

The People's Panel: COVID-19 Report



Easy Read version

Introduction: The People's Panel



The Scottish Government wants to involve people when making decisions. This means better decisions for the people. It can also help people to learn new skills, become more confident and feel valued.



The 'People's Panel for Wellbeing: 2022 and beyond' was set up for people to tell us their views, experiences, and ideas on the wellbeing of people in Scotland.



This panel looked at the COVID-19 recovery period. It also looked at other issues such as the cost of living crisis and how to make communities stronger.



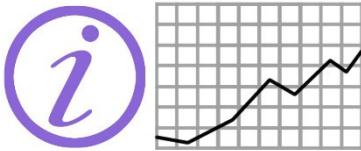
Three reports will be published about what the People's Panel found out about these issues. This report is about COVID-19.

Aims of the People's Panel

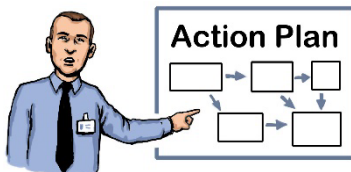
The People's Panel was set up with two main aims. These are:



- **To give people of Scotland more power.** People can take part in a research panel and the results are shared with government.



- **To test a new way of doing research.** People would be part of a new way of getting information and dealing with issues like COVID-19.



This would help the Scottish Government make the best decisions when dealing with these issues in future.

Recruitment



We asked 30 adults living in Scotland to become the People’s Panel. People were picked because of their different backgrounds and experiences. This meant we would get different views.



We tried to include as many different people as possible. Some groups were not included, like people under 16 or people who lived in care homes during the pandemic.



Just under 800 people said they wanted to join the panel. We picked 29 people from this group. There was also a reserve list.



There were six People’s Panel events. They were all held online and a total of 24 members took part. Members were given a shopping voucher worth £125 per event for giving their time.

The Panel Process



The research team asked the Scottish Government which issues they wanted the Panel to discuss. At the online events, these issues were discussed involving the whole panel and in smaller groups.



Staff from the research team and the Scottish Government took notes on what was said by the Panel members.

Looking at what was said

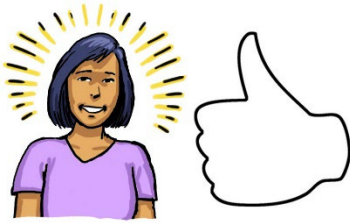


After each People's Panel event, the research team looked at the main things people talked about. They then gave a report of the results to the Scottish Government.



Panel members were asked to complete a survey. This was to find out what the panel members thought about each event and if they were happy to continue.

Trust and Relationships



The issues discussed could be challenging and emotional. It was important to have good relationships with panel members. We made sure their wellbeing was looked after.



Members were told clearly how their information would be used to make decisions. The members were told how their views from the previous event had been used and what changes had been made.



We protected the wellbeing of everyone involved in the People's Panel. We had contact details for support services like mental health charities and Citizens Advice.



A Mental Health First Aider was available. We tried to create safe spaces where members could feel supported during difficult discussions.

COVID-19 Panel - main findings



24 people with different backgrounds and experiences took part in this panel. There were five panel events. The main findings are:

Different experiences of the pandemic



Most panel members' experiences were upsetting and were about losing people. People felt sad and angry about what had happened.



There were very different views about the COVID-19 protective measures.



Not everyone said they had a bad experience during the pandemic. Some people said good things came out of it, like working from home, finding new hobbies, and making new connections with neighbours or online groups.



Feelings about safety and risk

Most panel members felt a high level of risk from COVID-19 and long COVID.



People with disabilities and health conditions were worried. So were people from minority ethnic backgrounds. These worries increased when COVID-19 rules and restrictions were ended.

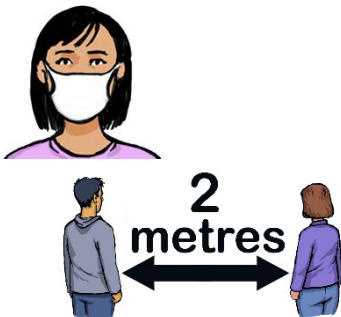


A small number of People's Panel members said they were not worried about the long-term impact of COVID-19 on their future lives.

People's thoughts about COVID-19 in Autumn and Winter 2022-23



Many panel members were worried that the virus was not under control. These worries were made worse by personal experiences of COVID-19. Some said they were at higher risk from COVID-19.

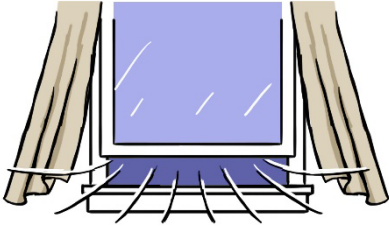


Some people said there still need to be protective measures, including face coverings, free testing, social distancing, and hand-washing. They said the Scottish Government needed to keep these measures going.



People said that it felt like COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis were joined together. Each made the other worse.

Ventilation as protection

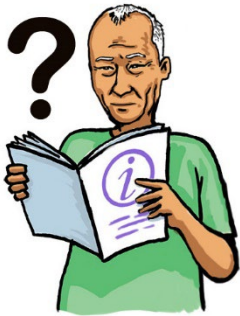


Most panel members were aware that ventilation helped to stop the spread of infections like COVID-19.



Some people said there were problems with ventilation. It was hard to keep windows open in bad weather and more expensive to heat homes.

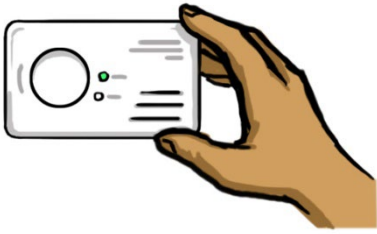
Latest Scottish Government ventilation guidelines



Panel members said the Government guidance should be clearer. It should have simple language, clear messages, and use pictures along with text.



A lot of people said that public spaces need to be ventilated as well as homes. This included businesses, schools, GP surgeries, public transport, and other public areas.

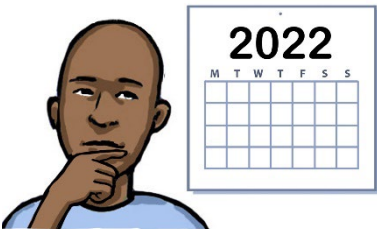


Carbon dioxide monitors in public spaces

Carbon dioxide monitors are used to measure air flow and check if ventilation is poor.



Some panel members thought it would be good to have Carbon dioxide monitors in public places. They said it would be important to have them set up properly and make the public aware of them.

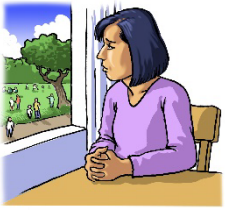


Measuring the COVID-19 pandemic in 2023

Some panel members felt that we were in a worse situation in early 2023 compared to 2022.



People who continued to wear face coverings in public places felt they were judged by others.



Many members were worried about the long-term impact of COVID-19. This included the effects of lockdowns, breaks in education, and effects on medical staff and services.



A small number of members were not worried about these things. They thought people overreacted to COVID-19. They thought face masks and vaccinations were unhelpful because they scared the public.

Summary



The Panel member's experiences have given us a lot of information to work with.



Their views were used to help develop new signs for public places. Their views on things like ventilation helped us make new guidelines for individuals and workplaces.



The panels have helped us find out about the long-term effects on health and the economy. This has also given us more information about how the pandemic affects different people and communities.



Getting these views has given the Government an opportunity to look at the challenges faced by Scottish communities. These views will be very useful when making future decisions.



The Government will learn from the success of the People's Panel. We will look at how to involve the public more in making important decisions and dealing with serious issues.