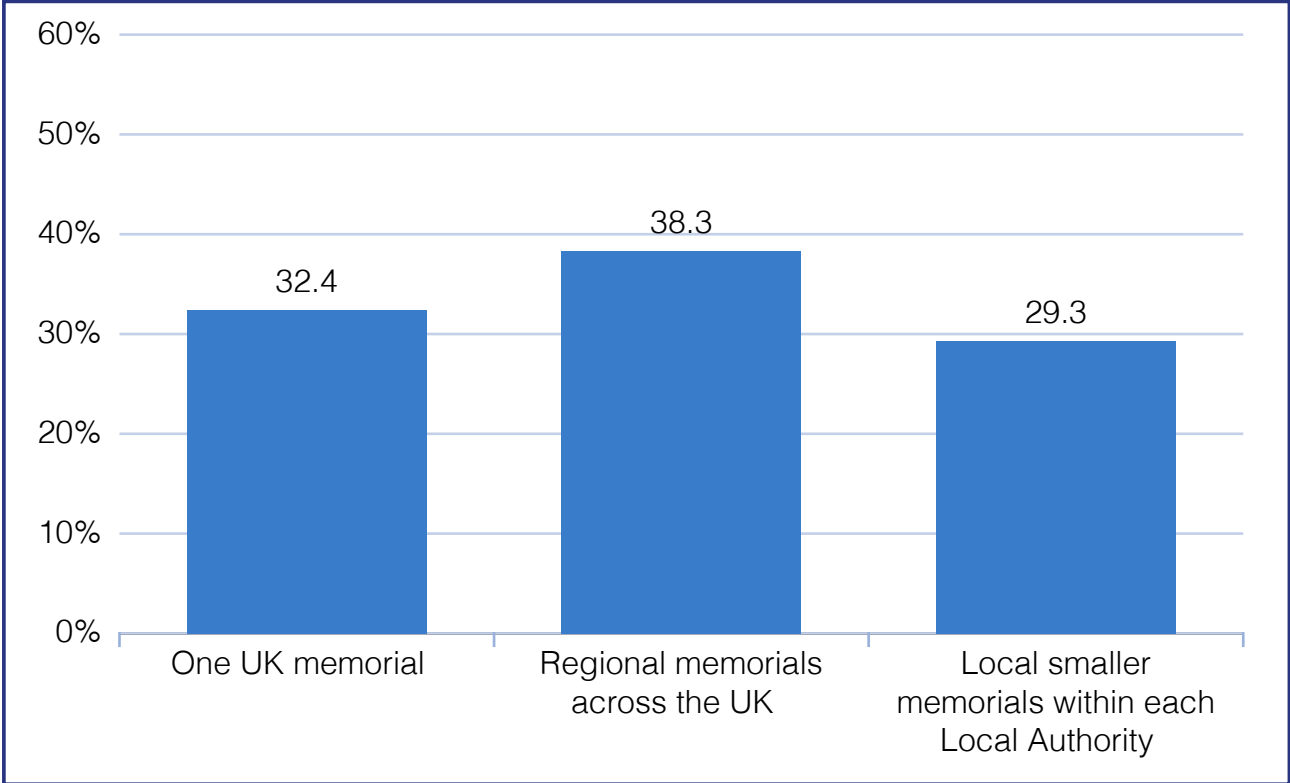
Charts show the percentage by total ranked score:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,134**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **775**

Weighted

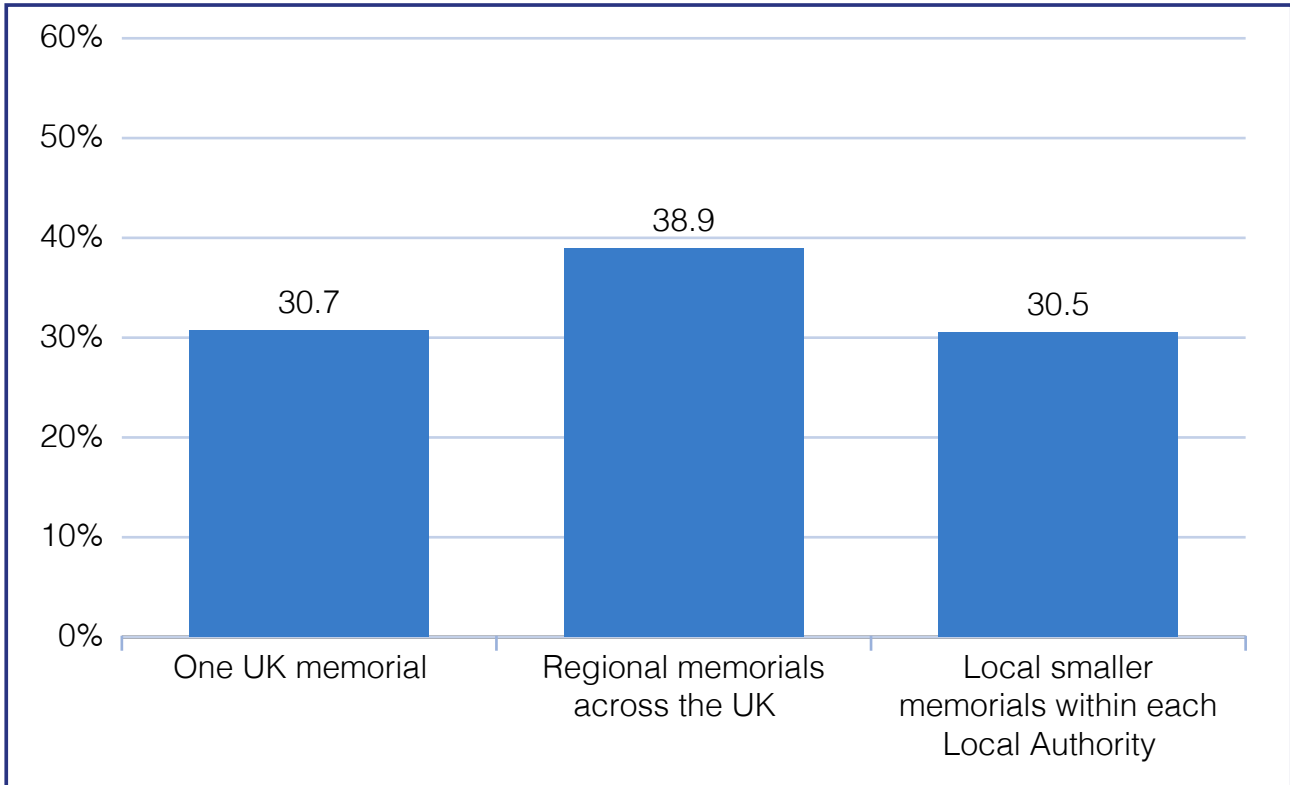


- Number represented: **46.0 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **8.7 mil**

The weighted graph shows that regional memorials across the UK were slightly favoured over one UK memorial or local memorials.

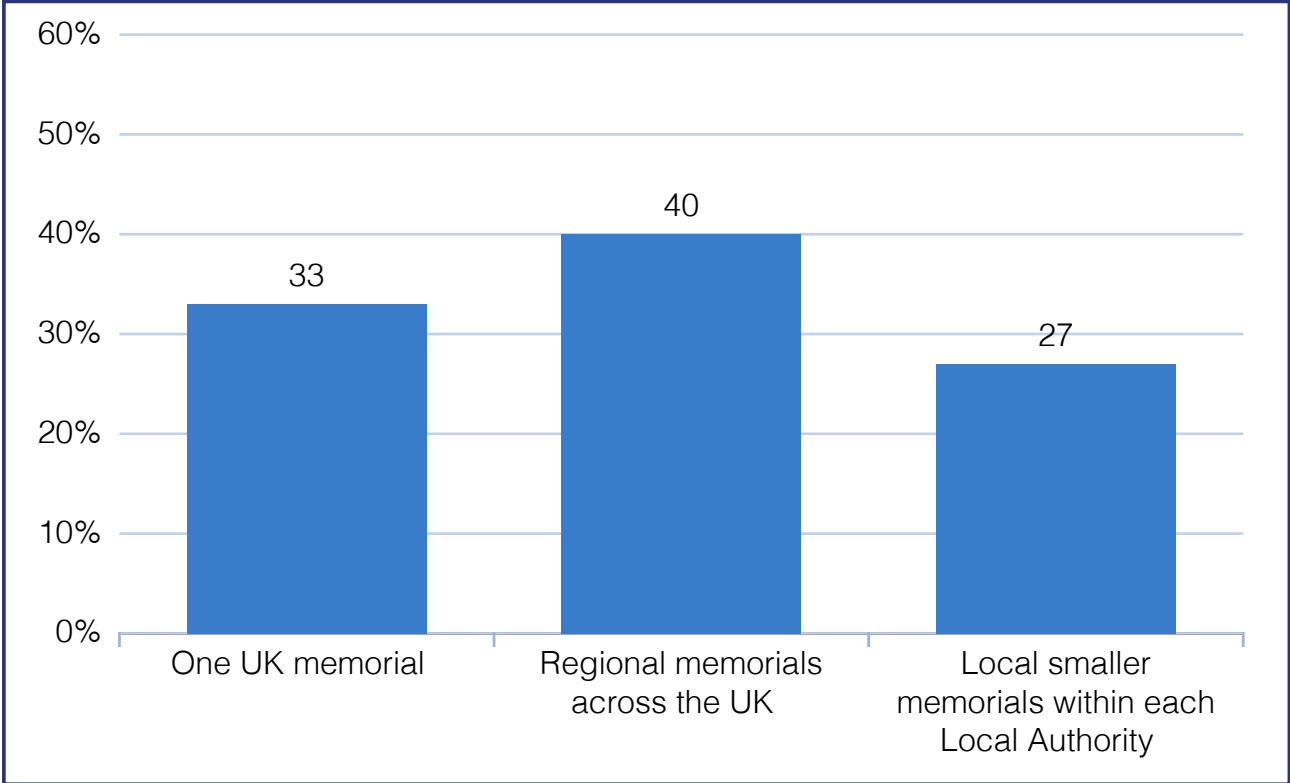
Charts show the percentage by option ranked first:

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,134**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **775**

Weighted

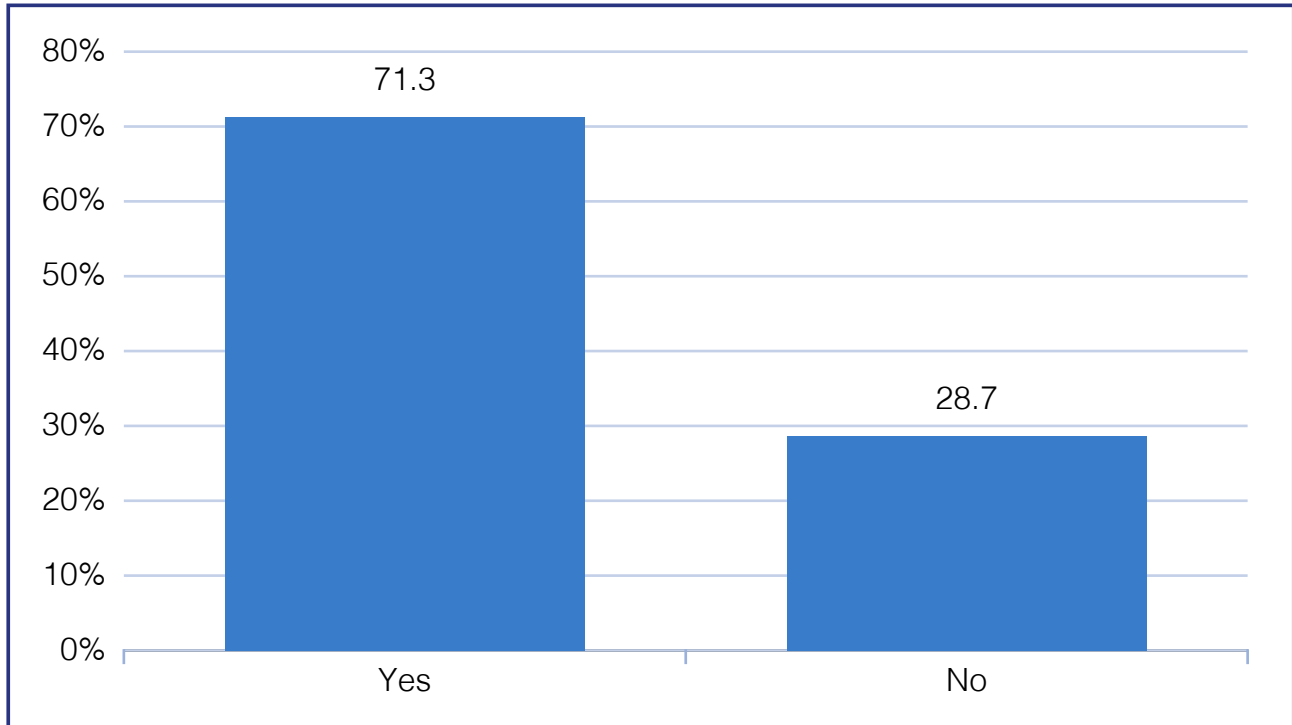


- Number represented: **46.0 mil**
- Number with no strong view: -
- Number who skipped question: **8.7 mil**

The weighted graph shows that regional memorials across the UK were more favoured over one UK memorial or local memorials.

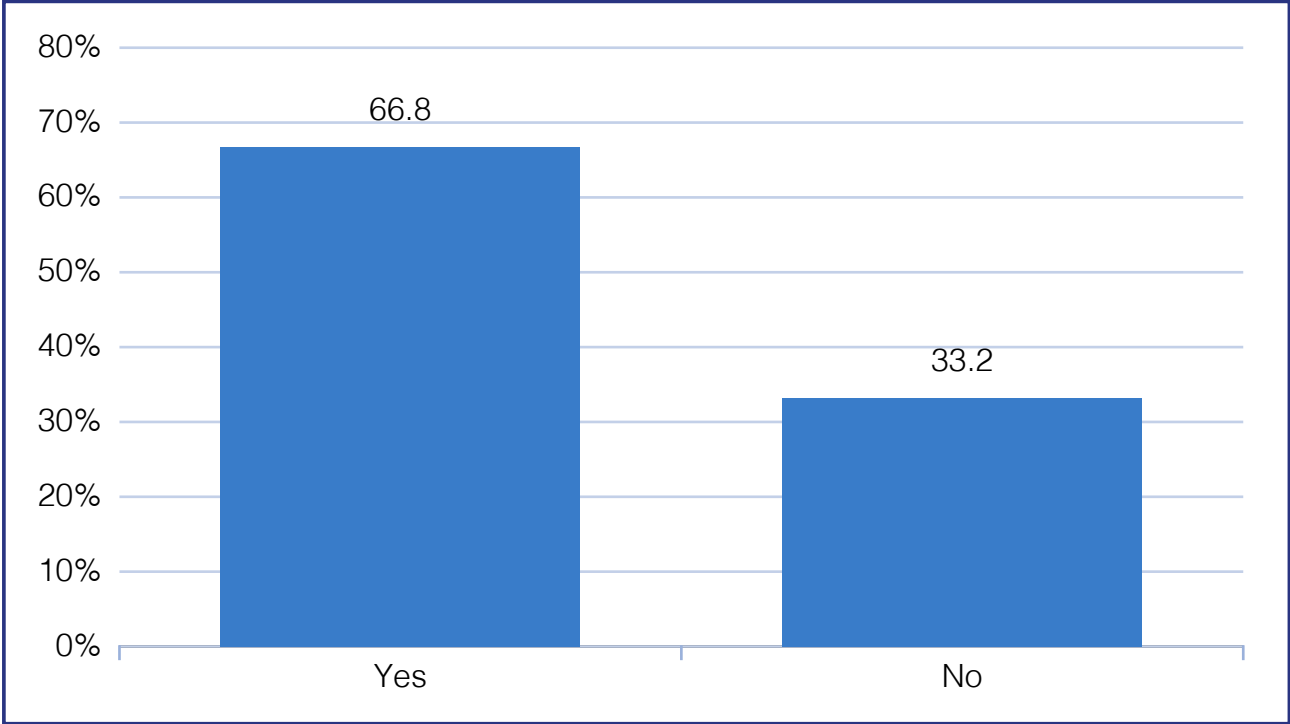
5. Would you be in favour of the creation of a website to find memorials and commemoration activities near you?

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **3,689**
- Number with no strong view: **1,029**
- Number who skipped question: **191**

Weighted

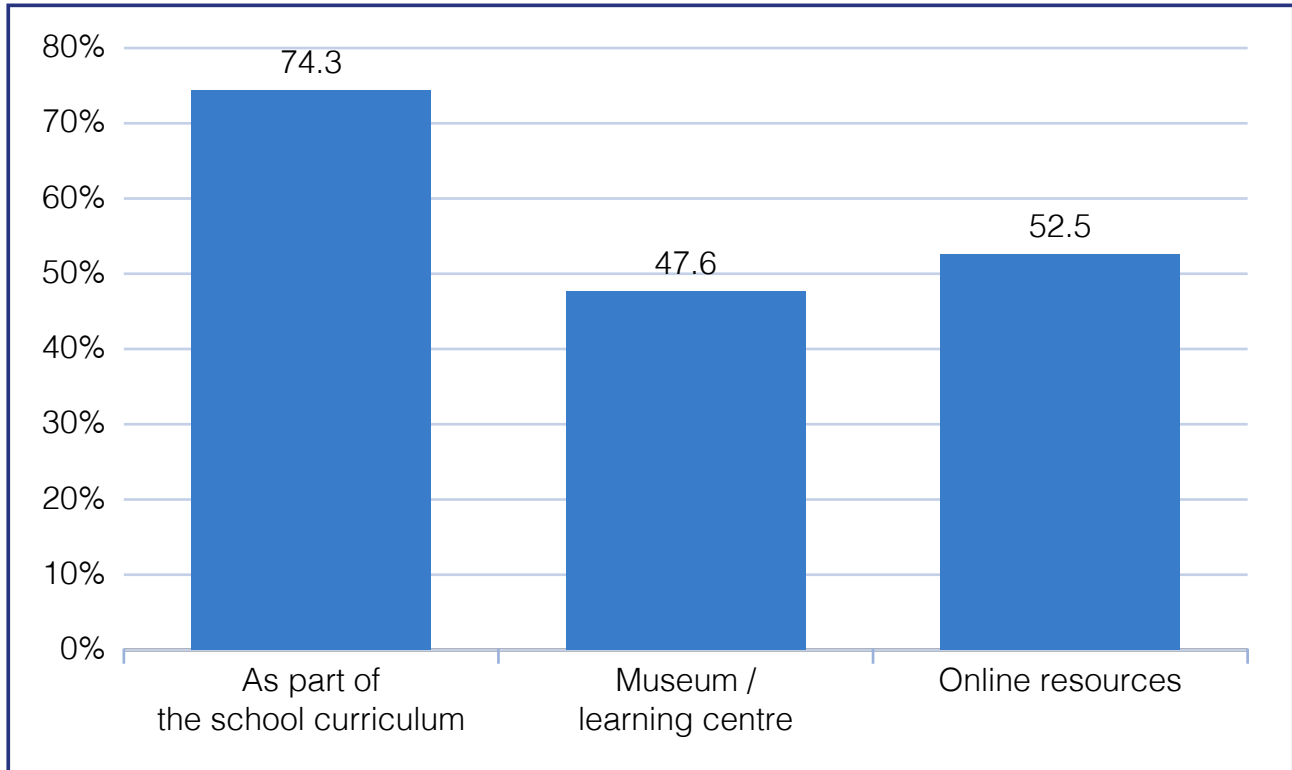


- Number represented: **41.4 mil**
- Number with no strong view: **11.8 mil**
- Number who skipped question: **1.5 mil**

The weighted graph shows that the majority were in favour of the creation of a website to find memorials and commemoration activities near them.

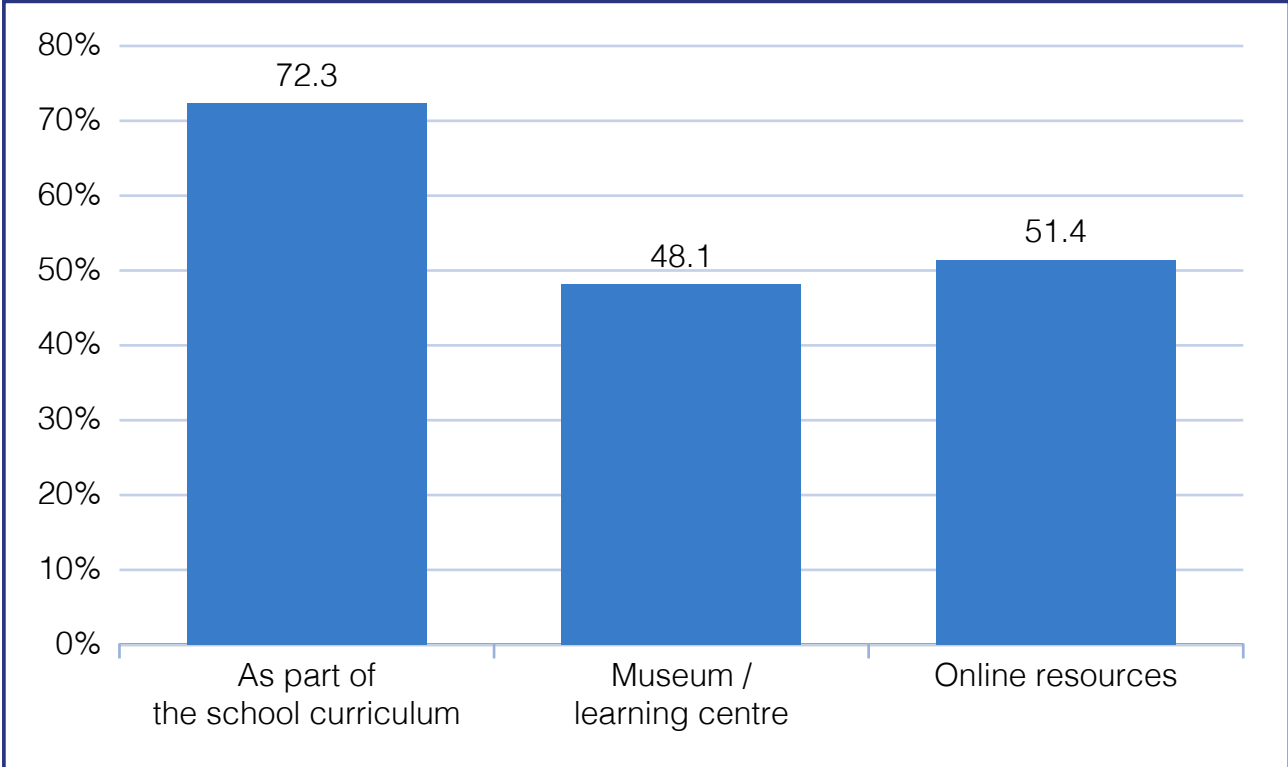
6. What do you consider to be the best way(s) to educate future generations about COVID-19? (please tick as many as you wish)

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,065**
- Number with no strong view: **736**
- Number who skipped question: **108**

Weighted

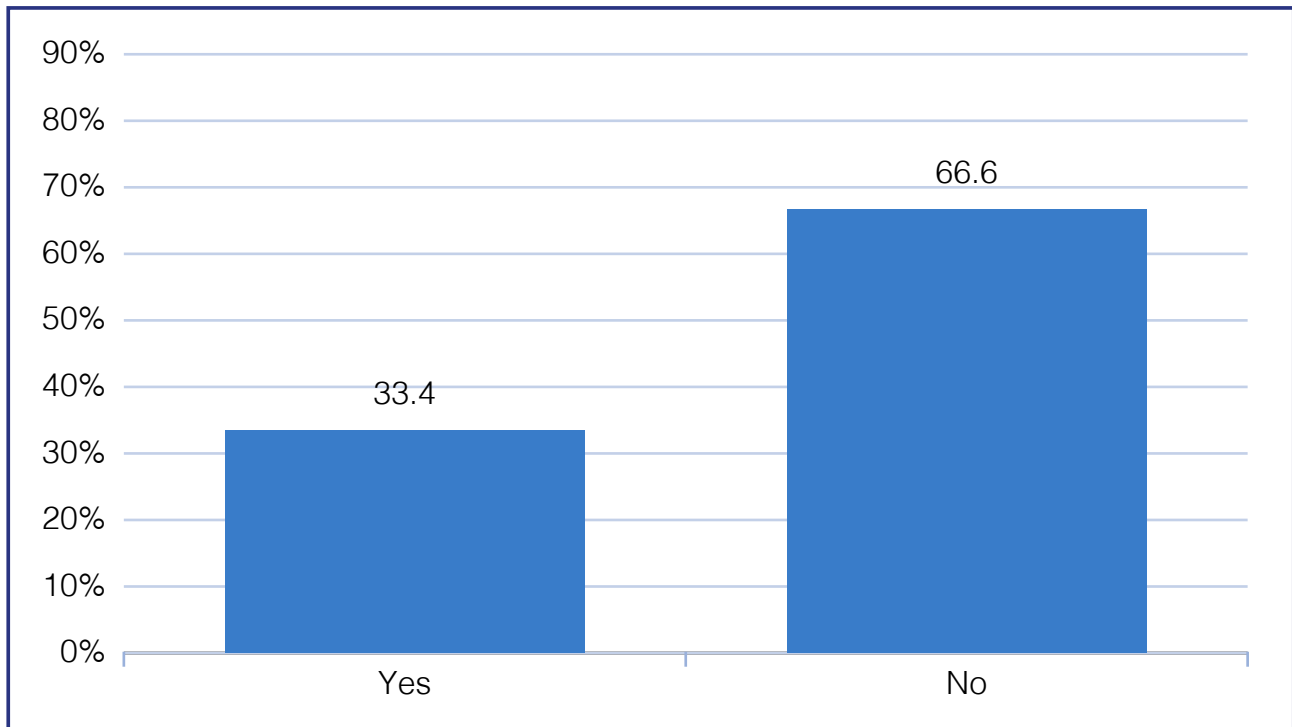


- Number represented: **45.9 mil**
- Number with no strong view: **8.4 mil**
- Number who skipped question: **0.4 mil**

The weighted graph shows that most people thought the best way of educating future generations about COVID-19 was by including it as part of the school curriculum. About half of people supported the idea of educating future generations through online resources, as well as museums / learning centres.

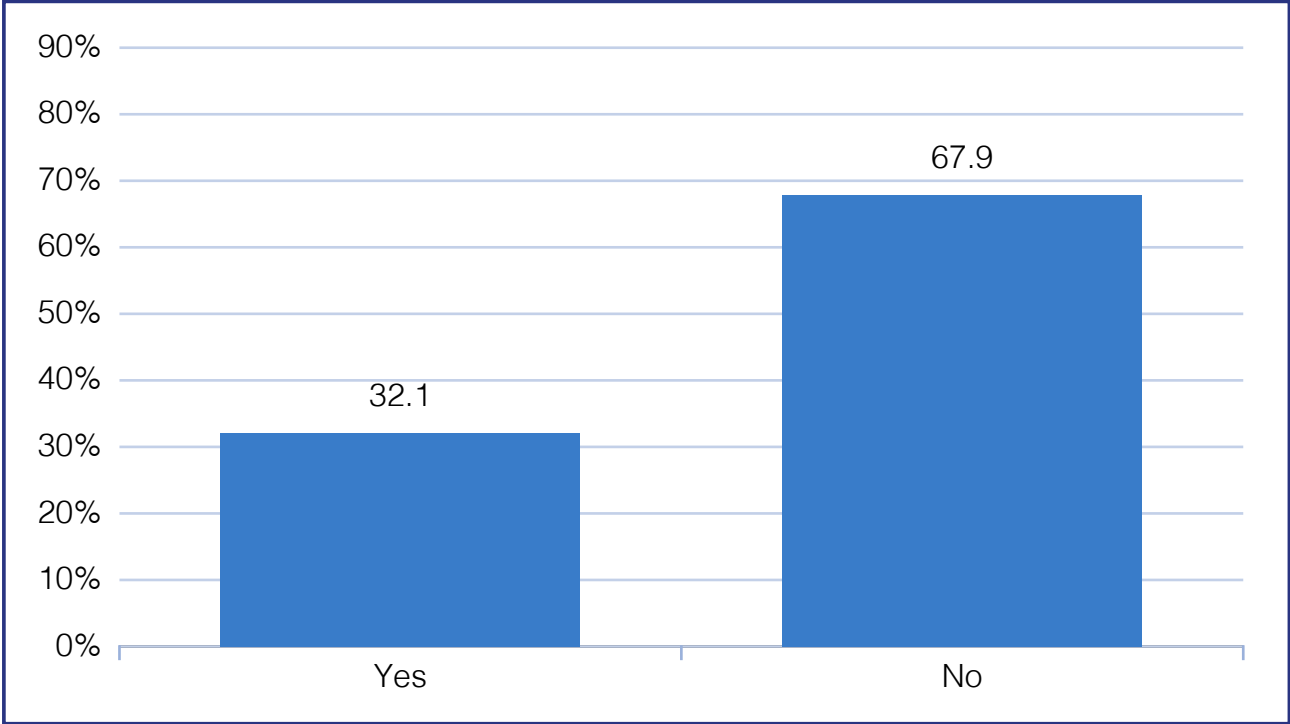
7. Would you be in favour of having a Commemorative Covid Coin?

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **3,813**
- Number with no strong view: **998**
- Number who skipped question: **98**

Weighted

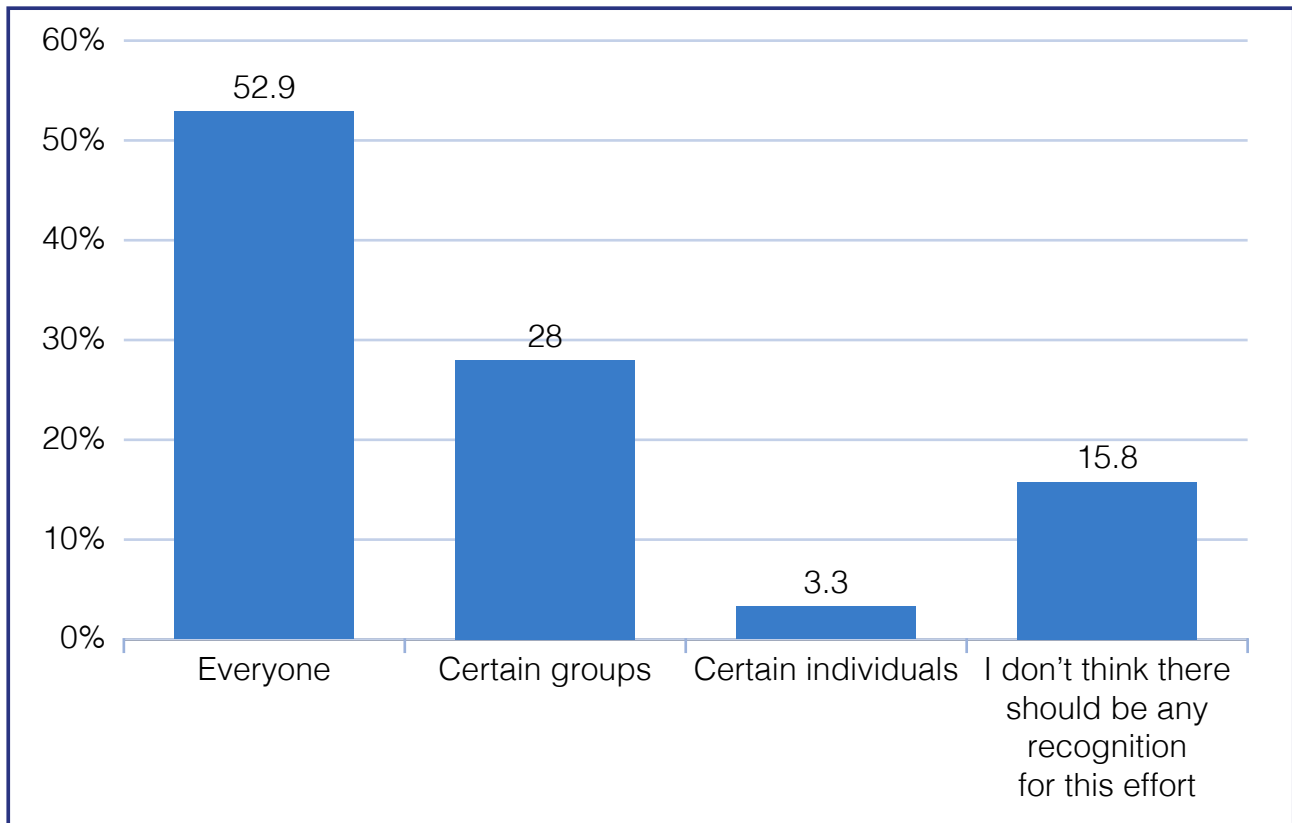


- Number represented: **43.1 mil**
- Number with no strong view: **10.4 mil**
- Number who skipped question: **1.2 mil**

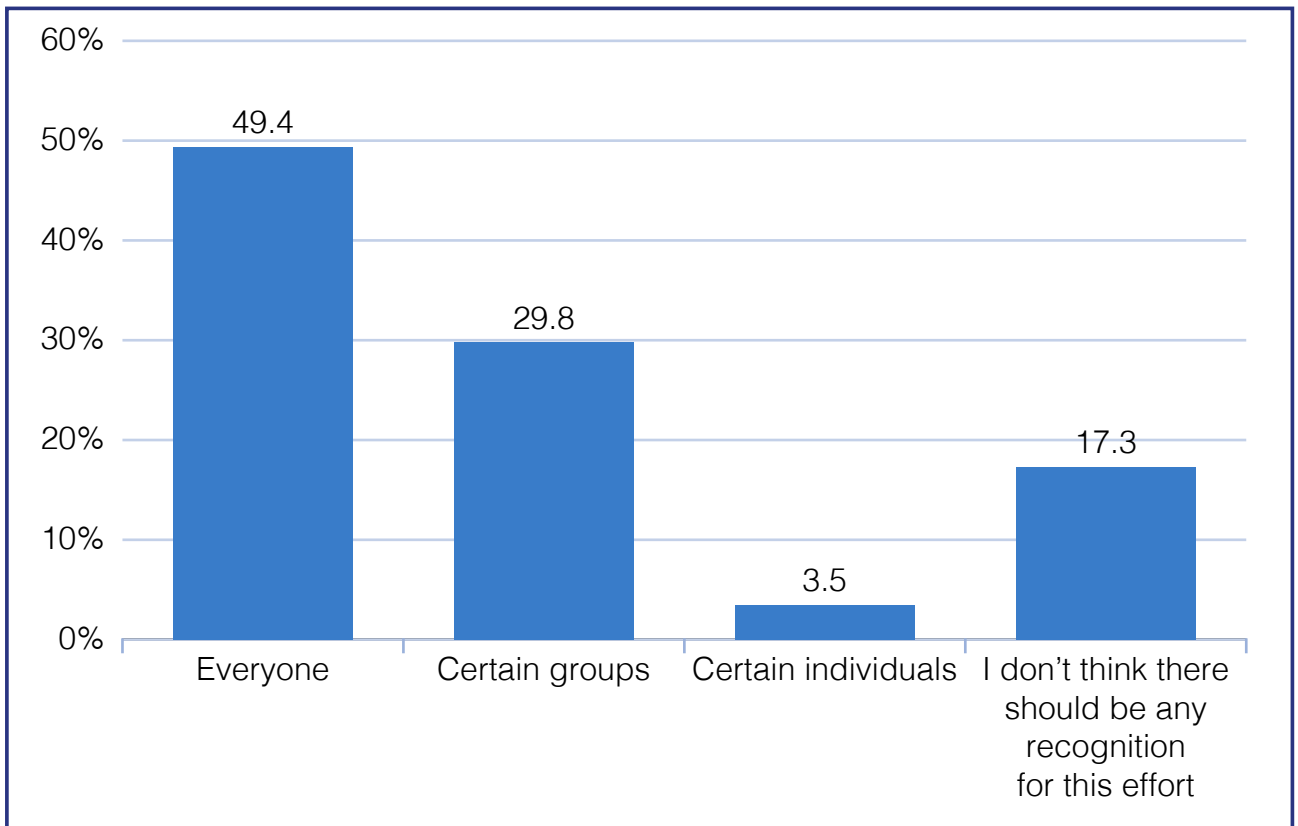
The weighted graph shows that around two-thirds of people were not in favour of having a commemorative Covid coin.

8. Millions of workers and volunteers contributed to the pandemic response across the UK in different ways. The Commission is considering how to recognise people's efforts throughout the pandemic. Who of the following do you think should be recognised?

Unweighted



- Number who answered: **4,364**
- Number with no strong view: **310**
- Number who skipped question: **235**

Weighted

- Number represented: **49.6 mil**
- Number with no strong view: **3.1 mil**
- Number who skipped question: **2.0 mil**

The weighted graph shows that around half of people thought that everyone should be recognised for their efforts throughout the pandemic. There was also a significant number of people who thought certain groups should be recognised. Almost one-in-five people felt that there should be no recognition at all.

9. Do you have any other suggestions on how we should commemorate and remember the COVID-19 pandemic? (Please answer in 500 characters or less)

Through this question, we received a vast range of views relating to all aspects of commemoration. The data has been reviewed and the recurring themes were:

- Some respondents suggested that the Yellow Heart should be the symbol for Covid; the Red Heart (and other symbols) was also suggested though less frequently.
- Some respondents said that the National Covid Memorial Wall in London should be made permanent.
- Some respondents said that there should be a Covid medal.
- Some respondents were of the view that it is essential that the commemoration of those who died from COVID-19 should be completely separated from any kind of recognition of key workers.
- Some respondents were of the view that there should not be any Covid commemoration for various reasons. These included the view that the Covid restrictions were not justified and therefore funding should not be allocated to commemoration activities. Other suggestions included that the Government should increase funding for the NHS and Social Care rather than spend it on commemoration. Others felt that Covid is not over and therefore should not yet be commemorated.

Annex D - Stakeholder Engagement

As part of its consultation, the Commission also hosted and attended a range of meetings with specific groups and sectors. The Commission is grateful to the groups and organisations who shared their views during these meetings, particularly the bereaved families who attended the engagement meetings. We are grateful also to the bereaved families representatives that met with Baroness Morgan on several occasions outside of the meetings detailed below. Details of these meetings are listed below⁴.

Cardiff meeting	Friday 30 September 2022
Belfast meeting	Thursday 6 October 2022
Manchester meeting	Wednesday 12 October 2022
Edinburgh meeting	Thursday 13 October 2022
Cambridge meeting	Friday 14 October 2022
Leicester meeting*	Monday 17 October 2022
Exeter meeting	Wednesday 19 October 2022
Volunteering stakeholders meeting*	Wednesday 19 October 2022
UK wide meeting*	Monday 24 October 2022
London meeting	Wednesday 26 October 2022
Newcastle meeting	Friday 28 October 2022
Disability charities stakeholders meeting*	Monday 31 October 2022

⁴ Meetings marked with an asterisk took place virtually

Passenger transport stakeholders meeting*	Monday 21 November 2022
Parliamentarians	Monday 21 November 2022
Yorkshire and the Humber meeting*	Monday 28 November 2022
Social care stakeholders meeting*	Wednesday 30 November 2022
Science stakeholders meeting	Friday 2 December 2022
Youth stakeholders meeting*	Tuesday 6 December 2022
Food retail stakeholders meeting*	Wednesday 7 December 2022
Retail stakeholders meeting*	Wednesday 14 December 2022

