

In their own words:
five generations of Britons
describe their experiences of
the coronavirus pandemic

Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey
in Five National Longitudinal Studies

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Access the survey data

The COVID-19 survey data analysed in this briefing have been de-identified and are available for researchers. To download the data (SN: 8658), visit the UK Data Service website (ukdataservice.ac.uk).

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About the survey

This briefing is based on data from a web survey of over 18,000 people, collected between 2 and 31 May 2020. The survey participants and their families are members of five nationally representative cohort studies that have been collecting data since childhood. These were:

- The [Millennium Cohort Study](#) (MCS), born in 2000-2002, part of 'Generation Z'. They have been followed since birth and were age 19 at the time of the survey;
- [Next Steps](#), who were born in 1989-1990, so-called 'Millennials'. They have been followed since adolescence and are now age 30;
- [1970 British Cohort Study](#) (BCS70) who were born in 1970, part of 'Generation X'. They have been followed since birth and are now age 50;
- [National Child Development Study](#) (NCDS) who were born in 1958, into the later part of the 'baby boomers' generation. They have been followed since birth and are now age 62;
- [National Study of Health and Development Study](#) (NSHD) who were born in 1946, at the start of the 'baby boomers' generation. They have been followed since birth and are now age 74.

The survey was designed to help researchers understand the economic, health and social consequences of the coronavirus outbreak, to give a unique insight into how people's experiences during the pandemic vary depending on their earlier lives, and to be able to track the impact into the future. The survey thus included a broad range of questions spanning a wide array of topics.

For the most part, these were 'closed' questions yielding structured data: for each question, respondents were provided with a range of answers they could choose from. However, the survey also included one open-ended question, in which respondents were asked to describe experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic in their own words. This briefing focuses on the responses to that open-ended question.

A number of further research briefings, using the data from the first wave of the COVID-19 survey, can be found [on the CLS website](#).

Introduction

As evidenced by [other COVID-19 studies reported on in this series of briefings](#), the coronavirus outbreak has comprehensively impacted on people's economic, health and social lives. Alongside collection of rich structured data, the survey (see 'About the survey') included one open-ended question, in which study members were offered the opportunity to write about the coronavirus outbreak in their own words. Respondents were asked to:

Express in your own words the main ways the coronavirus outbreak has affected your life and/or your loved ones so far, and what you think the effects might be in the future. You can write as much or little as you like, and cover any topic you choose.

By 'giving voice' to respondents, open-ended questions such as this provide a valuable 'person-centred' complement to the more structured variable-centred data typically collected by surveys¹. As shown by the responses discussed in this briefing, the pandemic and lockdown affected almost every aspect of respondents' lives, often in complex and interlocking ways – for example, negative impacts in some domains (e.g. reduced employment) could have positive impacts in others (e.g. more time spent with family), with these two domains in turn having both positive and negative impacts on areas such as mental and physical health. Study members' descriptions of and reflections on these inter-related impacts offer insights into how the outbreak has been experienced by the respondents to our survey, and allow us to contextualise these subjective experiences within the broader quantitative data. To the best of our knowledge, ours is one of the few large-scale longitudinal British COVID-19 surveys offering this complementary combination of approaches².

¹ [Generating qualitative data by design: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health qualitative data collection](#) | PHRP. (2016, July 15).

² A notable international example of this mixed methods approach is the Australian Longitudinal Study of Women's Health, which has collected multiple waves of quantitative and qualitative COVID-19 related data.

Methods

This briefing provides an initial analysis of open-ended responses from all five generations included in our COVID-19 survey, using mainly qualitative analysis methods. Respondents were born in 1946 (age 74), 1958 (age 62), 1970 (age 50), 1989-90 (age 30), and 2000-02 (average age 19).

Nearly 7 in 10 survey respondents (69%) answered the open question. Across all five cohorts, a total of 10,793 individuals responded to this question (6,497 female, 4,296 male), with an average response length of 113 words. Response rates and lengths were higher amongst the older cohorts and among females. The total word count for the five cohorts combined was slightly more than 1.2 million words, roughly equivalent to 2,000 pages of single-spaced text. [See Appendix](#) for additional details.

From this overall sample, 50 responses were randomly sampled from each of the five generations and preliminarily analysed to identify major themes. The responses quoted in this briefing paper are redacted and/or edited to conceal potentially identifying information, and we typically present extracts rather than full responses.³

³ As respondents born in 2000-02 were 19 years old at the time of the survey, we refer to them in this briefing as 'age 19'.

To provide additional detail on the key issues and factors that respondents wrote about, we conducted further analyses focusing only on the substantive nouns appearing in study members' responses (Table 1). In the four youngest cohorts, 'work', 'time', 'home' and 'family' were the most frequent, albeit not always in that order. Not surprisingly, 'work' was much less frequently mentioned by the age-74 respondents. 'People' and 'friends' were mentioned frequently across all five cohorts. The terms that were used most frequently did not differ by gender or occupation.

Table 1: Most frequently used nouns

	Age 19		Age 30		Age 50		Age 62		Age 74		Combined	
	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>N</i>
1	family	839	work	970	work	2307	family	2143	family	660	work	6393
2	work	791	time	794	home	2020	time	2127	time	614	time	6227
3	time	770	family	703	time	1922	work	2069	friends	588	family	6138
4	home	758	home	653	family	1793	home	1915	life	445	home	5741
5	friends	691	people	489	friends	1048	people	1571	people	405	friends	4169
6	university	650	friends	449	people	1006	friends	1393	home	397	people	4073
7	people	602	life	352	life	875	life	1247	week	364	life	3391
8	year	487	lockdown	318	children	795	virus	1027	grandchildren	331	lockdown	2596
9	life	473	job	276	lockdown	765	future	980	garden	316	future	2491
10	coronavirus	380	partner	263	school	686	children	959	children	306	virus	2298

Notes:

1. N = number of times this word appeared in the dataset. E.g. if one cohort member used the word 'family' twice in their response, this counts as two mentions.
2. This table focuses on the most commonly cited nouns, not all of the most commonly used words.
3. 'Work' includes closely related terms with 'work' as their root, e.g. 'working'.
4. The most frequently used nouns in these responses are words that appear frequently in the British English lexicon. However, initial analyses suggest that terms such as 'work', 'time', 'home' and 'family' are more common in these survey responses than in the general lexicon.

Preliminary themes

This section draws on responses from all five generations in our study, highlighting common themes in those responses. Whereas a small proportion of responses focused on only one of the domains cited in the section above – e.g. “I am a key worker so I have not been affected other than living on Teams!” (male, age 30) – most responses were broad-ranging, covering a variety of inter-related issues, including but not limited to work, time, home, family, friends and other aspects of life which were influenced by the pandemic.

Few respondents reported fully negative (or fully positive) experiences: most described a **mix of inter-related positive and negative impacts**. For example, one study member said that she missed seeing family and friends and was “worse off moneywise” because of the pandemic. But she also noted that there was a positive side to physical distancing and reduced working hours:

For once in my life I am experiencing quality home life and experiencing personal time to relax and do things I haven't done for a long time, due to working all the time. (Female, age 62)

This section focuses first on what respondents said about the difficulties and worries caused by the COVID-19 situation, before moving on to more positive aspects of their experiences.

Social isolation

A particularly common theme across all generations was **missing friends and family**. As one grandparent wrote, it was painful to be:

Missing out seeing the grandchildren growing... although we see them on facetime etc that is not the same as being able to give them a cuddle and play with them. I know full well how quickly time passes and these are times that we won't get back. (Male, age 62)

Respondents across all five generations made extensive use of digital communication tools such as Zoom in order to stay in contact with loved ones, but frequently emphasised the importance of physical contact with their loved ones – contact through a window or screen was not enough:

I miss the companionship of friends. The physical contact and that physical bond. (Female, age 62)

My mum and dad are self isolating so it's been hard not going into the home... I am doing shopping and paying bills for them so I can see them through the window but it's strange. (Female, age 50)

Social isolation was difficult for all five generations, but 19-year-olds seemed to particularly feel its impact:

I miss my friends so much I feel it in my bones. (Female, age 19)

I just feel so lonely even tho my family is around me. (Female, age 19)

I have not been able to see my girlfriend in months. It's made me feel a bit numb. (Male, age 19)

Mental health impacts

As noted by [another paper in this briefing series](#), many respondents suffered from poor mental health during the lockdown, however this was distributed unequally: in a quantitative analysis of the four younger generations, Henderson *et al.*⁴ found that poorer mental health was most common amongst 19-year-olds, followed by those aged 30 and then those aged 50 and 62. Henderson and colleagues also found that females reported worse mental health than males during the lockdown, consistent with previous (pre-lockdown) findings. Looking across all five generations, the open

⁴ Henderson, M., Fitzsimons, E., Ploubidis, G., Richards, M., and Patalay, P. (2020) [Mental health during lockdown: evidence from four generations - Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey in Five National Longitudinal Studies](#). London: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

text responses provide insights into the mental health challenges faced by study members and their loved ones, and their responses to those challenges:

I have depression. Before the outbreak I was heading in the direction of recovery, but the outbreak has definitely set me back a good deal.

(Female, age 30)

I have suffered with my mental health for a number of years and the effects of the virus and the lockdown have caused an incredible amount of stress and anxiety, which causes me to have depressive episodes [however] I am continuing to get through it with the support of my family, friends and flatmate, and I am confident that I will remain stable enough until its end.

(Female, age 19)

Whereas most respondents who mentioned mental health focused on negative impacts, a small number of respondents reported that the lockdown had improved their mental wellbeing by reducing social pressure. For example, one female (age 50) said:

I feel less anxious during this outbreak... For once, I don't need to resist the fight or flight instinct. I am justified to run away and stay indoors.

Another female (age 74) suggested that the barriers imposed by the pandemic provided her with a previously unknown freedom:

I feel less stressed than I have most of my life... I cannot help [other people] in any way [now] so feel that my life is finally my own.

Physical health problems and worries

Many respondents were worried that they and/or loved ones would become infected by COVID-19. One nurse said that she was grateful for her job as it provided "structure and routine". However, she also worried about her own health:

It has been very worrying at times having close contact with people especially before we had adequate PPE. (Female, age 50)

A small number of respondents reported having COVID-19. In some cases, the impacts were severe:

I have been unable to work for the last 6 weeks because of how unwell I have been. There still appears to be problems that this virus has left me with. I continue to be breathless, cognitive function is poorer and my level of exhaustion is still significant. Currently I do not think this will resolve until a significant period of time in the future (probably months). (Female, age 50)

More frequently, respondents reported physical health problems caused not by having COVID-19 but by the indirect impacts of the pandemic. In particular, respondents said that they and/or their loved ones were physically and/or emotionally overstretched, with potentially deleterious impacts:

Being a key worker... has been very tiring and stressful. Very long hours have been worked and dealing with the public has been very hard.
(Female, age 30)

We worry about our daughter who is caring for [her child] during the day and working from home late into the night. We feel helpless to relieve her tiredness. (Female, age 62)

Seventy-four-year-olds were particularly likely to worry about the long-term physical health effects of reduced activity and/or healthcare during the pandemic:

My husband came home a day before lockdown after 5 months in hospital following a stroke... Because of the absence of continuing physio he is rapidly becoming less mobile and needs considerable help with personal care etc. He has fallen several times and I have had to get help to get him up.
(Female, age 74)

A 74-year-old female who said that prior to the pandemic she was “usually busy” noted that she “dislike[d] having no structure to my life now” and worried that:

I am getting used to doing nothing and going nowhere and I fear it will be difficult to get motivated again.

Worries about loved ones

Many study members described providing support for family members, particularly older ones: “My grandma is self isolating... she is very vulnerable so I have been doing her shopping” (Female, age 19). The survey responses included numerous examples of worries about how the pandemic was affecting **family and friends**. As one 62-year-old male said: “My mother is [in her late 80s] and is really struggling with being isolated. [She] finds it hard to understand why I can’t spend time with her.”

Another respondent said:

I’ve been in full control of my depression. My father on the other hand has struggled big time. Since the outbreak he has become more depressed. He... likes to go out every day and do the food shopping, but this outbreak has meant that he has had to stay at home. He has become more dependent on me. (Male, age 50)

Parents of older children worried that their offspring were **missing out** on key life course experiences:

The main concern is my children... They are both at interesting and exciting stages of their life, and I do not know how this will now play out and how it will affect them in the next couple of years. (Female, age 50)

Another 50-year-old female wrote:

It’s definitely worst for my [child]... Teenagers need to feel their burgeoning autonomy and to be in lockdown with your parents and without your peers as you are forging your identity is not good.

Disrupted education

Many of the respondents in the age 19 generation were students who had to “Suddenly move home from university. From living with friends to back with my family full-time” (Female, age 19). While some young people were happy about this enforced move – “I have enjoyed being able to become closer with my family and... feel lucky that we get on so well” (Female, age 19) – students more frequently

lamented its negative impacts, both in terms of the social isolation they were experiencing – “I feel distant from my friends and miss them a lot” (Male, age 19) – and in terms of the potential negative impacts on their educational experience. As one student said, the transition to online learning had: “MASSIVELY affected my uni work and mental health... This outbreak has made uni 100X more stressful and difficult” (Female, age 19). Another frustrated student wrote: “If next year continues online then my hope... is that [the universities] put their hands up and surrender and we take a year out” (Female, age 19).

Not surprisingly, parents were also worried about education. Parents of younger children described the **challenges of home schooling**: “No support from school, being left to home school ourselves has been very difficult”, said one 30-year-old mother.

Gendered childcare

As detailed in [another study in this series of briefing papers](#)⁵, there were ‘**stark differences**’ in the amount of time that mothers and fathers of young children were devoting to childcare (including home schooling), with mothers on average spending several more hours per day on these tasks. A number of mothers used the open text response to explain how this disparity was affecting them. For example, despite having a partner, one female reported:

No help at home with the cooking, cleaning and looking after a [toddler], nowhere to escape to like before the corona virus where I’d see my friends and we could take our kids out. No time for myself and the lack of help making it harder. Not able to sleep and toddler not sleeping too. (Female, age 30)

Another mother wrote:

The stress on my relationship has been difficult as both of us... still have to go to work [and] the nursery had to close... My partner has struggled with this...

⁵ Villadsen, A., Conti, G. and Fitzsimons, E. (2020) [Parental involvement in home schooling and developmental play during lockdown - Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey in Five National Longitudinal Studies](#). London: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, p. 11.

I'm now having to work evenings and weekends and... he just expected me to... still be wholly responsible for the care of our child. (Female, age 30)

Employment and financial worries

Financial impacts were another common theme, and are the subject of [a briefing paper](#) focused on the age 19, 30, 50 and 62 generations⁶. As that paper observes, across these four generations nearly 30% of respondents reported being financially worse off in the early months of the pandemic. However, these financial effects were not distributed equally across or within generations. Among the younger two generations there was a 'broad balance between those who reported being better off and those who said that they were worse off', whereas in the 50- and 62-year-old generations the 'balance of the financial effects was negative'.

In their open text responses, respondents discussed their financial difficulties and the impacts of those difficulties on their wellbeing:

I have been let go from one [of] my jobs... which has left us without enough money to pay all the bills and keep food in. So we have been using [a] food bank and had help [from] our church to be able to eat. This in itself had a big impact on my mind to start with and pride however I am starting to [feel] better about having to keep getting help now. When it's all over I hope to be able to get a job so we can pay all our bills and eat again without having to ask for help from others. (Female, age 50)

Just (today) been informed that my place of employment is being closed down so I will have to look for alternative employment which at age 62 will not be easy. Added to that... the real possibility of my husband (same age) being made redundant... is a real concern. (Female, age 62)

I feel let down by the agency I worked for who let me go due to coronavirus, but chose not to help me get access to government support. (Male, age 30)

⁶ Wielgoszewska, B., Green, F. and Goodman, A. (2020) [Finances and employment during lockdown - Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey in Five National Longitudinal Studies](#). London: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, p. 6-7.

Positive experiences of the pandemic

As noted above, study members reported positive as well as negative experiences of the pandemic, often drawing parallels between the two. For example, one respondent (female, age 74) said “[I] miss the company and socialising... and look forward to seeing people face-to-face” again, but also observed that:

The restrictions have given me time to reflect on my life, catch up with old interests and old acquaintances. New challenges, buying an 'Alexa', learning to 'zoom' has been really interesting. Realise how much I have missed in life by being so 'busy' and not taking a step back and looking at why I was doing some things which I didn't even enjoy. Hope the new look at life continues when we are 'free'.

One of the UK Government's responses to the pandemic was the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Through this scheme, known more commonly as the 'furlough', the government paid up to 80% of eligible workers' wages (up to a maximum of £2,500 per month) in order to encourage companies to furlough employees rather than fire them⁷. Respondents who were eligible for the furlough scheme emphasised its positive impacts:

Being furloughed has removed the worry that I would have otherwise had.
(Female, age 50)

My partner has lost her job due to the outbreak. Fortunately I have been furloughed which means we can keep up with our rent and bills.
(Male, age 30)

More free time

As many of these respondents noted, the furlough scheme meant they had both income and free time: “I find the whole process of furlough and staying at home to be

⁷ Wielgoszewska, B., Green, F. and Goodman, A. (2020) [Finances and employment during lockdown - Initial findings from the COVID-19 Survey in Five National Longitudinal Studies](#). London: UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies.

very peaceful and relaxing. I thoroughly enjoyed being at home with my wife and children” (Male, age 50). Increased free time was perhaps the most commonly cited positive impact of the pandemic, both for individuals on furlough and those who were not, but neither this free time nor its impacts were distributed equally. Whereas the 30-year-old mothers discussed above struggled to find time for themselves, and 19-year-olds typically lamented the feeling that their lives were being put on hold through an enforced break from important activities and relationships, many 50- and 62-year-olds said they now had more free time than they had experienced for decades. These respondents were **overwhelmingly positive** about this experience:

I am loving working from home and not spending [several] hours a day travelling and [thousands of pounds] a year on train travel, I'm losing weight, eating healthily, sleeping really well and getting out for exercise every day.
(Female, age 50)

As illustrated in this response, having additional free time was associated with positive impacts across a range of domains, including:

Physical activity: “I have enjoyed having the time to... take a walk every day to improve my health and fitness” (Female, age 62)

Personal finances: “My finances are also in better shape as I've spent no money on fuel or travel” (Male, age 30)

Family relations: “With less things going on outside the home we find we have more time together and more meals together” (Female, age 50).

Even though some respondents said they “miss the office” (Male, age 50), the highly positive reactions to having more free time suggest that many respondents greatly appreciated their improved work-life balance during the pandemic, and may be reluctant to fully resume their former work/commuting patterns.

Reflecting on one's life and values

The unprecedented nature of the pandemic prompted many respondents to reflect on their lives. In some cases, **negative experiences gave rise to positive**

reflections – for example, the 19-year-old who said that not seeing his girlfriend had “made me feel a bit numb” added that the experience had made him more appreciative of her. Other respondents reflected on their values and direction in life:

It has made me take a step back and pause to reflect a little more, to a degree made me see more [of] what is important and what is not. (Male, age 62)

Many respondents also reflected on their sense of good fortune, saying they **felt lucky** to have jobs, social networks and/or other resources which made the pandemic less onerous:

I feel very lucky as I am healthy, live in a beautiful area by the sea where I can walk and swim. Two of our grown [children] have moved in with us and it is wonderful. [They] are doing all our shopping, to minimise our exposure to coronavirus. (Female, age 62)

I am lucky enough to be relatively stable – both I and my husband are in good jobs and we have been able to work full-time from home, so economically we are unaffected... I know people who have contracted the virus, people who are struggling because they are furloughed and people who have lost their jobs entirely. I feel awful for them, and somewhat guilty that I’m not being made to face the same problems. (Female, age 30)

Looking ahead

In addition to reflecting on their current experience of the pandemic, many respondents offered thoughts on how the pandemic might shape their own lives, the country and/or the broader world in the months and years to come. In addition to **fears** about the pandemic’s trajectory – “Really worried the virus will not go away and will have worse and worse outbreaks” (Female, age 50) – many respondents were worried about the **financial implications** of the pandemic, whether for themselves – “The virus... will have a big impact on finances which will affect me starting a family and looking to purchase a house” (Male, age 30) – or for **future generations**: “I do worry about the cost... which will be put on my children and grandchildren” (Female, age 62). A number of respondents who expressed gratitude

for the Government's furlough scheme said they were worried about what would happen when it ended:

The furlough scheme is amazing, but I am concerned that my employer might make further redundancies when [the scheme ends]. (Male, age 50)

Respondents also worried about the increased mental and physical impacts of an ongoing pandemic:

I am concerned the effects of isolation could be damaging to our physical and mental health if it continues over the winter period. (Female, age 74)

Some respondents were re-evaluating their personal priorities for the future:

This time has given me the chance to think more about the future. I'm considering a career change, and/or a move out of [city], if the right opportunities arise. It is also made me want to move closer to my family, as it's been difficult being so far apart during the crisis. (Female, age 30)

Others offered their thoughts on how the world might change in response to the pandemic, sometimes expressing hopes for what they see as a better way of living:

I believe the world will be a different place when all this is over. Home working will become the norm, government will be much more prepared in the future and ways of working will be much more technical and less time wasting than before. Perhaps less cars on the roads with less damage to our environment. (Female, age 62)

Conclusions

Our survey's open-ended question gave respondents the opportunity to describe their experience of the pandemic in their own words. We received just under 11,000 open text responses across the five generations of our study, and these responses provide an important complement to the more structured survey data by providing direct reports of study members' lived experiences of the coronavirus outbreak; these responses can thus be seen as a 'time capsule' of those experiences. This time capsule offers valuable insights into the specific ways in which different domains of life – including but not limited to work, home, family, friends and time – have been affected by the pandemic, and how these impacts in turn have affected other aspects of life, e.g. mental and physical health.

As the responses show, experiences of the pandemic are complex, with respondents across all five generations sharing many worries and losses, but also having unique experiences and perspectives based on their personal circumstances and resources. Responses highlighted a mix of positive and negative experiences and emotions, with (for example) worries about employment and finances sometimes being at least partly mitigated by the benefits of having more free time.

In future research we hope to use this unique database of open text responses to provide further rich insights into Britain's experience of the pandemic. The large size of this qualitative dataset means that, as with other qualitative cohort study data (see, for example, the 1958 cohort's [age-11 essays](#) and that cohort's [age-50 predictions for life at 60](#)), it is open to quantitative as well as qualitative analysis, both within and across cohorts. In particular, we hope to use the qualitative material to better understand the individual- and group-level mechanisms, processes and experiences underlying the broader patterns revealed by the quantitative survey data.

One limitation of the current set of open text responses is that they capture only one unique point in time: April-May 2020, when the UK government response to COVID-19 was in an early phase and the pandemic was still a relatively new experience. However, as one study member (female, age 50) wrote of the pandemic, "The longer the situation goes on the more difficult it is to remember being 'normal'." Another

respondent (male, age 19) provided a short but apt summary of what he, and the world, were facing in April-May 2020: “One word. Uncertainty.” That response has proved prescient: at the time of the publication of this briefing paper (November 2020) the pandemic continues to impact every aspect of life in the UK, and looks set to do so for an indeterminate amount of time to come. Study members’ experiences of and perspectives on the pandemic are likely to evolve over time. To capture these evolving experiences, we plan at least one additional wave of open text responses in early 2021. Combined with the current set of open text data, this additional wave of responses will complement ongoing longitudinal data collection by providing a uniquely rich longitudinal qualitative data source on experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix

Table A1: Open text response rates and word count

			Age 19	Age 30	Age 50	Age 62	Age 74	Totals
Responses	Female	N	1,123	792	1,802	2,202	578	6,497
		%	60	63	72	81	88	72
	Male	N	460	387	1,137	1,778	534	4,296
		%	59	59	64	72	88	68
	Total	N	1,583	1,179	2,939	3,980	1,112	10,793
		%	60	61	69	76	88	71
Mean words	Female		104	120	134	133	151	128
	Male		79	86	84	90	107	89
	Total		97	109	114	114	130	113
Median words	Female		76	88	105	98	127	96
	Male		53	60	56	58	81	59
	Total		69	75	82	78	103	79

Notes:

1. % = Percentage of survey respondents who also responded to the open question.
2. The Qualtrics survey software capped open text responses at 2,000 characters, i.e. approximately 400 words. Across all five studies combined, 290 females (4% of female respondents) and 88 males (2%) reached this cap.