

COVID-19 HEALTH & HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR STUDY


The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread disruption to health services



WHAT WE DID

A team at Cardiff University, working with Cancer Research UK, funded by ESRC via UK Research and Innovation conducted a survey of over 7,500 adults from across the UK during August/September 2020 and again in February/March 2021 to find out how COVID-19 had affected people's attitudes to cancer screening and to seeking timely help for potential cancer symptoms. We also interviewed 30 people who completed the survey.

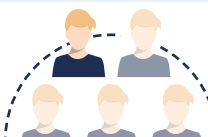
WHAT WE FOUND



Almost half of people who experienced possible cancer symptoms had **not contacted their GP** even when they **experienced alarm symptoms** like coughing up blood or an unexplained lump. They worried about wasting the GP's time, **overstretching the NHS** and the risks of catching COVID.



Those interviewed said that when they did **attend hospital** for appointments, they **felt safe** and found the experience **better than** they had **expected**.



Around **1 in 5** said they were **less likely** to take part in **cancer screening** now than before the pandemic.



Interviewees liked the use of **telephone GP appointments** and wanted them to continue as well as **face-to-face appointments**.



HOW HAVE THE RESULTS BEEN SHARED

- ✓ Three policy reports have been published and widely shared with professionals in the field.
- ✓ Results from the study have been widely covered in the news, on radio/TV and on social media.
- ✓ Findings have contributed to two national cancer charities' awareness campaigns.
- ✓ Evidence provided at three government/policy meetings and results presented at over 25 events.
- ✓ Several academic journal articles have been published.

KEY MESSAGES

The pandemic has changed people's attitudes towards cancer help-seeking.

The findings from this study are shaping future priorities for early cancer detection and management.

It's important to talk to your doctor if you notice anything that isn't normal for you, and to consider taking part in cancer screening when invited.