Trust Matters!
(and Matters of Trust)

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Prologue:
A cautionary tale

The myth: 'Behavioural fatigue'

" Anything we do, we have got to be able to sustain. Once we have started these things we have to continue them through the peak, and there is a risk that, if we go too early, people will understandably get fatigued and it will be difficult to sustain this over time"

Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer (England) March 9th 2020

The reality: Enduring endurance

The Suffering

44%
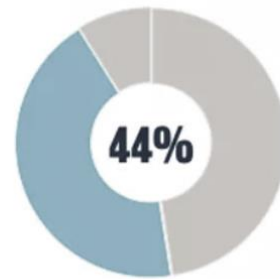
Key characteristics:

- 93% report feeling more anxious and depressed since lockdown measures introduced.

- 64% have slept less or worse than usual, a quarter say coronavirus makes them feel helpless.

- Spending much more time thinking about the coronavirus than other groups.

- 93% say they're following lockdown rules completely or nearly all the time – highest of all groups.

- Most likely to be closely following official guidance on how to protect themselves and others, with 95%+ adhering to most recommendations.

- 93% and 85% say they support lockdown measures and additional police powers respectively.

- 70% think the government acted too slowly to control the spread of the virus.

- Less likely than other groups to trust the government to deal with coronavirus and to trust the information it provides.

- 64% check social media for updates on coronavirus daily or more frequently.

Key demographics

- 64% female

- Mean age 44

- Equally split between Labour (30%) and Conservative (29%)

- Voted Remain over Leave by 46% to 35%

THE POLICY INSTITUTE King's College LONDON

Panic!: the public as a problem

People are 'fragile rationalists' at the best of times. Under threat, they lose their minds entirely and act in ways that turn a crisis into a catastrophe. So beware of giving too much information for fear that it makes people panic!

Collective resilience: the public as the solution

In emergencies, people develop a sense of shared social identity ('we-ness'). This leads to concern for others, support for others, organisation to sustain others. So give people information so they know what to do!

Art: @nicoleMcomix

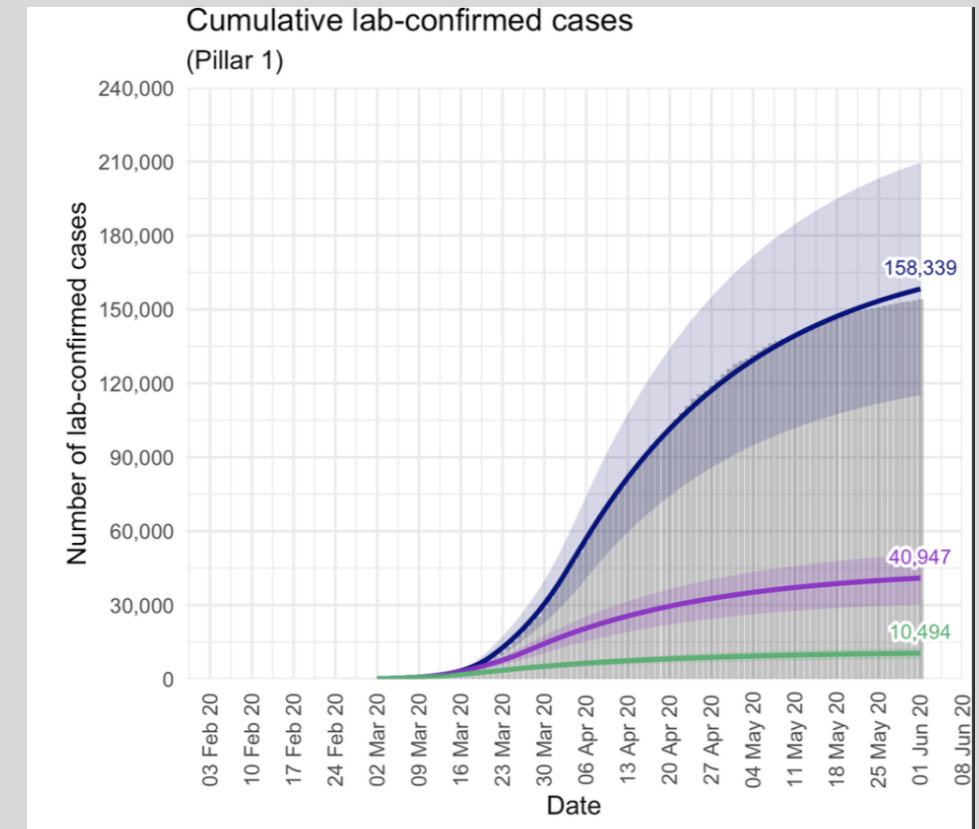YOU CAN BE A NEIGHBOURHOOD HERO

VOLUNTEER FOR MUTUAL AID

Part 1:

Trust Matters!

A matter of life and death…

One week earlier: infections down by 74%; deaths down by 34,000

Two weeks earlier: infections down by 93%; deaths down by 43,000

Arnold, Gilthorpe, Alwan, Heppenstall, Tomova & McKee (2022) Plos One

Cumulative lab-confirmed cases (Pillar 1)

Globally…

" Perhaps this pandemic can be a catalyst for the societal reforms needed to earn and nurture public confidence and social solidarity. COVID-19 has shown that the democracies that can mobilise public trust are best placed to survive and thrive even in the face of great adversity"

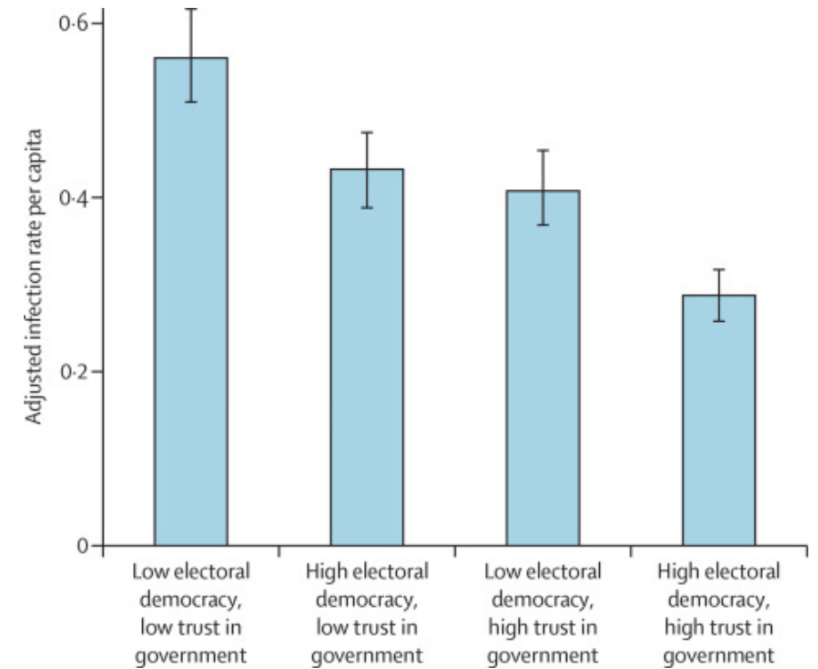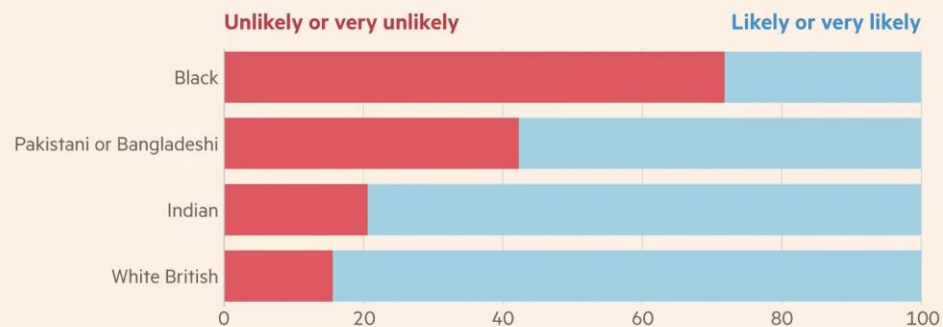Bollyky, Angelino, Wigley & Dieleman (2022) *The Lancet*

Figure Adjusted SARS-CoV-2 infection rate given low and high levels of electoral democracy and trust in government, from Jan 1, 2020, to Sept 30, 2021

Most ethnic minorities in the UK are hesitant about taking the Covid-19 vaccine

Stated likelihood of taking the vaccine, by ethnicity (%)

Sources: Understanding Society survey; University of Glasgow; Ipsos MORI; Public Health Scotland
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... and locally

Adherence is lower in groups who have a history of mistrust in authority, including medical authorities.

Part 2:

Matters of Trust

Trust is reciprocal

Trust is a two way street. We cannot expect people to trust us if we don't trust them. So we must reject psychologies which define the public as an unreliable partner

Trust is social

The trust we have in information is less to do with the information itself than with our social relationship to the source of information. The key issue is whether we see others as ingroup - being of 'us' and acting for 'us' – or outgroup – being 'them' and imposing on us

Building trust:
Four key factors

Transparency
Empowerment
Co-Production
Respect

Transparency

Be open with information, even bad news.

Provide detail on how the information was collected.

Explain assumptions, limitations, uncertainties – this is our best understanding at this point in time.

Don't hide things from people – they can take it…

Empowerment

A positive response to information is dependent less on whether it is threatening or not as on whether it is empowering or not. That is, can I do anything with it?

Co-Production

Work with and through communities at every stage:

Defining questions
Conducting research (Citizen Science)
Interpreting findings
Disseminating information (Community engagement)

People are far more likely to trust information which they see as coming from them.

Respect!

Respect and indeed welcome the fact that people have questions. That should be encouraged and welcomed rather than anyone with a question being treated as a fool or a foe.

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Conclusion:

The best data in the world is worthless if people do not trust it. So creating an infrastructure of transparency, empowerment, co-production and respect is every bit as important as building robust systems of surveillance

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