

LOCKDOWN2020 PROJECT REPORT UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD APRIL-JULY 2020

About the Project

Lockdown2020 is a community collection seeking to capture the everyday life and experience of staff and students during the unprecedented events of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund and ESRC Impact Acceleration Account through the University of Oxford's COVID-19: Economic, Social, Cultural, & Environmental Impacts - Urgent Response Fund, and run by the University's Faculty of English and IT Services.¹ Crowd-sourcing calls for text, photo, and video contributions were advertised through social media, colleges, and faculties. Contributors were prompted to share any of the following: 'a description of your typical day/or plan for your day', 'pictures from your 'new normal' life (anything that represents your daily life in lockdown, or what is happening in your neighbourhood)' and 'a message to the future - a short time capsule message for future staff, students, and historians of the University describing the current times.' Although these were the titles of the submission sections, contributors had the freedom to submit any content related to their experience of lockdown. This was reflected in the genre of entries, ranging between 'day in the life'/diary styles, reflective prose, articles, and photo captions, with individual cases of a journal extract and a poem. Once reviewed, submissions were then made public on the project website, lwf.it.ox.ac.uk/s/lockdown/.

The submissions to the project, collected from April to July 2020, form a corpus of personal experiences during lockdown in the UK and internationally (with submissions sent from Jersey, France, USA, Tokyo, and Australia). The University of Oxford had advised, where possible, for students to return home (13th March) and for staff to work from home (24th March). On the 23rd March, Prime Minister Boris Johnson instructed the British public to 'stay at home', except for 'shopping for basic necessities'; 'one form of exercise a day'; 'any medical need'; and when travelling to and from work is 'absolutely necessary'.² Our project was collecting submissions during this first stage of lockdown, through and beyond the lockdown easing announcement 3 months later on the 23rd June. Johnson announced to the House that on the 4th July, hairdressers, pubs, restaurants, and other leisure facilities, could reopen adhering to a social distancing rule of '1 meter plus' where possible.³ Hence, the corpus offers an opportunity to analyse the frequent themes and feelings of the University community throughout the changing lockdown period of the pandemic, and grants an insight into the 'new normal' daily lives of staff and students from their perspective.

Corpus

The corpus contains 157 entries from 128 contributors. 105 entries included visual media (photo and video). The total wordcount of the corpus is 37,085 (572 of the total wordcount is made up by submission titles).

Table 1: Distribution of entries from students and staff.

¹ The project is also in collaboration with the Museum of Oxford, who are running a community collection aiming to capture stories and images of Oxford city life, 'The Covid-19 Pandemic and Oxford', accessible at museumofoxford.omeka.net/exhibits/show/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-oxfo/c19.

² Johnson, Boris. "Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020." *GOV.UK*, 23 March 2020, accessible at gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020.

³ Johnson, Boris. "Prime Minister's statement to the House on COVID-19: 23 June 2020." *GOV.UK*, 23 June 2020, accessible at gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-to-the-house-on-covid-19-23-june-2020.

	Entries	Contributors
Student	71	69
Staff	86	59
Total	157	128

Conclusions

Lockdown2020, while a small-sized and opportunistic corpus, provides a valuable insight into the day-to-day lives of the University community during lockdown in the coronavirus pandemic. The impacts prove to be an increased engagement in walking in nature following outdoor exercise limitations; a greater appreciation of spending time with family and friends; engaging with community via public art or community support schemes; and the changes to a remote and online workspace speculated to result in long-term changes. While these experiences have been isolating and anxiety-inducing in many cases, leading to economic and political concern, lockdown has also commonly encouraged appreciation for the ‘small things’ of normal life. While it is challenging to draw large conclusions from the small dataset, this corpus ensures material is available that addresses the real-time experience of a global pandemic, the first of the digital age.

Student Submissions

A common concern in the collection was of students ‘missing out’ on the Oxford experience. This affirms the importance of Trinity term for student experience at Oxford, especially for Finalists for whom this marks the end of their entire degree. This emphasises how academics are only one part of life as an Oxford students, with students missing societies, college staff, friends, punting, trashing, and the libraries when the University goes remote. In terms of studying, many students also acknowledge the difficulties studying in the family home due to distractions, poor wifi, workspace, and parents not understanding the nature of Oxford academic work. The variety of experiences, from having to move out of your family home during lockdown as in one submission, to having to unexpectedly stay in a foreign country during term time, show the differing impacts on students given their situations outside of Oxford. Going forward the University should be aware of the feelings of isolation and missing out that many students experienced during this time.

Going forward

This project, as well as preserving these experiences for future generations, can be used by the University to gain an insight into the diversity of experiences during lockdown otherwise unreported or unknown to the wider community. The project has also contributed to the writing of Oxford’s history, and some submissions will be being included in Pembroke College’s official History which is currently being written. We hope that similar historical projects in Oxford and the University use the archive in the future, as we work with the Museum of Oxford to organise an exhibition, and with the Museum of History of Science to feature in their COVID-19 project portal. As lockdown measures change what the University looks like to returning students and staff in the academic year 2020/2021, we will keep the project open to submissions for reflections and experiences in the continued endeavours to educate students safely. Social distancing and support ‘bubbles’ will still be in place, and Lockdown2020 will create further opportunity to capture and explore University life in different forms of lockdown.

APPENDIX

1. Twitter analysis reach

During the project we encouraged staff and students to submit via our Twitter page, @OxLockdown2020, where we also share featured submissions. In June and July, we reached a total of 52.3k impressions, 253 followers, and 1,282 profile visits.

Jul 2020 • 30 days so far...

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

Top Tweet earned 830 impressions

Last chance to submit before the prize draw tomorrow! twitter.com/OxLockdown2020...

↳ 2

[View Tweet activity](#)

[View all Tweet activity](#)

Top Follower followed by 16.1K people



Medical Sciences

@OxfordMedSci [FOLLOWS YOU](#)

Latest research, news and events from the Medical Sciences Division. Tweets from the divisional office. communications@medsci.ox.ac.uk

[View profile](#)

Jun 2020 • 30 days

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

Top Tweet earned 4,621 impressions

Already your photos of empty Oxford in our archive feel surreal as lockdown rules are eased and streets become busier. We encourage you in this transitional period to reflect on your experiences of lockdown change

See more amazing 'Empty Oxford' photos: wlf.it.ox.ac.uk/s/lockdown/ite...
pic.twitter.com/YaxC42xve



↳ 1 ↳ 11 ♥ 46

[View Tweet activity](#)

[View all Tweet activity](#)

Top media Tweet earned 329 impressions

"NO POLICE STATE"

May 2020 pic.twitter.com/pfQ88LvXlp



↳ 1 ↳ 1

[View Tweet activity](#)

[View all Tweet activity](#)

ADVERTISE ON TWITTER

Get your Tweets in front of more people

Promoted Tweets and content open up your reach on Twitter to more people.



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JUL 2020 SUMMARY

Tweets	Tweet impressions
42	16.4K

Profile visits	Mentions
224	1

New followers
20

JUN 2020 SUMMARY

Tweets	Tweet impressions
68	35.9K

Profile visits	Mentions
1,058	5

New followers
223

Top mention earned 10 engagements



Shireen Walker

@shireenkW · Jun 22

I'm proud to be involved in this project, and have been touched, amused, saddened, delighted and amazed by some of the experiences of my peers during lockdown [@OxLockdown2020](#) [@UniofOxford](#) [#lockdown2020](#) twitter.com/OxLockdown2020...

↳ 1 ↳ 2 ♥ 2

[View Tweet](#)

Top media Tweet earned 3,930 impressions

Lockdown2020 is a crowd-sourcing project recording the experiences of staff and students of [@UniofOxford](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Find out more and contribute your

2. Thematic Analysis: Themes and Feelings (Table)

The most frequent themes discussed in the corpus are: the different leisure activities people spent their time doing; COVID-19, in terms of discussing the impact of the lockdown measures and increased hygiene; the increased use of online communication; the local community, whether time with the family, or wider community events and support; and spending time in nature. The most frequent feelings and emotions discussed are: worrying and the impact on mental health; appreciation and gratitude; missing people and things from pre-lockdown; and the perception of time in lockdown and of the crisis.

Corpus analysis was completed manually and with the assistance of linguistic software Voyant Tools and AntConc.

Table 2: Frequent themes discussed in the corpus.

Leisure	<p>75/157 entries mention leisure time activities, with a total of 120 references to individual activities. Within these, the most common activity with 45 individual references was exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 of these exercise references were to walking specifically. • Positive statements about exercise included: ‘feeling of freedom is just joyous’; ‘luxury’; ‘keeps me positive through the bad news’; ‘tranquillity’; ‘welcome distraction’; ‘assumed a great significance’. However 5 entries discuss missing their normal forms of exercise: ‘biggest loss’; ‘missed the most’. <p>The second most frequent activity was baking/cooking, with 21 references. Other activities included games (9), art (8), TV (6), reading (5), cleaning (4), and gardening (2). The majority of leisure activities were discussed as increased or new activities (69), using markers such as ‘more’ (23) ‘new’ (17), ‘start*’ (4), and ‘*discover*’ (3). The most common increased activity was walking: 20/27 references to walking expressed that this was increased or new.</p>
COVID-19	<p>52/157 entries mention COVID-19, either in terms of the disease itself or the related lockdown measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 of these mention the lockdown measures, 17 of which concern changes to shopping (delivery, queuing, stockpiling, one-way systems, community alternatives to the supermarket). There are 5 references to and 2 photos of ‘toilet roll’/‘toilet paper’, reflecting the immediate consumer stockpiling of toilet roll at the beginning of the lockdown measures, termed ‘the Great Toilet Paper Shortage’ by one contributor. • 16 mention the economic impact of COVID-19. The references to economic impact feature 5 uses of the verb ‘furloughed’ in reference to many individuals facing temporary absence of work. Submissions mention family members’ experience (and one case of personal experience) of furlough, given the sample of submissions being within the higher education sector. The other primary economic impact observed is the closure of pubs, restaurants, and other services, with 17 uses of ‘close*’/ ‘closure’ in this context. 3 entries also reflect future job uncertainty. 1 staff member reflects on ‘the unfortunate things this confinement is bringing upon our career development’, and 2 students reflect on being ‘anxious’ about entering a graduate job market during a recession caused by the pandemic. • 23 photos show public signage or markings that demonstrate the lockdown restrictions: commercial signs for new systems or updates (8), 2m floor markings (6), NHS materials (4), closed business signs (3), wash your hands sign (1), and a park bench covered in tape (1), • 17 mention the hygiene risk of COVID-19. These tend to focus on personal responsibility, such as wearing a ‘mask*’ (12). The semantic field of infection and hygiene is comparatively limited across the corpus: ‘spread*’ (5), ‘infect*’ (5), ‘risk’ of coronavirus

	<p>(3), 'disease' (2); 'clean*' in context of coronavirus (5, all from one entry on supermarket cleaning methods), and 'sanitis*' (2).</p> <p>There are no references to personally having the disease or knowing someone who does, and no references to symptoms except via the text in photos of NHS literature. There are no references to coronavirus as a respiratory disease. However the corpus does contain 6 references to breathing in relation to calmness: 'stop for breath' (2), 'don't forget to breathe' (2), 'breathe in the air' (1), and 'catch your breath' (1).</p> <p>Death is less frequently discussed, only once as 'may die' (1) and most 'deaths in Europe' (1) or in observations of 'death rate*'/'death roll' (4). This absence is most likely to the localised nature of the archive, and the prompt to record 'normal' experience when submitting.</p>
Online	<p>47/157 entries mention online communication for work, study, or leisure: 14 explicitly mention studying at home; 22 explicitly mention working from home. Online terminology is frequent: 'online' (55), 'virtual' (15), 'digital' (3); 'Teams' (34), 'Zoom' (23), 'Facetime' (2), 'WebEx' (1), and 'Google Meets' (1). The frequency of Microsoft Teams is expected given that it is the University's standard communication software. The use of 'Zoom' was hence more common for leisure activities, explicitly used as a modifier such as 'Zoom running' (1) for end of exams celebrations (2), 'Zoom yoga' (1), 'Zoom poker' (1), and 'Zoom quiz' (1). Zoom was also used for staging a 'play' (1), and other online activities shared without specifying the channel were church services (1) and orchestra rehearsals (1).</p>
Community	<p>43/157 entries mention the family or the local community, of which 22 concern the family. The word 'family' occurs 54 times within these, with 11 entries expressing their appreciation for their family. 14 entries feature public art or signs, 4 of these being thank you rainbows, a symbol used to show support for the NHS.</p>
Nature	<p>30/157 entries mention the natural world, with 'natur*' occurring 36 times in the corpus. 13 of these entries explicitly mention the benefits of nature during this time.</p>

Table 3: Frequent feelings discussed in the corpus.

Mental Health Impact	<p>Given the nature of an international pandemic, many entries mention the negative impact on their mental health. 51/157 entries mention negative feelings associated with lockdown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressions feature: 'worry*'/'worried' (25); 'anxiety'/'anxious' (14); 'difficult' (12); 'stress*' (6); 'confusion'/'confusing' (5); 'sadness' (4); 'challenge' (4); 'loneliness'/'lonely' (3); loss of motivation (3); 'monotonous' (3); 'tough' (2); 'depressing' (2); 'suffocating' (1); 'trapped'(1); 'unfocussed' (1); 'restlessness' (1); 'disappointment' (1); 'rough for mental health' (1) When reasons are given for these feelings, they range: worried about friends and family (6); exams (5); changing rules when in public, such as in supermarkets (3); the 'future' (2). <p>Some of the submissions closer to the end of the collection period tend to be more reflective in style, and mention mental health impacts of isolation, whereas the beginning of the collecting period log the immediate changes life in lockdown. This is unsurprising given the development of the corpus</p>
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	as the lockdown restrictions changed and as people adapted to the situation to be in the position to reflect.
Appreciation	<p>44/147 entries feature explicit positive statements of feeling gratitude or appreciation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressions of this feature: 'luck*' (17), all in 'I' or 'we' statements; 'appreciat*' (15); 'thank*' (8); 'grateful' (6); and appreciating 'more' (7), in regard to nature, Oxford, and family. A common theme was a shift to appreciating microlevel occurrences: 'small things'/'little things'/'smaller events' (7). • The things appreciated were: nature (14; 'more' 4); family/friends (11, 'more' 1); work/workspace (9); small things (7); Oxford (6, 'more' 2); solitude (5); online communication (3); exercise (3), general safety (2); NHS (2).
Missing	<p>27/157 entries discuss the feeling of missing something.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'miss*' occurs 29 times, 15 times as part of the construction 'I miss', 3 times as 'miss* out'. • 'miss*' is used to express feelings about summer term at Oxford (9), missing exercise (5), socialising in the office (3), family/friends (3), wandering around town (1), hugging (1). • Some entries mention what they might/do miss about lockdown: increased wildlife sighting (1), the view outside their window they'd grown accustomed to (1). <p>Missing these items is also expressed differently. Oxford: 'I would love to', t Family: 'homesickness' (2).</p>
Of Time	<p>18/157 entries comment on the perception of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 references mention time slowing down or stopping, or time passing slowly/differently. Most times this is negative (8): 'aimless daydream, where days just pass you by and you get nothing done'; 'felt like it has been a long time since my life was somewhat normal'; 'progress is slower'; 'time has become a near meaningless concept for me'; 'overly long days that never seem to end'; 'disconcerting' how 'sense of time seemed to warp'; 'a robot that doesn't notice time passing'; 'the end of March seems like a lifetime ago'. Sometimes this is positive and linked to appreciation (5): 'our walks allow us to stop for breath'; 'slow down'; 'take time to stop'; 'how important it is to slow down'; 'something freeing about the world grinding to a halt'. • 5 references mention things happening or changing quickly: 'everything was happening very fast'; 'In a world where time keeps accelerating'; 'things change and can do so faster'; 'how fast things were changing'; 'speed we had to adapt'. In the corpus, 'suddenly' is used 10 times to express sudden changes in routine, closures, and realisation; 'quick*' is used 15 times, typically to express the response to these sudden changes. • 5 references mention 'using' time in the following constructions, typically through hobbies or by being productive: 'make the most of this time'; 'use my time'; 'used wisely'; 'using this time'; 'used the time'. There are 7 uses of 'more time', reflecting the opportunities to spend time with family and recreational projects

	<p>during lockdown. This is part of the wider trend in the corpus of attributing purpose to one's time, in similar examples of 'dedicating some of it' or 'time to reflect'. While these statements of 'using' time are positive and show the potential lockdown has offered, it also demonstrates the cultural expectation to 'use' this free time productively.</p>
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3. Additional Thematic Analysis

10 entries feature criticism of the government, in both text and media. There is criticism for long-term underfunding:

- **'anger at the cutbacks [the NHS] have had to suffer over the past 10 years due to 'austerity''**; handmade sign in someone's window (photo) saying 'The NHS is underfunded by £30 billion!! / Tory cuts kill / Never again...'; **'School funding has been slashed over the past ten years, there is no money to repair the buildings, have enough teachers, buy books, etc.'**

There is also criticism of the current Johnson Conservative government's communication, hypocrisy, and slow pace to enforce restrictions in the short-term response to the pandemic:

- **'Johnson then complained that people had not behaved but many people feel he lost the moral high-ground some time ago by not sacking Dominic Cummings'**, in reference to a scandal in late May when political advisor Dominic Cummings broke lockdown rules by travelling from London to Durham with his family; **'There has been an element of easing in the last week but it was surrounded by confusion sparked by a communications muddle from Government.'**; **'If only we had a government we could trust to deliver us from the perils of Covid-19. I fear for our future if Johnson and his cohorts remain at the helm.'**; **'I hope that if you are reading this in the future, that it is known just how badly the UK government let down its people and that they failed to keep them as safe as they could have.'** [Message to the Future]; **'There is a growing feeling that the way the UK handled this was very poor and that we are being controlled and manipulated by a Government communication team that, since Brexit, is out of control. Targets are getting declared, missed (but then lied about). Care homes and care workers have been neglected. This unknown publication seemed to capture this discontent [photo in submission], but this is Oxford - I have no idea what people are thinking in the new Tory-supporting areas in the North.'**; **'mixed messages from the Government, Johnson's announcement on live TV'**; public graffiti messages (photos): 'They are lying to us', 'No Police State'.

Messages to the Future (48 entries; 2,414 words.)

Most frequent words in the messages to the future were **'time'** (20), **'world'** (15), and **'hope'** (14). The style of the messages are written as imperative calls to action (22), personal reflections (17), and universal observations such as **'It's going to be okay'**, **'Nothing is impossible'**, and **'things change'** (9). The content of the messages encourage appreciation (14) (of friends and family (5), for the natural world (5)); kindness (6); to seize opportunities (5); to spend time doing what you love (5); to learn from (4) and to remember this time (3). Other notable topics are reassurance that things will be okay (3), criticism of governmental action and the push for economic growth (3), and for an awareness of climate change (2). Encouraging positive action and future recovery is the general consensus, with the construction **'I hope'** occurring 28 times, and 43 uses of imperative verbs in the messages. The imperative

verbs used are most commonly used for appreciation (8)— ‘cherish’ (2)/ ‘be more appreciative’/‘practice gratitude daily’/ ‘appreciate’ / ‘don’t take’ ‘stop taking’ for granted’ / ‘notice’; remembrance (6) — ‘don’t forget’ (4), ‘remember’, ‘learn’; compassion (6) — ‘be’ kind/generous (2), ‘keep in touch’ (2) ‘share’ / ‘take care’; and opportunities (6) — ‘take’/ ‘grab’ / ‘make the most of’/ ‘give it a go’ / ‘dive in’ / ‘join in’.

Microlevel insight into daily life

As the call to appreciate the ‘small things’ frequently occurs in the submissions (7), this project gives insight into the subjective experiences during a pandemic on a local level. Hence, as the personal changes were logged as the lockdown intensified and eased, the collection presents the small moments otherwise ignored in journalistic discourse concerning the pandemic.

- Some of these smaller features include the ways people are responsible for implementing their own safety measures: ‘**money is exchanged in sanitised plastic bags**’ in a community alternative to the supermarket; the concern that ‘**we didn’t bleach everything when we arrived at the cottage, and ate the cake the owner brought around to us**’; one photo contribution shows photographs of friends printed off and “**sat**” in the garden for a birthday. Community alternatives are also catalogued: a WhatsApp group ‘**where people sheepishly say that Ovaltine is for their mum’s night-time drink and marmite for their kid’s lunches “if that’s ok?”**’; and ‘**buying in bulk and dividing it up between friends**’.
- In an attempt to feel closer to normality, 5 students shared photos of their home recreations of the Oxford tradition of ‘**trashing**’ to celebrate the end of exams (being covered in a variety of messy items such as foam, silly string, and alcohol). There were other make-shift measures adopted by students when adapting to studying while in a family home, for example, ‘**I installed a ‘je suis studying’ sign on my door. A blu-tack dot on a cue card informs the family of my current task**’, and 1 photographic example where a student had made a fake ‘Examinations School’ sign for the shed where she was taking her exams.
- Verbatim anecdotes that show the honest and trivial aspects of the lockdown. One contribution epitomises this by bringing together naïve hugging and dismissal of the virus, and the singing while washing your hands encouraged by the media: “**do we still hug?**” she asked, “**of course**” I answered, as I couldn’t ever envisage a time when I couldn’t hug my dearest friends when I saw them (and still can’t). We discussed the virus and our concerns, but in a distant “**it’s happening somewhere else or to other people with underlying health conditions**” kind of way. We discussed what song we sang to ensure we were washing our hands for twenty seconds as instructed. I had eschewed “**Happy Birthday**” for a verse of “**My Sharona**” by The Knack, which suits my ageing rock-chick persona far more.’ While not necessarily part of wider linguistic trends, they give insight to the specific minor impacts of the pandemic. One contribution logs the small observation that they are buying ‘**more milk than normal**’ due to the increase of drinking tea and coffee. Another explains that they have started to do yoga while ‘**listening to the Government’s briefing**’.
- Many contributors chose to share photos of public signage and literature associated with the impact of COVID-19. These included closed business signs; wash your hands notices; public homemade ‘thank you’ displays for NHS and keyworkers; official ‘thank you’ signs from companies; a sign on the door of TSB bank saying ‘Please stop and think. Do I really need to go inside?’; floor markings to mark 2m (using tape and spray paint); tape over a park bench to prevent contact; the post office commemorative

marking ‘Stay Home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives’, and ‘Happy 100th Birthday / Captain Thomas Moore / NHS Fundraising Hero’; and governmental literature such as the letter from Boris Johnson, NHS information leaflet, and testing kit. These photos give an insight into the day-to-day visibility of coronavirus-related public messages. Another frequent feature of the photographic submissions was empty cityscapes: Oxford (7) and elsewhere (2), with ‘**empt***’ occurring 18 times in the corpus.

- Some key callouts of events that occurred and discussed in the project are the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer on 25th May and the resultant race discussions (6); VE Day, where many communities organised street parties as to socialise in lockdown restrictions (5); the weekly clapping for carers and keyworkers in the UK (1); and discussions about climate change following the decreased pollution in lockdown and increased engagement with nature (3). This demonstrates how the pandemic is also associated with these events, particularly those of racial injustice and climate preservation.
- Some submissions also feature hypothetical questions reflecting the uncertainty about what the future looks like: **‘Will theatres reopen across the city? Will we even have a panto this year?’**; **‘Will we all still be in lockdown, will there be a second spike, will there be a vaccine? Will students be allowed back and if so how will they be taught (hybrid with online/face-to-face in small groups)? Or will it all be sorted out by October we will be back to normal?’**; **‘Will the world ever be the same again?’** Despite their future focus, these did not feature in the ‘Message to the Future’ section, but rather were stimulated by their reflections on lockdown.