

Spring 2025 Directive

Before you begin, please start each response on a new page with your MO number and biographical information. This should include your gender, age, location, living situation, most recent job title and employment status. For example:

S12, female, 37, Cambridge, lives with partner, nurse

Please remember not to identify yourself or others inadvertently within your reply. It is best to use initials instead of a name.

Part 1: COVID-19 Five years on

On Monday 23rd March 2020 Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a lockdown in the UK, ordering people to “stay at home” to reduce levels of infection.

Throughout the pandemic Mass Observation captured people's everyday lives, their experiences, thoughts and feelings. This vast collection of nearly 10,000 directive responses and diaries provide a valuable record of people's lives during this unprecedented time, moment by moment, with palpable emotion.

Words and phrases such as ‘PPE’, ‘Shielding’, Furloughed’ and ‘Variants’ were common place. Zooms calls, facemasks and BBC briefings with Chris Whitty became part of daily life for many of us.

In the first part of the Directive, we would like you to think about the legacy of this time five years on. We are interested to hear about the long-term impacts of this period. What’s new, different or absent from your everyday life. We have provided prompts but please feel free to share anything that is important to you.

Work and homelife

Have you experienced changes to your employment such as home working or a change in your profession? Maybe you did not return to work or experienced redundancy. Please share this change and how it feels now. Did these feel like choices on your terms?

How has the dynamic of homelife changed with partners, family or friends. Do you spend more time at home and if so, what has the impact of this been?

Entertainment and leisure

During lockdown and throughout the pandemic people shared experiences of discovering new outside spaces, taking up hobbies or exercising with Joe Wicks. We would like to hear about any hobbies or leisure activities you do now that were instigated or re-ignited during the pandemic. For example, growing your own vegetables, walking, or learning new skills.

Health

For those who contracted COVID-19, experiencing periods of lockdown and unpredictable changes to daily life has left a lasting impact for many people. Please share any mental and physical health challenges that you continue to experience from this time.

Socialising

What have your social activities been like since the pandemic period? Have you felt the pressure to socialise or have your social networks/friends become less active? Do you feel reluctant to meet in public spaces and maybe you meet in different places? If so, please share details.

What about travelling to places or going away from home. Has the pandemic left a legacy with either a reluctance to go far to new places or a desire to get away?

Technology

During the pandemic many of us found ourselves using Zoom for the first time, for work meetings, family gatherings and social quizzes. What is your engagement like with technology like this today?

Did you become part of new online social networks or forums and if so, are you still active on them? Please tell us about this

Please share any other experiences that are a legacy from this time and how this makes you feel.

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Part 2: VE Day

This year marks the anniversary of VE Day – a day of celebration to mark the Allied victory in Europe after six years of war.

In 1945, Mass Observation investigators and diarists documented the public mood and captured festivities across the nation. These documents are now part of the archive and are regularly used by those researching what life was like for those who had experienced a war on home soil.

80 years on, we'd like your help to enhance these Mass Observation collections with modern opinions on VE Day and accounts on how this anniversary is marked in your local area.

We would also welcome reflections on how you marked previous anniversaries, maybe with family members who were veterans or on the 75th anniversary when the UK was in lockdown.

Some prompts for you:

- How will you spend VE Day (8th May 2025)? Will you do anything to mark this event?
- Are there any events (including street parties) in your local area to mark the anniversary? Will you attend any?
- Have you noticed any special items to mark VE Day (e.g anniversary mugs, bunting, advertising, displays in shop windows)
- Did you watch, read or listen anything (e.g news, TV, podcasts) relating to VE Day
- Does your family have any mementoes or souvenirs of VE Day or the Second World War? What are these? Are they important to your family?
- Will you do anything to mark VJ Day (Victory over Japan Day) on the 15th August?

- How do you feel about the national marking of the end of the Second World War

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Part 3: Good News

In a time of rolling news and what can feel like information overload, it is sometimes tricky to find the good news, or to give ourselves the space to reflect upon good news.

We would like to give you that space. Please tell us about some good news, whether this is something that has happened in your life, or you have read or heard about. Let us know.

Was this expected or unexpected and how did it make you feel?

Feel free to send any screenshots, reports or images of this news.

Please post your response to: Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk. KP/JS Spring 2025 Directive/No. 133