



National Centre for Research Methods

# Changing Research Practices: Undertaking social research in the context of Covid-19

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# Executive summary

## Aims

Covid-19 is a global pandemic with devastating impacts on lives and economies worldwide. It has disrupted research practices such that the ESRC funded NCRM to:

1. engage the research community (within and beyond the academy) in learning and sharing positive methodological responses to, and possibilities within, the constraints of Covid-19 measures when conducting social research; and
2. synthesise the evidence available to the research community on how social research methods have been successfully adapted for, or may work within, pandemic conditions.

## Methods

The research was conducted through interconnected research community engagement and review of the emerging evidence. Eight knowledge exchange workshops illustrated the concerns and responses of 58 social researchers from the academy, third sector and government; these were followed by two webinars (300+ people) to expand community involvement and raise awareness. The grey literature was scrutinised and a Rapid Evidence Review conducted of work published in 2020 to answer the question ***How have social research methods been successfully adapted or designed for use within pandemic conditions?***

## Findings

Researchers have responded to the pandemic and the associated public health mandates by thinking differently about their research designs and adapting their methods ranging from minor adjustments to fundamental methodological change; methods have been substituted or combined in new ways and some methods have flourished while others have stalled. Survey research has adapted by changing modes (e.g. from interview to online questionnaire) and addressed challenges to recruitment and representativeness by using social media and doorstep interviews. Researchers using qualitative interviews have also used telephone and video interviews. Autoethnographic methods have been well-suited to the pandemic conditions and researchers have also used expressive methods and adapted sensory and material methods for use in social distanced ways.

In addition to making research happen, social researchers have been attending to questions of the validity and ethics of their research in Covid-19 times. Survey researchers, for example, have been concerned with how samples could have been distorted by the pandemic and how the effects of mode changes can be isolated. The expansion of digital communication in research has raised ethical challenges that are dynamic as platform companies and researchers continue to innovate but do not manage to include all groups. Researchers have been alert to the impact of changes in material, health and social circumstances impacting participants and addressed questions of whether participating in research is an unnecessary burden or helpful and important to continue. The workshops supported an atmosphere of

collegiality, criticality, supportiveness and considerateness and provided much needed mutual support.

## Recommendations

### *Researchers*

1. Researchers should make use of this report and the project outputs – see <https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/socscicovid19/>.
2. Researchers need to consider and address the significant ethical and epistemic challenges alongside the practical and technical challenges.
3. Supportive and collegiate research communities should continue to be found or fostered.

### *NCRM and training providers such as Doctoral Training Partnerships*

4. We recommend training provision that prioritises specific data generation methods highlighted in the report.
5. Training provision needs to address wider methodological issues regarding speed, secondary data use, maintaining remote research relationships and method combinations.
6. NCRM should continue to provide workshop spaces for researchers to connect (and provide mutual support in research affected by the pandemic).
7. Training should be provided in contingency planning skills.

### *ESRC/UKRI and other research funders*

8. We recommend that ESRC fund further research to update the rapid evidence review and to continue knowledge exchange.
9. We recommend funding further activities to enhance coordination and understand provision across the UK's social research methods infrastructure.

### *Research institutions: Ethics committees, universities, professional research associations*

10. We recommend that research ethics committees publish and promote the emerging examples illustrating imaginative ways for ensuring care and positive outcomes for participation.
11. Universities and funders should provide wider access to secure digital devices resources.
12. We recommend universities and professional associations provide easily searchable, up-to-date guidance on ethical issues with respect to digital technologies.

## Introduction – Project origins, aims and approach

Covid-19, which rapidly spread to become a global pandemic with devastating impacts on lives and economies worldwide, is widely understood to be a social not just medical event of epic proportions (Teti, Schatz & Liebenberg, 2020). Researchers have responded to the pandemic and the associated public health mandates by thinking differently about their research designs and adapting their methods in order to continue producing knowledge. Considerations range from minor adjustments of procedures to fit new social conditions through to fundamental methodological change; methods have been substituted or combined in new ways and some methods have flourished while others have stalled.

In discussions between the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Economic and Social Research Council and the National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM), the aims for a new project to respond to Covid-19 were devised, to:

1. engage the research community (within and beyond the academy) in learning and sharing positive methodological responses to, and possibilities within, the constraints of Covid-19 measures when conducting social research; and
2. synthesise the evidence available to the research community on how social research methods have been successfully adapted for, or may work within, pandemic conditions.

NCRM sought to offer leadership by engaging with and facilitating timely debates, synthesising useful evidence, and sharing solutions to the methods challenges faced by social researchers in the challenging new pandemic times. Becoming a response hub, NCRM has been supporting researchers developing and adapting methods, often with some urgency, while also contributing lasting lessons for research communities.

When the project was conceived, we imagined that restrictions on physical proximity between people ('social distancing') would have most impact on social science researchers and would therefore be the primary focus for this work. We were also interested to explore how stipulations such as wearing masks, avoiding touching objects and foreclosing access to particular premises might affect how research could be conducted and, crucially, the knowledge that could be produced. At the project start, in August 2020, the changes to people's everyday practices such as shifting to interact increasingly in online spaces were affecting researchers' access to people and places and the time people had available to engage with researchers. The extent of the pandemic and its effects were unfolding, and the impact of repeated bereavements, stress and anxiety on research and researchers were initially under-estimated.

In the project we sought to:

- engage with the vibrant discussion on social media, in blogs, university task forces and professional forums about how research could be – and was being – made to work in the challenging and dynamic context;
- stimulate, via virtual knowledge exchange workshops, the sharing of challenges and lessons learned by researchers needing to rapidly adapt their social research methods

during the constraints of the Covid-19 context, teasing out the affordances of existing, new and adapted methods;

- conduct a rapid evidence review of published research on how social research methods have been successfully employed or adapted for, or utilised within, pandemic conditions;
- produce and disseminate guidance material based on all of the above thereby sharing evidence about social research methods suitable for use and adaptation during Covid-19 constraints.

Our approach as a project team has been to bring into dialogue the emerging discussions, published evidence/methodological rationale, and lived experience of researchers. The findings and synthesis contained in this report are therefore somewhat co-productive in nature. The report speaks directly to the research community conducting social research, reaches out to the institutional and organisational infrastructure supporting social research, and the intended audience includes funding bodies sponsoring social research.

## Background – The Covid-19 crisis and research response

Following the outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus in the city of Wuhan, the UK government advised against all but essential travel to mainland China in late January 2020. The first two cases of Covid-19 in the UK were confirmed on 31 January. As the number of cases exceeded 100, the first death from Covid-19 in the UK was confirmed on 5 March. Several days later, WHO declared the outbreak as a global pandemic. The Government advised on social distancing and washing hands, and the 'Stay Home, Save Lives' public information campaign was launched on 15 March following cancellation of mass events.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the first UK lockdown on 23 March advising the British public to stay at home except for essential purposes. Universities were closed to all but essential workers, and staff were advised to work from home. Higher Education teaching moved online. By 4 April, over 1 million cases of Covid-19 had been confirmed worldwide. On 10 May, the Government changed its information campaign to 'Stay Alert'.

As Covid-19 cases fell in June and July, the UK and much of Europe saw a gradual easing of lockdown restrictions and the opening up of amenities. Face mask restrictions were introduced in the UK on 8 August. Universities reopened to students in September though most teaching remained online. The 'Hands. Face. Space' public information campaign was launched on 9 September. On 12 October, England moved to a tier system of restrictions (with the other UK nations adopting similar systems).

As cases continued to surge, a 'second wave' of the pandemic hit in UK and Europe. England entered a second national lockdown on 31 October. Vaccinations began in the UK on 8 December after the regulator MHRA granted emergency authorisation to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Following a brief relaxation of restrictions over Christmas, new national lockdown measures for England were announced on 4 January 2021 alongside phase 1 of the UK mass vaccination rollout commenced for priority groups. The UK death toll from Covid-19 exceeded 100,000 on 26 January, on the same day as cases recorded around the world passed 100 million. On 22 February Boris Johnson announced a roadmap for coming out of lockdown, with key dates for the gradual easing of restrictions and opening up of the economy. Across the

world there have been similar national and regional measures to contain the virus and implement mass vaccination programmes in an attempt to halt the pandemic.

## Rapid social research response

Once the Covid-19 pandemic started to significantly disrupt research practices in early 2020, the academic community began rapidly producing resources and to share knowledge via different channels. Initially, this was largely undertaken by researchers working independently of their institutions, reinforcing and cultivating cross-institutional and international academic networks, within and across their disciplines. This was most evident in a number of crowd sourcing initiatives. Probably the most widely circulated of these, *Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic*<sup>1</sup>, was initiated by Deborah Lupton (Sociology Professor at University of New South Wales) on 17 March to provide 'necessary information and key resources for researchers struggling to conduct traditional I face-to-face research under new circumstances'.

Blogs and blog-type news articles from university departments, research groups and academic media outlets, as well as academics' personal blogs provided narrative accounts of how researchers were responding. Blog, which have become established platforms for providing opportunities for academic publishing without peer review, enabled researchers to share accounts of disruption to fieldwork and data collection and their proposed or realised adapted methods. Blogs also enable academics to focus on aspects of research practice not typically cultivated in formal publication, and provided spaces for reflective, subjective and personal perspectives on the pandemic and the emotional labour of research practice.

Several academic blogs, such as Methodspace<sup>2</sup>, the Social Research Association blog<sup>3</sup> and LSE Impact Blog<sup>4</sup>, ran series of posts dedicated to the pandemic and the associated disruption of research methods. Items<sup>5</sup>, the blog of the Social Science Research Council, published a series of posts from researchers in low- and middle-income countries experienced in crises situations exploring disruption to fieldwork with a strong focus on ethical dimensions. Notably, contributors seized on Covid-19 as an opportunity to promote local researchers in those regions with a call for greater equity and the decolonising of Global South research. We found examples of blog posts preceding and summarising subsequent published articles e.g., Fell et al. (2020)<sup>6</sup>; *The Editors' Notebook*<sup>7</sup>, the blog of the *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, routinely publish author summaries of upcoming articles, with a significant number in 2020 addressing Covid-19 disrupted research. Academic blogs continue to point to research yet to be published. In addition, we saw the republishing, repurposing and referencing of pre-existing research methods material seen as relevant to the challenges of the pandemic, such as advice on conducting telephone surveys<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nwssdtpacuk.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/doing-fieldwork-in-a-pandemic2-google-docs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.methodspace.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/Blog>

<sup>4</sup> <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://items.ssrc.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://the-sra.org.uk/SRA/Blog/Internalandexternalvalidityofenergysocialresearchduringthepandemic.aspx>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://ijsrm.org/category/notebook/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/blog/3-20-20/best-practices-conducting-phone-surveys>



Established hashtag-based peer-support communities such as #AcademicChatter, #PhDchat, #PhDforum, #ECRchat and #AcWri that typically support discussion and sharing of resources across a broad range of academic practices, particularly for doctoral and early career researchers, quickly began sharing experiences and resources related specifically to research methods under lockdown conditions. Some run scheduled chats on specific topics such as Helen Kara's #CRMMethodsChat. Another, #virtualnotviral was set up by Anuja Cabraal and Pat Thomson in direct response to the pandemic, facilitating a chat session every Monday to support PhD researchers and provide resources.

Online projects also emerged in response to Covid-19. For example, *Massive and Microscopic Sensemaking*<sup>9</sup>, a collaborative autoethnographic project was launched in April 2020 by Anne Harris and Annette Markham. Over 150 social researchers, artists and activists responded to a series of prompts over 21 days to share texts, images and videos, a number of which were subsequently published in *Qualitative Inquiry*. Similarly, *Post-pandemic University*<sup>10</sup> a collaborative research platform and network have invited researchers to reflect on the challenges of doing fieldwork during lockdown through a series of podcasts.

While many of the institutional responses to Covid-19 were beyond the scope and the access of this project, some of their methods-based support activities were shared with the wider academic community through social media and blog posts and included shared reports, resources and webinar recordings. Yenn Lee adapted her SOAS module, *Technology-Enhanced Research*, to produce a five-page guide specifically for researchers at the university, with practical advice on conducting research remotely. Saurabh Bhajbhakare and colleagues at the US-based Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) produced several practical guides for their researchers adapting to Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Institutions such as University of Edinburgh<sup>11</sup> were particularly active in promoting repositories either existing, or newly created or repurposed for the pandemic. Examples included Overseas Development Institute (ODI) tips for collecting primary data in a Covid-19 era<sup>12</sup> and an online resources page from Methods Lab, an experimental research collective based in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London<sup>13</sup>.

Universities and institutions, research groups and networks have run webinars, online lectures and virtual events around research methods in response to Covid-19. With typically limited attendances or registered audiences, many have been recorded and made publicly available online for the wider academic community. Examples include Poppy Gerrard-Abbott's online lecture for the University of Edinburgh on adapting focus groups and interviews<sup>14</sup>, an APA webinar on adapting research methods with a panel of psychologists<sup>15</sup>, and an all-day online event run by Hull University Library on online research methods that combined live sessions, information videos and a Twitter hashtag<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://futuremaking.space/project/massive-micro/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://postpandemicuniversity.net/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cdcs.ed.ac.uk/research-during-pandemic>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.odi.org/publications/16977-primary-data-collection-covid-19-era>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.methodslab.org/resources/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZ97uPXSp5Y>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.apa.org/members/content/research-methods-covid-19>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xo-gb\\_iMZYw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xo-gb_iMZYw)

In the *Changing Research Practices* project reported here we sought to capture, organise and add to the research community response we have described, turning what was spontaneous into something more systematic.

## Methodology

### An interconnected design

The work of this project was designed to take place through two interlinking workstreams, one facilitating community engagement with the Covid-19 methodological challenges and solutions and the other reviewing relevant published evidence. In pursuit of this plan, there has been a dynamic relationship between the engagement and evidence work such that each has informed the other in an ongoing fashion. As we detail below, the community engagement work comprised a series of knowledge exchange workshops and evidence review work comprised a search and synthesis of the grey literature and a rapid evidence review of academic publications. The two workstreams were conducted in tandem. The rationale was that in a dynamic situation it was essential to look in different directions and to engage with researchers as they were responding to challenges, contingency planning, implementing adapted methods, reflecting in blogs, and reporting in published protocols, methods papers and even findings papers.

We identified the research method of interviews as a key priority because of its widespread use. This focus formed a starting point for bringing the research community on board. Participants shared with us and each other their interviewing challenges and solutions. As the knowledge exchange workshops expanded into new terrains, new themes were flagged for consideration, notably the emotional dimension of researching in a pandemic and the fundamental challenges of getting research off the ground with recruitment and relationship-building. The issues affecting methods work were exposed by the different methods foci of the workshops, attention to different populations researched and the different sectors represented in them (academic, government, public and third sector). At the same time, the early forays into the grey and published literature were flagging topics to be explored with the research community and resources to share with them. The reading and resources lists emerging from the evidence workstream were enhanced by additions from the workshops participants and shared online. This to-and-fro process created space for some of the less predictable elements (and relationships between them) to emerge and supported wide engagement with the project.

### Community engagement

The engagement workstream aimed to promote supportive knowledge exchange within the research community and to involve the community in the co-production of resources. This included generating data that could be interpreted and shared more widely. The workstream was organised around a series of ten online events:

- eight knowledge exchange workshops focused on particular methods themes, and
- two webinars where the project team could share preliminary findings.

### *Thematic choices*

The themes for the first workshops were selected using initial evidence and discussion with NCRM stakeholders. These were:

1. Interviewing
2. Working with groups with additional challenges
3. Participatory and deliberative research
4. Research ethics.

We decided on the following four workshop themes as the project progressed, the final topic being suggested by the NCRM executive. These themes were:

5. Creative and sensory methods
6. Online ethnography
7. Surveys and longitudinal studies
8. Covid-19 data and secondary data.

We anticipated overlaps between different themes in terms of content and responses, but also differences in emphases or particular strategies of adaptations. For instance, semi-structured qualitative interviewing, which emerged as the main focus of the first workshop, has many similarities with interviewing in large surveys and longitudinal studies addressed in the penultimate workshop. However, there are also important differences in terms of who is doing the interviewing, their relationship to the participants, their relationship to the study, the objectives of the interview, all of which meant adaptations in the pandemic were varied, and similarities and differences emerged across the workshops as well as within them.

### *Invitations to participants*

To get the most out of the knowledge exchange we required participating researchers to have experience of methodological adaptations in the pandemic. This could include leading or working on ongoing projects, writing project proposals and teaching and supervising students, contributing to the emerging academic and grey literature, and so on. The strategies for inviting researchers to the workshops included:

1. Emails and Tweets to addresses registered with NCRM;
2. Emails to the wider networks of the project team;
3. Direct approaches to people identified in the project via citation in sources e.g. authors and editors of papers, books and blog posts.

Researchers who did not have experience were encouraged to register for the webinars.

### *Participants*

The project engaged with 113 researchers from different career stages, countries, and institutional and disciplinary backgrounds, 58 of whom participated in the workshops. Those who did not attend workshops inquired about the project or sought advice. Many were emailed relevant co-produced resource lists and directed to the upcoming webinars. We also offered specific advice to several researchers who were in planning stages or reapplying for ethics. Some researchers were involved in more than one workshop. Almost all participants stayed for

the duration of the workshops. For all but one workshop, all three members of the project team were present.

Participants in the workshops included representatives from:

- Academia
- Non-profit and voluntary sector
- Government.

We received interest from several recently appointed staff in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and we agreed a slightly lower threshold of experience for this governmental group who wanted information and strategies as quickly as possible (autumn 2020) ahead of the webinars of early 2021.

We also invited seven guest speakers to the webinars, three of whom had been participants in one or more workshops and four who had authored published or grey literature we had drawn upon. The webinars were promoted via NCRM and social media and both were sold out (285 and 350 places, respectively); approximately 170 audience members logged in to the live sessions.

### *Workshop structure*

The workshops were planned for a 90-minute main session with an optional additional 60 minutes for continued discussion and networking. We chose this set-up because we felt researchers would have a variety of time pressures and we wanted to encourage flexible participation. The workshops were held using the Zoom meetings teleconference platform.

In keeping with optimal focus group size, we aimed for around eight participants per workshop and numbers ranged from five to eighteen participants. For the largest (workshop 7) we divided the workshop into three breakout rooms for the much of the session. One team member acted as the facilitator (Meckin) while Nind and Coverdale recorded fieldnotes in a template designed to optimise focus on the research objectives, posed questions and picked up on additional points in the discussion and the Zoom “Chat” function.

### *Evolution of the workshop activities*

The workshops were predominantly arranged around three activities. The first activity was a version of the *Rivers of Life*<sup>17</sup> that we intended as an icebreaker. We call this “Research Rivers”. We asked participants to represent the last year of their research experience as a sketch of a river, with some suggestions for representing experience as features of waterways, including:

- Tributaries and confluences are ways to show joining up of influences;
- Rapids and whirlpools might show times of disruption (particularly relevant?);
- Eddies and shoals might be slower times;
- Meanders and waterfalls can show changes in direction and speed.

We then posed five questions based on the theme of the workshop. The idea, given our expected time constraints, was to have participants primed to think about some of the questions

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<sup>17</sup> <https://steps-centre.org/pathways-methods-vignettes/methods-vignettes-rivers-life/>

we were hoping to address. At the first workshop researchers introduced themselves using their rivers diagrams. The second two activities were almost in parallel. We planned an open discussion with prompt questions from our project template and other issues that arose from the evidence reviews that we wanted to explore. Secondly, we asked for participants to suggest resources that they used – and referenced in the Zoom chat – or that they would like to see developed.

The *Research Rivers* preparation exercise generated rich accounts from participants in the first workshop, so we subsequently turned it into the substantive section of the remaining workshops. This meant that first session of each workshop was dedicated to introduction, research river accounts, and dialogue regarding those accounts. The second session was then more oriented to wider discussion and co-production of resource lists.

### *Consent and ethics*

Ethics approval for the project was gained from University of Southampton (reference 61089). When people approached us to join the project workshops we discussed their experiences, what they sought from the workshops, and what they might share in the knowledge exchange. When we agreed they would participate we provided a participant information sheet and consent form. We asked for the consent form to be returned in order to receive the Zoom invite. We recorded the workshops to a local, password-protected computer using Zoom's audio-only record function. Any participants mentioned by name in the report have given their consent.

### *Workshop data*

The workshops generated a wealth of data including fieldnotes, references, chat contributions and images. We had a field note template (for Coverdale and Nind) to ensure the workshops covered relevant topics and addressed the project questions. The fieldnote template included a series of method-related questions to be completed in the course of the workshops:

- What challenges are identified?
- What options have people considered? What did they consider as they weighed them up?
- What are the affordances?
- What worked?
- What resources were useful?
- What resources do we need?
- What learnings would you pass on?

Meanwhile, Meckin recorded descriptive fieldnotes of topics of conversation to facilitate as smoothly as possible. Many participants shared their river sketches in advance of the workshops. Several participants displayed sketches, but did not share them with the project team, and some participants did not display sketches.

The data generated in the engagement workstream comprises:

- 15 fieldnotes recorded using the above template (Coverdale x 8; Nind x 7)
- 8 descriptive field notes
- 8 transcripts (the recordings were then transcribed using *trint* software)

- 33 river maps.

### *Analysis of workshop data*

After each workshop, the team debriefed for about fifteen minutes, making any additional notes on the session. The workshops were also discussed at the fortnightly meetings. The formal workshop data were loaded into NVivo 12 and firstly open-coded for “what” was talked about (e.g. access, affect, data) and, secondly coded in a focused thematic analysis to address the project aims. Some of the codes were the same as those from our debriefing sessions. These generated particular themes around, for example, ‘time’, ‘research relations’ and ‘moving online’. Thirdly, partly to enable a consistent report, we analysed the data with the Rapid Evidence Review framework. This final phase also generated the additional theme of “making a research community”, which encompasses wider issues that were entangled with discussions of research methods.

### *Webinars*

The two webinars were each two hours long. They were themed based on findings from the project. The first, *Methods adapted or suited to research in the Covid-19 pandemic*, included four speakers who had engaged with the workshops and covered important methods and adaptations that we identified:

- Material methods and sensory ethnography (3 members of the In-Touch team, UCL)
- Valuing Covid-19 methodologies (Poppy Gerrard-Abbott, University of Edinburgh)
- Expressive methods (Nind)
- Adapting survey methods (Coverdale)
- Secondary data analysis (Meckin).

The second webinar, *Thematic issues arising from methodological adaptations*, was a more synthetic-thematic session where we developed the themes made in the findings section of this report. We also invited a panel of three experts to comment on the emerging issues presented:

- Making research happen (Nind)
- Making research ethical (Coverdale)
- Making research valid (Meckin).

The audience had their microphones muted but they made use of the Zoom chat function. In the second webinar in particular there was problem-solving and issue-addressing exchanges in parallel to the talks. Thus, as well as interest in the emerging issues, peer- and community support activities were evident at these events.

## **The grey literature**

We searched the grey literature to add to our understanding of how the research community responded to the social impact of Covid-19 in their research, and how they supported each other to keep their research going. Our primary source was Twitter, conducting advanced searches using the keywords: research methods (covid OR coronavirus OR pandemic) lang:en until:[date] since:[date]. We found using monthly date intervals was most effective for yielding results. We searched replies and threads to tweets where relevant. Supplementary searches

were conducted using Google (searching for 'social research methods for the pandemic'), YouTube and Facebook. We also followed up prospective links and further posts in key sites and blogs. Material was gathered and classified with basic quality checks before extracting key data and synthesising key messages and practical applications.

## Rapid evidence review

The design of the rapid review of the published literature work borrowed from the staged *Knowledge to Action* rapid evidence review approach found by Khangura et al. (2012) to be effective in creating overviews of evidence for use by decision makers in a short timeframe. The process comprised needs assessment, question development and refinement, protocol development, systematic literature search, screening and selection of studies, narrative synthesis of included studies, reporting and ongoing follow-up and dialogue with knowledge users. The full protocol can be seen in the Rapid Evidence Review Report available from <http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/4398/>. The review question was delineated as:

*How have social research methods been successfully adapted or designed for use within pandemic conditions?*

### Searching and screening

Six bibliographic databases were searched: Scopus; Web of science; PsycINFO; Coronavirus Research database; ERIC; and Social Science Premium Collection. The search terms used in combination were:

- Terms to indicate that the paper is about applying, developing or adapting research methods: ("research method\*" OR methodology\* OR qualitative OR quantitative OR fieldwork OR survey\* OR interview\* OR "focus group\*" OR observation\* OR \*ethnog

AND

- Terms to indicate that the methods were applied, developed or adapted to the social conditions and public health mandates accompanying Covid-19: (Covid\* OR coronavirus OR pandemic OR lockdown OR "social distan\*" OR "face cover\*" OR face mask\*)

The search was limited by date (2020), document type (articles, book chapters) and language (English). As rapid evidence reviews usually exclude grey literature (Nordhausen & Hirt, 2020) that was not included but played a different role in the study. The systematic search was supplemented with additional hand-searching of selected methodology journals<sup>18</sup>, forward and backward citation searching and pursuing leads from the grey literature

Studies were identified that met **ALL** of the following criteria:

### Scope

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<sup>18</sup> International Journal of Social Research Methodology; Qualitative Research; Qualitative Inquiry; International Journal of Qualitative Methods; Journal of Mixed Methods Research; Sociological Methods and Research; Methodology; and Survey Research Methods

1. Focuses on social research methods (used by researchers in any discipline)
2. Provides description and/or rationale for the fit of the research methods that have been (or were in train to be) applied, developed or adapted to the social conditions and public health mandates accompanying Covid-19

#### *Paper Type*

3. Journal article report or discussion of individual empirical studies or synthesis/review of these; or peer-reviewed published conference proceedings (other conference papers will be covered in the review of the grey literature)
4. Written in English

#### *Timespan*

5. Published 1 January 2020- 31 December 2020.

Screening was conducted in three stages proceeding through a series of graduated filters. First, the search strategy was applied and all studies with potential to meet the inclusion criteria were identified. Second, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the titles (and where necessary also the abstracts). Third, full papers were scrutinised. Again, as per the norm for rapid evidence reviews (as opposed to systematic reviews), the screening was conducted by one person with partial involvement of another (Nordhausen & Hirt, 2020) in approximately 25% of cases, including all instances of researcher uncertainty.

#### *Data extraction and synthesis*

We conducted data extraction ahead the quality appraisal and narrative synthesis of the included studies. This built of a picture of the kinds of published research that had been conducted, where, in which conditions and utilising or adapting which types of research methods. For mapping purposes we assigned generic keywords to log paper reference; source (indicating databases/handsearching); country; discipline; participant groups; and study type, We applied review-specific keywording to log research method; constraining pandemic conditions; key contribution (free text); and recommendation regarding the need or not for a deep read for the narrative synthesis. Papers where the detail was limited regarding rationale for the method in terms of Covid-19 conditions were mapped rather than synthesised.

We appraised papers for relevance and quality. As this review was concerned with the way in which methods were used and adapted to generate data in pandemic conditions (argument-based), an *all things considered* (Popay et al., 2006) conclusion of low/medium/high quality was regarded as appropriate. This took into account: clarity; attention to the methodological literature; attention to theory; depth of rationale for the method/adaptation of method; consideration of ethical challenges; evidence of reflexivity; technical merit; internal coherence; evidence of testing the method to produce viable findings; clarity of the basis for the conclusions; and the authors' own evaluation of the strengths and limitations. This allowed us to consider the extent to which the paper was valid for its own purpose and for the purpose of the systematic review (see Garside 2014). Common threads, headline messages and practical pointers were identified and synthesised in the narrative.



## Findings

The specific findings of the Rapid Evidence Review can be seen separately in the Rapid Evidence Review Report<sup>19</sup>. In this main project report, we share the integrated findings from the different dimensions of the study. This shows how the knowledge exchange workshops, grey literature review and Rapid Evidence Review were complementary. We start from the three core themes in the Rapid Evidence Review, that is, making research happen, making research valid and trustworthy, and making research ethical. These categories provide a useful analytical framework, but many issues have dimensions in each – digital connectivity, for example, is about the practicalities of making research happen, ethical decisions about what research should do, and affects whether the instruments and tools in use are suited to the question at hand. A final section describes making (a) research community. This theme emerged when we analysed the engagement workstream data with the framework from the Rapid Evidence Review and noticed how the methods-related discussions in the workshops were entangled with wider issues of researcher interactions, researcher development and research infrastructure.

### Making research happen

#### *The context*

The research shed light on the pandemic conditions that interfered with researchers' ability to conduct their research during the pandemic. Challenges to research practices came from the need to adapt to 'social' (actually physical) distancing requirements imposed to keep people safe. This was a dominant feature in the literature and many of the survey papers were transparent about the points at which changes had to be made to their research designs and methods as governments introduced specific public health mandates. National variations in responses to Covid-19 were particularly problematic for cross-national studies. Furthermore, the pandemic was not a social context in isolation and research decisions were in some cases shaped by the interaction between the pandemic and other social and political activity, such as the Black Lives Matter protests.

In the workshops, 'context' was produced by participants as they discussed similarities and differences in their research experiences in the pandemic, typically by agreeing with points made by others and developing conversational themes. In these conversations, researchers were constructed as responsive social actors located in institutions that were themselves responding to pandemic conditions by redeploying and furloughing some workers, emphasising other institutional goals (e.g. education, administrative needs), experiencing financial pressures and so on. These institutional responses often exacerbated the issues discussed in the workshops, such as decreases in access to resources and support, increases in bureaucracy, and increases in expectations to align with the institutions' priorities.

A significant aspect of the workshop discussions was about the changes, not only in the dimensions of physical restrictions and health risks, but also in terms of the affective landscape. This was related to increasing levels of anxiety, stress, bereavement and grief, and concerns of the impacts on the lives of participants and informants as well as the professional and personal lives of researchers and the academic community. The workshops were therefore important in

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<sup>19</sup> <http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/4398/>

exploring relational and affective aspects of research in the pandemic. The theme of affect also came out in some of the literature (e.g. Ellis & Rawicki 2020; Harris & Holman Jones 2020).

Another significant context-related theme in the workshops was dynamism and uncertainty. The pandemic was unfolding in unpredictable ways at the intersections of global, national and local responses, biological responses of the virus and so on. Similarly, institutions were reacting, keeping their options open. Participants highlighted how, in the switch to more online research, institutional licences changed and developers sought to enable new functionalities and patch vulnerabilities (e.g. Zoom). Thus, the modes with which researchers could interact with participants, and the functional and ethical considerations of those modes, was constantly shifting.

The literature and the workshops discuss how the widespread prohibition of in person contact affected particular studies and methods through closure of sites for research (e.g. schools, care homes) (workshop 2; workshop 3); forced cancellation of events such as festivals and gigs (workshop 7; Fritz et al., 2020; Vicente et al., 2020); interruptions to postal services; and travel restrictions or travel bans (workshop 6; Leemann et al., 2020; Lovo, 2020). The published literature reflected on how research methods had to take in account the considerable time pressures experienced by some researchers and participants (Gummer et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020); their experiences of stress and anxiety (Fell et al., 2020; Markham et al., 2020; Moraes Silva & Mont'Alverne, 2020); changing priorities, daily routines, workplaces and living conditions within the dynamic context (Markham et al., 2020; Scherpenzeel et al., 2020; Sovacool et al., 2020).

Workshop participants discussed how the exacerbation of inequalities affected participation in research. Discussions included groups with lower incomes or who resided in rural communities as well as some elite groups. This highlighted concerns about research ethics, importantly about the goals of research and whether connectivity should be provided; it suggested some groups (e.g. professionals) were comparatively easier to reach. One participant explained how they preferred to think of hard-to-reach groups as “waiting to be reached”, placing the onus of inclusion on the researcher. Digital inequalities raised important issues of ethics, access, representativeness and participation.

### *Pace*

For some researchers, making research happen during Covid-19 has been about adapting the pace of the research (Henze et al., 2020; Huber & Helm, 2020), sometimes necessitating hasty decision-making combined with critical reflection Favilla & Pita, 2020; Gross, 2020). Much of the literature and community engagement came from a space of, as Favilla and Pita (2020, p.233) put it, 'Waiting for fieldwork to once again be possible, accompanied by the high levels of uncertainty that surrounds us all'. This demands high levels of flexibility and resilience but also provides time for reflection or for looking at secondary data (Gross, 2020). The UK Data Service was praised for the speed with which data had been made available (workshop 8).

The *Research Rivers* activities in workshops were explicitly focused on time and pace as water moves through waterways at different speeds. There were many examples of “fast” and “slow” experiences which were often related to the research topic and the point at which the pandemic restrictions affected the projects. For some researchers, they described a dam, or trickling flow,

for others, there was gushing cascades of activity. Some participants in the workshops highlighted changes in pace as methodologically valuable. One researcher in workshop 5 noted how the UK's first lockdown resulted in them pausing their research. This facilitated an analytical reflection on timing and where next to take their project. Subsequently, they were able to adapt their methods and substantive focus in the next phase of their ethnographic research. The importance of pausing was picked up in workshop 6, where participants discussed the difficulties in pausing in the broader context, and where there was little option to take a hiatus.

The choice of method adaptations also affected pace and changed the data researchers were getting. For instance, switching to epistolary means, via email or handwriting, meant asynchronous data generation in which participants had more time to develop and refine what they wanted to say (workshop 2; workshop 8). This is an unexpected finding, as there was an assumption that participants would have less inclination to engage with research.

Speed has been important to informing policy decisions (Vindrola-Padros et al., 2020) and rapid evaluation and appraisal methods (REAM) have included: rapid ethnographic assessments (REAs), rapid assessment procedures (RAPs), rapid assessment response and evaluation (RARE), rapid qualitative inquiry (RQI), and rapid ethnographies (Vindrola-Padros et al., 2020) as well as rapid mobile phone survey using specially designed open-access tools (Henze, Paganini & Stöber, 2020). However, pace presented problems for some researchers, particularly the attractiveness of time-saving non-probability samples in survey research (Connelly & Gayle, 2020; see also: *Making Research Valid* below).

### *Decision-making*

Decision-making included how much change was needed to a research design or method. For example in the literature, de Barros et al. (2020, p.235) reflect on being able to make 'modifications in our fieldwork without having – at least so far – to radically change the direction of our intended research'. These modifications span the ethnographic study of Brazilian PhD students in Portugal becoming limited to using only digital social networks in one study; the rescheduling of fieldwork and resorting to social media contact in another; shifting fieldwork in a refugee camp to use of WhatsApp and online meetings in another; and finally the switch to an online focus group with teachers in the last study. These modifications are typical among the qualitative researchers in that researchers accepted the need to alter how data were generated and included the move to online contacts while this could remain within the original research framing. As the authors reflect, for 'those who are at an early stage of their research, Covid-19 ends up being a challenge regarding the re-adjusting and re-scheduling of activities and, most importantly, reconnecting to people' (p.236).

We found that decision-making interacts with all elements of research. It incorporated theoretical, ethical and practical components, as well as ensuring alignment with wider institutional norms and expectations. Some workshop participants, for example, orientated their decision-making to ensure it fitted the theoretical or ethical frameworks they prioritised. For instance, choosing particular teleconferencing platforms because they enabled certain kinds of care for participants (workshop 3; workshop 4; see also: *Making Research Ethical*) or ensuring their decisions were consistent with their wider commitments to participatory values (workshop 3, workshop 4) or the values performed by forms of ethnography (workshop 5).

Decision-making was also influenced by acceptance, or better, “embrace” (workshop 2), of remote methods. One participant, interested in researching sports, used their research river to depict how their “on-field” ethnography was dammed (damned?!) and they diverted their project to “online” ethnography. In this process of elimination, the researcher made moving ethnographic and dialogic methods online as the doable possibility for research on sport activities, while using a consistent education studies heuristic. Similarly, another researcher investigating clinical resources and consultations found online work was the best way to continue developing their project (workshop 3). Another researcher refocused their project on London instead of the Caribbean, arguing they were still able to research the same phenomena, but without the need to plan for international flights and was able to start a project by conducting asynchronous online research (workshop 6). Researchers continued to explore how moving online fit their research plans, or whether the earlier framing of their research needed adjusting.

Workshop discussions, particularly at PhD level, included the idea of contingency-planning as a future skill. Trainee researchers may need to develop multiple project futures and design work for changing circumstances and restrictions. This may add to the workload of particular PhD designs because researchers would need multiple methods for different scenarios.

There also seemed to be a need for inspiration in decision-making. Some researchers in the workshops felt ‘stalled’ and unable to move forwards with their projects because there seemed to be no possible opportunities (especially workshop 2). Discussions with peers led to possibilities that might enable their projects to restart, and several participants left the workshops commenting on feelings of positivity.

Thus, decision-making in the workshops proceeded through parallel processes of seeking inspiration for possible options, checking alignment with ethical guidance and principles, eliminating unlikely or impossible options in geographic and population dimensions, and so worked towards making research “doable” (Fujimura, 1987) across a range of practical, ethical and organisational conditions.

## *Particular methods*

### *Surveys*

Survey research was found to be seriously impacted by Covid-19. A special issue of the journal *Survey Research Methods* was dedicated to this. To make survey research happen during the pandemic researchers have:

- i. Designed or re-designed surveys to address urgent concerns related to the effect of Covid-19 on: the labour market (Sakshaug et al., 2020), education (Huber & Helm, 2020), farming and food security (D34). These include new specific surveys (Sakshaug et al., 2020), rapid surveys (Huber & Helm, 2020) and survey modules (Hafner-Fink & Uhan, 2020; Will, Becker & Weigand, 2020).
- ii. Utilised mixed methods designs with, for example, in-depth telephone interviews (with vulnerable people and community leaders) preceding online surveys of the general population (Morales Silva & Mont’Alverne, 2020).
- iii. Changed their survey modes. In person mode has been switched to become web first then telephone (Burton, Lynn & Benzeval, 2020), or online with telephone option (Verma & Bizas), or telephone with mitigation plans (Gummer et al., 2020), or self-administered mixed mode. Questions for online modes have had to be modified or cut (Sastry,

McGonagle & Fomby, 2020) and content-related adjustments made for switches to telephone (CATI) modes (Will et al., 2020) (e.g. changing a physical/visual slider to a verbally communicated numerical scale (0-10). Establishing some form of contact with the respondents before CATI surveys has been used, together with repeat attempts to call, to increase response rates (Narasimhan et al., 2020). Offering online mode with postal options has been used effectively by Hafner-Fink & Uhan Will (2020) for including elderly participants.

- iv. Sought data on the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown (Sastry et al., 2020), sometimes adding a subsample of cases about this, or new surveys of health and living situations during Covid-19 (Scherpenzeel et al., 2020), or new modules on life and attitudes in the pandemic (Hafner-Fink & Uhan Will, 2020).

In terms of efficacy, it is often too early to tell the impact of survey mode changes beyond responses rates which have largely been good and prevented a hiatus in longitudinal work (Burton et al., 2020).

An important point made in the workshops was that there was concern about response rates to surveys, when representativeness is the methodologically important concept (workshop 7). Thus, a focus on response rates may overlook features of the survey sample.

### Qualitative Interviews and focus groups

In qualitative studies, researchers have been engaged in mode changes similarly, moving from in person to online individual interview (Cuevas-Parra, 2020; Ellis & Rawickis, 2020; Ndhlovu, 2020; Verma & Bizas, 2020), group interviews (Dodds & Hess, 2020; Verma & Bizas, 2020), focus groups (Jones et al., 2020; Chávez et al., 2020), discussion forums (Monchuk et al., 2020) and community researcher meetings (Gratton et al, 2020) or, less often, interviews conducted by telephone (Gross, 2020; Jones et al., 2020; Snow, 2020). Interviews incorporating cultural probes have been adapted so that participants received cultural probes by post (Couceiro, 2020).

Workshop participants described incorporating themes of interest and using particular interview strategies to draw out those themes. One researcher (workshop 5) discussed how they had brought the experience of touch into an online interview by using props similar to those in the hands of their participants. They were then able to copy participants and check understandings using the props. The researcher also worked on disrupting tactile technologies that formed part of their research interests, thus drawing on research method of 'breaching' for their investigation. Researchers also found ways to incorporate photovoice techniques into online group interviews (Liegghio & Caragata, 2020) and to retain manipulative and interactive tasks within interview protocols when the interviews had to be conducted remotely (Chatha & Bretz, 2020).

Workshop participants (workshop 2) explained how they had deployed telephone interviews to talk to participants with low incomes and for whom internet access was too expensive. They reported a richness in responses and that their participants were positive about the choice of telephone interviews, indicating they shared things that they might not have shared with a different method.

In terms of efficacy, online and telephone interviews have been found to be creative and sustaining (Gratton et al., 2020) and despite some limitations generate rich and deep data on experiences and perceptions (Cuevas-Parra, 2020). Online interviews have been technically challenging for an older interviewee (Ellis & Rawicki, 2020) but effective with professionals (Ndhlovo, 2020). One study of an online group interview showed mixed results (Dodds & Hess, 2020). Some researchers have sought out alternative creative/participatory methods when the interviews were less effective at keeping connections thriving (Gratton et al., 2020). Telephone interviews have been found to change, but not weaken, research relationships (Snow, 2020).

### *Ethnographic and expressive methods*

Often, the making research happen challenge during the pandemics has been about finding effective ways to capture data on the everyday realities. In this arena, autoethnographic methods have been strongly in evidence. As with the available data on survey methods, evidence of use and suitability of autoethnographic methods has been supported by one major research initiative (Massive and Microscopic and one journal special issue (*Qualitative Inquiry*)). Autoethnographic writing and photo-assisted ethnography has offered a route to sense-making in the pandemic (Chemi, 2020; Lee, 2020; Markham et al., 2020; Sarkar, 2020), alongside other multimedia autoethnography (Chemi, 2020; Davis, 2020; DeGarmo, 2020; Markham et al., 2020; Zheng, 2020) and collaborative autoethnography (Markham et al., 2020; Roy & Uekusa, 2020). Similarly, ethnographic diaries by children (Gwenzi et al., 2020), digital storytelling and diary writing by young people (Jones et al., 2020), and other expressive and creative methods have been found to suit the need for people to individually and collectively engage in sense-making. Self-recording methods with mobile probes have supported generation of data, sometimes at scale (Goldstein et al., 2020).

In terms of efficacy, these methods have required little adjustment for Covid-19 conditions, instead allowing participants to express using whatever modes they have available to them to communicate their embodied experience; to share photos, recordings, and online chat participants have needed only (their) phones (Zheng, 2020).

Workshop 6, in particular, but also other workshops explored issues regarding ethnographic approaches, which are typically considered immersive and responsive, and there have been significant developments in recent years in 'online' and 'digital' ethnography. Hine (2015) advocates for a 'blended' approach, where both digital and 'offline' methods contribute to the data generation and sense making. Ethnographic approaches therefore lend themselves to creative efforts, responsive to the changing features of the field (site). The point, though, was made earlier regarding decision making – that researchers were checking and aligning what was currently doable with key features they wanted their research to demonstrate; in this case immersion and responsiveness.

One of our webinar speakers explained their adaptation of cultural probes (Webinar 1). Typically, these are 'packs' of materials mailed to participants, with sets of open-ended questions and activities for participants to engage with. They adapted this by designing activities for participants to do, but where the activities involved materials 'to hand' in participants' homes. They argued that participants were able to engage meaningfully in the activities because they were engaging with the material culture in their vicinities, giving the participants more agency.

## Making research valid and trustworthy

Validity-related issues were particularly prevalent in the literature on surveys and, similarly featured in workshops 7 and 8, mostly, which were focused on surveys and secondary data, respectively. Researchers using other methods discussed correlate concepts, such as data richness, upon which trustworthiness in much qualitative research is founded. In the workshops, we found such issues to be deeply entangled in the conversations.

### *Methodological and ontological challenges*

There are several themes relating to validity and trustworthiness and the ways researchers are addressing them. These relate to changes in the method and changes to the objects that are in, or the focus of, or surrounding, research projects.

Disruptions to social conventions, interaction and travel have meant that projects and longer studies have needed to change methodologically, often realigning data generation within the new constraints. Such concerns are summed up well by Chatha and Bretz (2020, p.4200) when they ask, 'What are the implications for reliability and validity of data if one research project combines data collected using both F2F and remote interviews?' Many papers and workshop participants comment on changing the methods part-way through a project. This has potential implications for consistency, representativeness, internal validity and comparability.

The pandemic has also generated change in many objects of interest, with some researchers suggesting the 'whole world' has changed, with implications for relevance and reliability over time:

*How can we ensure that conclusions drawn from data collected during the pandemic are valid, representative, generalisable to a post-pandemic world, and comparable to the pre-pandemic one? (Fell et al., 2020, p.1)*

Fell et al. communicate deep concern with the changes across societies that troubles some forms of analysis. In workshop 8, that concern was referred to as "BC and AC": Before Covid and After Covid. Related to this position, many researchers have similarly found the objects of interest in their projects have changed. Across the two themes in particular, the pandemic has meant researchers have had to attend to different issues of validity and reliability across the research spectrum.

### *Sampling and representativeness*

The pandemic has brought a need to produce data quickly and report findings in short order (Huber & Helm, 2020; Sakshuag et al., 2020). However, the idea of speedy or rapid research was a concern in terms of using and analysing data because researchers have to balance the desire for rapid surveys with the representativeness of their sample (Huber & Helm, 2020). Connelly and Gayle (2020) draw attention to the challenges of sampling and argue that, although surveys can be done quickly using the internet and social media, using non-probability samples produce serious problems for drawing any meaningful conclusions. Instead, they

suggest that adding survey components to existing panel cohort studies would be the best option (see Burton et al., 2020).

The pandemic has meant that recruitment and response to surveys was a significant issue as they had the potential to affect representativeness (Fell et al., 2020; workshop 7). A new survey deployed recruitment strategies using Facebook and was able to mitigate participation issues and generate a representative sample (Ali et al., 2020). The large cohort and panel surveys have also produced reliable secondary data for projects that have completely switched from a primary data methodology (Chawla, 2020). Thus, although speed and sampling are significant issues in responding in a timely fashion, there have been successful adaptations.

### *Mode changes*

A crucial theme in the literature regarding surveys was concerned with the ways that the pandemic instigated changes to data collection that can distort survey data. Mode effects emerge when multiple techniques, such as face-to-face interviews and online questionnaire, are deployed in the same survey. Data generated by different techniques can be significantly different in the different modes because of the medium, and contextual factors, in which the responses are recorded; survey researchers therefore need to account for effects of changing modes in their work (Burton et al., 2020; Sakshaug et al., 2020). Researchers sought to mitigate mode effects in data collection by using the same interviewers (Gummer et al., 2020; Will et al., 2020; workshop 7). To better apprehend and understand potential mode effects researchers used research designs such as a subsample or secondary population for comparison across modes (Hafner-Fink & Uhan, 2020; Leeman et al., 2020; Sastry et al., 2020); separate Covid-specific modules, sometimes with their own mode (Gummer et al., 2020; Will et al., 2020); additional surveys within longitudinal studies (Burton et al., 2020); and rapid bespoke surveys (Huber & Helm, 2020). Some studies were reporting study design and had not analysed the data. However, these efforts have provided some understanding of mode experiences (Leeman et al., 2020) and enabled some researchers to distinguish mode effects from pandemic effects (Will et al., 2020).

### *Qualities of data and method*

Qualitative-interpretive researchers have discussed issues touching validity with regard to features afforded by particular methods, given a broad epistemology of specificity vis-à-vis generalisation. In science education, researchers switched to a video conferencing platform and converted paper-based resources to digital materials finding that students interacted with them in different ways (Chatha & Bretz, 2020); taking into account the laws and politics of remote research in China (Lawrence, 2020); and the difficulties in building trust online in community-based action research (Valdez & Gubrium, 2020); changing one's methodological conventions to digital methods towards the end of an ethnographic career (Gross, 2020).

Much of the discussion in the workshops (especially workshop 6) and ethnographic literature, using our loose definition of ethnographic approaches, talks about the responsiveness and adaptability inherent in much work – ethnography is built to change. This optimistic strategy of responsiveness as a key element in ethnographic method, and arguably, social research more widely. This means that social research should be, and is, well-positioned to respond to validity issues raised by the pandemic by accounting for changes in method and object. Indeed, for



ethnography, experience can be seen the main method (Pandian, 2019), which means the typical distinction between object and method is dissolved.

In terms of rich, quality data, there was cross-methodological agreement in the workshops that research relations were of vital importance. For survey researchers, trust was an important issue in that, if participants are to engage with studies, they need to trust the modes of interaction – the letters, emails, phone apps – that researchers deploy. Social restrictions present a challenge to establishing such trust. Contract research agencies were instructed to conduct surveys with doorstep interviews, sometimes to fill out questionnaires, but sometimes to personally meet participants before enrolling them in following up telephone call (workshop 7). Rapport is a concept often deployed to capture a sense of trust and exchange and was thought to be a precursor to produce rich data. Workshop participants spoke of learning to build rapport online (workshop 6) and argue that it often takes more time without particular physical cues. However, some found that it was possible to build rapport using social media (workshop 3). Thus, the qualities of the data were interrelated with the features of particular methods and strategies.

### *Comparison, generalisation and transferability*

Some discussions in regards to validity were more about ontology, than methodology, and how the very objects of interest (or not) in research were changing. In the workshops, researchers noted how administrative categories disappeared or appeared, meaning that it was not possible to access and track the same populations (workshop 7). Health data was now different and difficult to interpret because it was so entangled with the pandemic (workshop 8). Furthermore, researchers in the workshops explained how sociality was changing in some participant communities as they protected and cared for their group: care homes were no longer accessible to diet and nutrition intervention researchers (workshop 2); schools created bubbles and reduced access (workshop 6); and rural communities reorganised to protect themselves (workshop 3). These sorts of issues were notable as participants were talking through their unresolved problems and trying to figure out approaches that would accommodate these changes: by altering methods, participants, communities, research questions and so on.

There was a more general sense that the entire world was no longer the same, too, threatening ecological or external validity (Fell et al., 2020). Survey researchers have worked with ways to account for effects of the pandemic, which includes guidance on how to answer questions, such as ‘when you are answering the survey, we would like you to answer according to your circumstances now, even if these are not normal’ (Burton et al., 2020, p.237). Some surveys have asked participants to situate their response in a pre-Covid perspective (Will et al., 2020), or added new questions for new times (Burton et al., 2020). Generally, there has been a concern with maintaining or building in longitudinal elements for before and after Covid-19 comparisons where feasible (Fell et al., 2020; Scherpenzeel et al., 2020).

For ensuring generalisability or transferability, theory is an important resource for researchers in addressing some of these issues. Rearticulating and revisiting theory (workshop 3; workshop 4; workshop 6) and grounding research in theory (Promegger et al., 2020) are substantive ways that researchers, across research areas and methods traditions, are ensuring findings are relevant to pre- and post-pandemic conditions. A second way is in the ways that researchers report their projects. Transparency in accounting for the changes and adaptations is important

in informing others of the changes and effects of the pandemic on data collection and analysis (Fell et al., 2020; Gummer et al., 2020). This is a strategic response to validity, which speaks to norms in the research community at large. The challenges to validity are therefore deeply embedded in the epistemic goals of particular research methods. In research orientated to comprehensive coverage, sampling and inference are key issues. In research orientated to deep insight, finding ways to account for the qualities of data was paramount.

## Making research ethical

The pandemic has presented social researchers with interrelated and multi-layered ethical challenges; around whether to conduct research at all and, if so, around effects of the pandemic on research participants and the effects of any enforced changes to research procedures and methods.

### *Moral imperatives in the pandemic*

The rethinking of research plans during the pandemic has, for Kara and Khoo, been an ‘ethical imperative’<sup>20</sup>, with researchers having to weigh the values and opportunities of researching in and on an extraordinary social event against heightened risks to participants and other stakeholders. For Malila (2020), adaptability and agile decision-making are key to conducting ethical research in a crisis, carefully evaluating the most appropriate timing for starting, postponing or resuming a project.

Any ethical response has to prioritise the protection of participants from harm and researchers have the responsibility to assess participant wellbeing throughout the research and reporting processes (Ravitch, 2020). Throughout the pandemic, researchers have had to critically evaluate the ethical risks of over-burdening participants already badly affected by the pandemic (Fell et al., 2020). However, Cuevas-Parra (2020) reminds us that it is sometimes ethically most responsible to continue research because, as Carayannis and Bolin (2020) point out, postponing or cancelling research can negatively affect locally embedded research collaborators and researched communities.

Pacheco and Zaimağaoğlu (2020) remind us that social research can contribute unique and valued insights into crises like the pandemic, and both the literature and the workshops highlighted the natural instinct of researchers to want to respond despite ethical challenges. This moral responsibility was particularly evident in studies such as the oral history project with NHS patients, frontline workers and policy-makers (Snow, 2020). Many social researchers are particularly well placed to focus on disadvantaged and marginalised communities who have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 and social effects of the pandemic, even if their participation in research potentially puts them in an increasingly vulnerable position. This has been evident in studies involving the participation of people with disabilities (Partlow, 2020), homeless youths (Goldstein et al., 2020) and lone mothers and their children living in poverty (Liegghio & Caragata, 2020).

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<sup>20</sup> <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/10/26/how-the-pandemic-has-transformed-research-methods-and-ethics-3-lessons-from-33-rapid-responses/>

### *Coordinating ethics*

Researchers in our workshop spoke of the increased difficulties in getting approval from research ethics committees (workshop 4). Several researchers described the challenges of negotiating multiple ethical procedures where their research transcended either geographical or institutional boundaries. One specific example was when researchers are operating from countries with stricter governmental measures, and local community-based collaborators are subject to lesser restrictions (workshop 4). While ethics committees can be seen as particularly risk-averse at this time, they are responding to a dynamic situation and the need to prioritise rapid research. There remains a clear need for more coherent ethics guidance, support and resources.

Several authors have widened the discussion on the ethical dimensions of the pandemic to expand on the heightened procedural aspects of getting ethics approval and the practical measures to mitigate risks to participants, to consider the relational aspects of ethical research. Liegghio & Caragata (2020) use critical and feminist approaches to draw on researchers' own social positions, roles and responsibilities in relation to both the research and participant communities and the research phenomena. Others (e.g., Malila, 2020) have chosen to discuss this ethical positionality in context with the wider socio-economic ethical and moral dimensions of the pandemic. Even researchers not requiring ethics clearance, such as those conducting autoethnographies, have an ethical responsibility to recognise individual subjectivities and academic privilege at times of crisis (Roy & Uekusa, 2020).

### *Emotions and affect*

Workshop discussions highlighted the challenges of managing heightened emotional aspects of participant engagement, especially participants and communities deeply affected by Covid-19. Some researchers expressed concerns over the uncertainty of how participants might be dealing with the pandemic and noted a lack of training in dealing with strong, difficult and complex emotional responses. Others explained how they were able to draw on previous professional experience in social work and counselling (workshop 4).

Fell et al. (2020) advise on mitigating the effects of questioning of survey respondents who may already be badly affected by the pandemic: 'Any changes to planned research should not, unless it is explicitly justified, introduce collection of categories of data that are more sensitive than those that were originally (or would ordinarily be) planned and/or approved' (p.3). Cuevas-Parra's (2020) participatory action research with children required balancing promoting the participation, agency and decision-making of co-researchers with safeguarding needs and the informed consent of parents or caregivers or legal guardians.

### *Digital technologies and online platforms*

The significant shift of methods onto online and digital spaces has introduced considerable ethical concerns. Digital communication limits visual and communicative cues to participants' wellbeing (Braun et al., 2020; Partlow, 2020) and the pandemic has highlighted familiar concerns around digital divides (Chatha & Bretz, 2020). Assessing risk to participants remotely is particularly challenging. With the potential for 'off-screen' coercion from third parties, Valdez and Gubrium (2020) discuss ensuring vulnerable participants are provided with a 'safe place' to conduct video calls.

However, we also found examples of affordances in the technology. For instance, a participant (workshop 3) detailed their choice of teleconferencing platform as the one that enabled the research team to facilitate an important level of care. If participants became distressed, other participants were returned to a waiting room so that counsellors could direct attention to participants in private, confidential exchanges. In this way, the research project was able to perform its important commitment to the welfare of its participants.

Issues around confidentiality and data security have proven to be problematic areas for researchers. Workshop participants highlighted how platforms are developing and their innovations widen the reach of ethical issues (workshop 4). The use of remote transcription services has proven problematic for some researchers because recorded voices are sometimes stored in locations that do not meet the requirements of research ethics and sometimes used by platforms to improve their voice recognition and transcription services (workshop 6). These present problems to data security and ownership of data.

A workshop participant reflected in detail on the relation between technology and gender-based violence (workshop 4). Research on gender-based violence in online spaces can often provoke abuse and attacks meanings researchers and participants were at risk of harm. In the pandemic, increased digital research therefore contains within it the potential for greater risks to some participants and research projects. This highlights the ways that the relations between technologies, projects, methods and participants often require careful, situated ethics.

With fast-changing technologies and practices, applicable and up-to-date ethical guidance may not be available (workshop 6). Thus, platforms present a set of difficult choices, where functionalities can be in line with some ethical practices and not with others and, in workshop 6, some guidance around these was highlighted as being important.

### *Equities and vulnerabilities*

Researchers have demonstrated an ethical responsibility to mitigating inequalities in digital access and digital literacy, such as for disabled and older participants (Ellis & Rawicki, 2020; Partlow, 2020). Internet connectivity has also been a barrier. Survey researchers have notably shifted to using telephone interviewing (CATI) in communities in low- and middle-income countries where there is relatively widespread ownership and use of mobile phones (Verma & Bizas, 2020). Goldstein et al. (2020) faced the challenge of conducting remote ethnographic research with homeless persons in São Paulo; without internet access they distributed disposable cameras and mobile phones for participants to capture their experiences during the pandemic. Researchers in the *Following Young Fathers Further* project explained how they used online videos as participant information sheets and sought verbal rather than written consent from their participants (workshop 2).

We have seen how social researchers have explored methods with the potential for promoting participant wellbeing during the pandemic. Pacheco and Zaimağaoğlu (2020) advocate the use of methods that are therapeutic, reflective and focus on positive outcomes, and there are examples of researchers using reflective diaries, digital storytelling, photo-elicitation and a range of other participatory methods to support emotional expression and encourage a sense of purpose (Clarke & Watson, 2020; Gratton et al., 2020; Jones et al. (2020); Markham et al., 2020). A researcher on the Mass Observation programme described how their writers have

responded to the pandemic with significantly increased output, while noting a rise in people wanting to volunteer and contribute. Shankar (2020) highlights the perpetuation of largely dominant Western notions of emotional restraint in academic discourse, describing it as a form of ‘scholarly social distancing’. She calls for a new ethical turn where emotional responses in our research practices are seen as both valid and productive.

Kara and Khoo<sup>21</sup> also claim the largely Western paternalistic fixation on the protection of vulnerable participants is outdated, suggesting anyone – researcher and participant alike – may be vulnerable, though not equally. This sense of collective wellbeing (Malila, 2020), that we are all connected, dependent on, and responsible to, each other (Ravitch, 2020), is particularly evident in relational and feminist approaches to research practice and includes acknowledging the responsibility of researchers towards their own and their colleagues’ mental health in times of crises and disruption. By sharing their own video diaries in their participatory action research project with migrant women in Medellín, Marzi (2020) and her colleagues not only demonstrated the use of the technology but emphasised the collaborative relationship with their participants through the shared experiences of lockdown.

We have also heard how heightened ethical responses have increased difficulties gaining access to participants. This has led to an increased recognition of the reliance on gatekeepers, research partners and local researchers (Verma & Bizas, 2020), highlighting their role in maintaining or re-establishing relations with communities.

This dynamic has particularly resonated with local researchers in the Global South and low- and middle-income countries, experienced in conducting fieldwork in conflict areas and crisis situations. Several authors have seized on the pandemic to address the historic and exploitative inequalities between local (‘facilitating’) researchers and ‘contracting’ researchers in the Global North, suggesting it is the responsibility not only of research institutions, but funding agencies, ethics committees and academic publishers to ‘decolonise’ Global South research (Carayannis & Bolin, 2020; DeHart, 2020; Dunia et al., 2020; Monson, 2020). Dunia et al. (2020) call for better co-authoring opportunities, remuneration and insurance, while Monson (2020) highlights inequalities in access within the international research community, proposing a more connected and collaborative ‘transregional scholarship’ based on trust and mutual respect.

Researchers in the pandemic have highlighted many ethical challenges in pandemic, including those exacerbated by local and global inequalities, differences in cultures and national responses, the increased incorporation of digital communication in research, changes in stress and affect, and promoted the important conversation of global balance and epistemic privilege in knowledge production.

## Making (a) research community through engagement

Our themes cover much of the literature and discussions in the workshops. For instance, although a lot of the talk in workshops was about researchers’ everyday experiences or more personal matters affecting their research lives, much can be understood in the “making research...” framework. When researchers connected with one another and shared practical

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<sup>21</sup> <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/10/26/how-the-pandemic-has-transformed-research-methods-and-ethics-3-lessons-from-33-rapid-responses/>

ideas, the findings fit well with “Making Research Happen”; and research conversations about bereavement, illness and caring responsibilities fit into “Making Research Ethical”. However, sets of exchanges and conversations were also evident in the workshops that, perhaps, were not as instrumental in working directly towards research aims as our other themes suggest.

The workshop conversations were often exploratory and open-ended in that many researchers were gaining awareness of methods ideas and approaches they could use later. They were also comparative as researchers listened to one another, shared experiences, and discussed possible ways to address issues. At the end of many of the workshops, participants said how nice it was to meet one another, indicating a sense that they had got to know one another in a way that resonated with connecting, with a coming together. In our team debriefing sessions directly after the workshops we often commented on how enjoyable they had been and how helpful and supportive the participants were to one another. We discussed the extent to which this may be whether it may be a feature of the workshop design and practice and whether it was an effect of self-selection – perhaps the workshops were attracting particular dispositions as they discussed expectations and participation with us prior to joining.

In a sense then, the workshops were about making a research community with particular qualities. We noted an atmosphere of collegiality, criticality, supportiveness and considerateness was created by those engaging with the project. The atmosphere could include aspects of playfulness, humour and confidence. There was sincerity and willingness to be open, to disclose difficulties. These are not the only ways to be a research community, by any stretch, but they were distinctive in the sessions.

It was interesting to detect an atmosphere in a digital space - a virtual atmosphere. We initially detected and commented on this notion at the end of workshop 2 when a participant, who at the start of the workshop presented as dejected, verging on hopelessness for the future of their project, ended on an upbeat note – with an optimism and a confidence to address issues that had increasingly pervaded that session. There was a sense, we thought, that these qualities could help research continue in a more expansive sense that methods: by sustaining a research community in particular ways.

This idea of making research community was most explicit in discussions of support and continuing professional development. Several doctoral and early career researchers attended the workshops, and there were particular concerns about what support was available for them to develop as rounded researchers as opposed to focusing just on getting projects completed. With travel and meeting restrictions in place the conventional places for building connections and networks, through smaller conferences, colloquia and training programmes, were no longer accessible or, often, not running at all. There was a sense that the workshops therefore offered a small space for this kind of development and exchange, but it was specifically orientated to methods. Researchers commented on how they would like further opportunities to meet peers and potential mentors, and be able to gain the wider experiences and skills for careers. Some of the participants indicated that they would keep in touch with each other.

Another example of the way community was performed in the workshops regarded explanations and discussions of time and temporality. Time and pace, as we have shown across the report, were important themes in making research happen, ethical and valid. However, time and

temporality could also be experiential. Researchers were able to understand different experiences of 'project time' in the pandemic, depending on where in the research process the lockdowns began and who they were affecting. This heuristic meant that researchers were able to reflect on different aspects of the research process and the effect of time, from their own research processes, those of students and colleagues, and the system which their work practices sustained.

Some researchers commented on how useful the "rivers" exercise was for reflecting on and thinking over elements of the previous year. Some participants who attended more than one workshop redid the exercise to explore different things. One researcher, who was involved in multiple projects, developed images of different projects for different workshops themes. Another, produced an adapted image because they felt their perspective had changed from their first engagement and had more time to reflect. What was also important about the latter example was the researcher stated their inspiration to explore additional points had been because this had been done in an earlier workshop. Through this mechanism, researchers were able to be inspired to explore themes both those proposed by others and those they felt were important, suggesting the importance of community exchanges in making sense of research in the pandemic.

The workshop dialogues, because of their relational and comparative structure, enabled the production of insights that might not have emerged via other means. One of these was about the apparent change in the data landscape during Covid-19. On one hand, we have noted that in "Making research valid" that there was a 'data glut' and a perceived need for fast results, and that survey research, particularly large longitudinal infrastructure, was well placed to address issues arising from the pandemic. At the same time, the Mass Observation Project, a large qualitative secondary data archive, is receiving a large increase in volunteer writers, as well as increasing in the average size of each submission. This was largely unanticipated as many of our discussions have indicated – amid the stress and anxiety and change, people were predicted to engage less with research, not more. This indicates a potential, possibly temporary, change in the secondary data landscape, where there will more opportunities for researchers to access secondary data, especially related to the pandemic. The changes to infrastructure in the research community were an important point that may require further exploration.

The workshops were sessions that, as well as addressing issues of specific methods, facilitated particular instantiations of research community. They allowed explorations of biography and research projects, the performance of particular community qualities and the identification of other potential research community needs. From the feedback we received in the sessions and afterwards, and our analysis of the field notes, we feel justified in saying that continued provision of this sort is needed during the pandemic.

## Concluding discussion

The *Changing Research Practices* project has been able to synthesise and share emerging adaptations to social research methods during the Covid-19 pandemic. The project has engaged a wide range of researchers, many of whom have generously shared their experiences

and ideas. The project design, with three interrelated strands of published literature, grey literature, and engagement through workshops and webinars, has meant a continued dialogue between the different realms of activity and helped the project be responsive to the ongoing situation. It also facilitated an integration of findings, as the evidence reviews indicated conversation topics

The findings, then, are best seen as the outcome of processes of coproduction, where knowledges and experiences in the literature, online, and accounts from researchers, are woven together in our report. We were able to share resource lists after each workshop, compiled from the literature review and contributions from participants. The resource lists were emailed to attendees and those who contacted us with interest and made available publicly via the NCRM website. Through the two webinars, we were able to engage a wider range of researchers and share insights with a greater level of analysis, as well as with support from other members of the research community, all of whom had either participated in workshops or been identified through the evidence reviews. We have also produced a set of wayfinder guides to help researchers with specific issues and themes that emerged in the course of the project. The responsive ethos and the orientation to particular outputs has created a set of legacy resources that will be useful to researchers in the coming period, but also in a longer stretch of time as a snapshot of methodological responses to the pandemic.

The Rapid Evidence Review covered a wide range publications and literature. However, it was too early for some evidence to be published. The findings are biased to where methodological challenges had been quickly adapted, or where particular research initiatives had been established at the onset of the pandemic, and subsequently published. Therefore, survey methods featured prominently in our discussions, particularly in the context of longitudinal studies where wave-to-wave effects and within-wave mode and context changes were proving problematic. There was a special issue of *Survey Research Methods* dedicated to this. The *Massive and Microscopic* project, which resulted from a call for a special issue of *Qualitative Research*, also skewed the findings to autoethnographic methods. There was therefore a lot of discussion of these two broad methods while coverage of other methods was more dispersed. However, the grey literature addressed many of these, gesturing towards what is yet to come in the published literature.

There are many advantages to being responsive in that the project's finite resources were directed to immediate needs. However, responsiveness almost inevitably means that some avenues are not travelled, and we have been able to identify further methodological issues, such as working with children, that we were not able to cover specifically in the workshops. The foci of the project, particularly in regards to knowledge exchange, was limited by the workshop topics.

The structure of the workshops afforded particular ways of exchanging knowledge, because of their size, the choice of platform, and our choice of activities. They were useful to understand the many impacts on decision-making and methods. The "rivers" exercise foregrounded, and guided, the ways researchers conceptualised and understood entities in their research lives. They were important in having researchers "meet" one another. The activity produced rich information in the project particularly with regard to the ways participants expressed themselves and outlined their experiences of the pandemic. The activity privileged time, in particular, and



situated understanding of research history in a diagrammatic way. Other activities could focus on other aspects of methodological adaptations, including futures, networks of relations and so on. Furthermore, using an art-based representative method did not suit everyone and many participants apologised for their lack of artistic ability, either to the team or to the whole workshop. Other elicitation strategies, or more options for representation, might facilitate other modes of engagement in future work and guide discussions towards other themes.

A final point to note about the workshops is the degree to which they acted like focus groups. We planned the activities to provide enough structure to orientate the conversations towards knowledge exchange. However, the more open discussion component had similarities with focus group dynamics in that we had themed prompt questions. While focus groups are hoped to highlight similarities and differences by allowing participants to respond to one another and compare their experiences, it has been pointed out that they can operate towards a 'collective voice' and a joint perspective (Smithson & Diaz, 1996). Therefore, some of the atmospheric findings – towards optimism, for example – and some of the conversation topics around affect and emotion, may be an effect of discursive consensus about the importance of certain topics within the workshops.

## Implications and recommendations

We end by drawing out the implications of the study and make recommendations for action for particular groups.

### Researchers

1. **Researchers should make use this of report and the project outputs.** Researchers are not alone in the pandemic and there is a lot of expertise and knowledge about researching with particular methods in this challenging context – see <https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/socscicovid19/>
2. **Researchers need to consider and address the significant ethical and epistemic challenges alongside the practical and technical challenges** in times of crisis; radical reflexivity, rigorous thinking and attention to research relationships are required.
3. **Supportive and collegiate research communities should continue to be found or fostered** and the difficult affective landscape and challenging working conditions continue to be recognised alongside the technical and philosophical challenges of the pandemic.

### NCRM and training providers such as Doctoral Training Partnerships

4. **We recommend training provision that prioritises specific data generation methods and adaptations.** Clear training needs emerged from the study that NCRM and DTPs etc can address through short courses or resource development on topics including:

- Telephone interviews
  - The affordances of different platforms for online interviews and focus groups
  - Rapid surveys and mitigating and understanding the effects of mode changes
  - Autoethnographic and expressive methods
  - Using cultural probes and elicitation methods at a distance.
5. **Training provision needs to address wider methodological issues regarding speed, secondary data use, maintaining remote research relationships and method combinations.** We recommend provision includes:
- Managing/analysing inequalities in generating data and using secondary data
  - Recruiting research participants in times of hardship, anxiety and social distance
  - Rapid qualitative research
  - Digital and blended ethnography
  - Working with community leaders and proxies/people on the ground to conduct research from a distance.
  - Collaboration and interdisciplinary practices
  - Coherently combining research methods
  - Reflexivity in the pandemic
6. **NCRM should continue to provide workshop spaces for researchers to connect,** to engage in peer mentoring through sharing their solution-focused thinking, and, with this, to support each other with the emotional toll of trying to keep research happening in such a challenging context. This should continue until the crisis is over.
7. **Training needs to be provided in contingency planning skills** as they will likely be needed in the coming years and researchers will need strategies for dealing with uncertainties and disruptions to plans; this may be in regard to methodological adaptations, substitutions and multi-method approaches. Organizations supporting doctoral and early career researcher development should provide training and support peer networks for this.

## ESRC/UKRI and other research funders

8. **We recommend that ESRC fund further research to update the rapid evidence review and to continue knowledge exchange.** There is a risk that the resilient, rapid and creative responses of researchers to the social conditions of Covid-19 remain fragmented and unshared. This project has managed to collate and synthesise the work of researchers across a wide range of research areas and approaches, illustrating the decisions made and work that is flourishing or struggling. It is too early, yet, however to know whether some of the methods made to work during the pandemic were effective or for much of the work to be published.
9. **We recommend funding further activities to enhance coordination and understand provision across the UK's social research methods infrastructure.** Researchers' choice of methods depends significantly on what is afforded by research infrastructure in terms of resources, training, data and conceptual trends. Infrastructure often goes unnoticed until it breaks down. There are signals that the data landscape is changing with increase in digital and online data generation as well as reported uneven

engagement with social research. Changes in infrastructure is changing how researchers collaborate and engage with participant communities. Understanding how this aspect of research is changing is critical for the research community to continue choosing and adapting suitable methods as well as identifying gaps.

## Research institutions: Ethics committees, universities, professional research associations

10. Researchers have been feeling the burden of repeatedly showing their research meets ethics criteria as their research undergoes changes. **We recommend that research ethics committees publish and promote the emerging examples illustrating imaginative ways for ensuring care and positive outcomes for participation** in research in Covid-19 times.
11. **Universities should provide wider access to secure digital devices/resources** to facilitate timely research responses, to recognise that remote research methods will require wider access to secure devices among researchers, and to help address digital inequalities regarding participant populations.
12. **We recommend universities and professional associations provide easily searchable, up-to-date guidance on ethical issues with respect to digital technologies.** This is one practical contribution they can make alongside providing opportunities to researchers to exchange experiences and share mutual support. The pandemic has led to changes in the capabilities of digital communication technologies, particularly teleconferencing. There are ethical issues in the expansion of these functionalities related to the ways that platform companies use data to improve services, the increasing power of platform companies, their continued drive for innovation in interaction, and changes to institutional licence arrangements that enable or prevent some functionalities.

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