Dissertation Draft

# Introduction:

The implementation of lockdown protocols by the United Kingdom Government on 26th March 2020 created a unique environment by restricting movement among non-essential workers and limiting social contact (Johnson, 2020). The primary reason was to reduce the spread of the disease and ease the burden on the National Health Service. However, the effects of this lockdown spread to all sectors, including hospitality, construction, education, travel, and the judicial system (ONS, 2020). From March 26th 2020 lockdown measures legally came into force and the UK police were given extra enforcement powers to reduce the spread of coronavirus, including the ability to instruct members of the public to return home or leave an area (UK Gov, 2020). The lockdown required non-essential shops such as pubs and retail stores to close and for non-essential workers to work from home if possible. Those that could not work from home were furloughed, with one in four people that had been employees having been on furlough at some point between March 2020 and June 2021 (ONS, 2021). Table 1 contains a full timeline of lockdown events from the beginning of lockdown on March 26th 2020 to the end of the third and final lockdown on July 19th 2021. These restrictions resulted in changes to the mobility of the general public to the point where even seismic noise was reduced by 50% for months at a time, with the period being described as “the great seismic quiet period” (Lecocq et al, 2020).  
This report investigates the effects of the national lockdowns on crime rates and also arrest outcomes over the full coronavirus period of March 2020 to August 2021. The areas selected for study are the North, East Midlands, West Midlands, South West and South East police constabularies of England and Wales. Specific forms of crime have been selected; these are:

* violence and sexual offences
* theft offences
* drug offences
* public order offences
* arson and criminal damage offences

Data from 2017 to 2022 is used so that a pre-covid comparison can be established. The data used is from <https://data.police.uk/> which contains official UK police records of every crime reported within the 43 geographic police forces in England and Wales, the British Transport Police, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Ministry of Justice.

Table : Key Lockdown events from March 2020 to August 2021 (IfG, 2022)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| March 26 (2020) | Lockdown measures legally come into force; police given powers to enforce restrictions |
| Apr 3 | Figures from transport office demonstrate greatly reduced usage of motor vehicles, rails and buses (Department for Transport, 2020) |
| april 16 | Lockdown extended for “at least” 3 weeks |
| April 30 | PM says “we are past the peak” of the pandemic |
| may 10 | People that cannot work from home should return but avoid public transport |
| june 1 | Phased re-opening of schools in England. The “Rule of six” is implemented, allowing six people from different households to meet outdoors. |
| june 15 | Non-essential shops reopen in England |
| june 23 | Relaxation of restrictions and 2m social distancing rule |
| june 29 | First local lockdown is announced in Leicester |
| july 4 | More restrictions are eased, with pubs and restaurants being allowed to operate |
| july 17 | Public transport can be used for non-essential purposes |
| july 18 | Authorities gain additional powers to enforce social distancing, such as restrictions on those not wearing face coverings (DHSC, 2020) |
| august 1 | Shielding guidelines for the vulnerable cease. Permitting 2 million people to leave home and return to work |
| August 3 | “Eat out to help out” scheme with discounts on meals at restuarants |
| august 14 | Further relaxation of lockdown, theatres and bowling alleys open. |
|  |  |
| september 14 | “Rule of six” gatherings are banned |
| september 22 | Return to working from home and a 10pm curfew for hospitality sector |
| october 14 | New three-tier system of restrictions is implemented |
| november 5 | Second lockdown comes into force |
| november 24 | Announced that 3 households can meet during the Christmas period |
| december 2 | Second lockdown ends |
| december 15 | Rules are to be relaxed over Christmas, but advised to keep celebrations small |
| december 19 | Tier 4 “Stay at Home” restriction is introduced. |
| december 21 | London and South East England put under tier 4 restrictions |
| december 26 | More areas of England enter tier 4 restrictions |
| january 6 (2021) | Enter third national lockdown |
| february 15 | Hotel quarantines for travellers from high-risk countries |
| march 8 | Schools open for primary and secondary school students. Outdoor recreation allowed between two people. “Stay at home” order remains in place |
| march 29 | “Rule of six” is allowed again, for outdoors. “Stay at home” order ends |
| April 12 | Non-essential retail shops reopen. Outdoor venues including pubs and restaurants reopen |
| may 17 | “Rule of six” is now allowed for indoors, 30 people allowed to mix outdoors. Indoor venues of pubs and restaurants reopen. |
| july 19 | Most legal limits on social contact removed, final sectors reopen such as nightclubs |

# Literature Review:

Approximately 90 countries followed the example set by Italy in March 2020 by implementing their own forms of national lockdown and curfews during the coronavirus pandemic (Euronews, 2020). Whilst the lengths of time and requisite powers to enforce lockdowns among the public varied by country, the vast majority of these lockdowns followed similar rules. Non-essential workers were to stay home, gatherings were restricted and schools and retail stores were shut. Studies around the world have been conducted to investigate the relationship between the coronavirus and crime. They have found substantial variations in which types of crime the lockdown protocols impacted as well as how these changes were distributed over different cities and countries (Nivette, 2021).

Crime takes many forms and is strongly associated with both a target and a victim’s mobility (Farrell et al, 2020) and the situational opportunity for a crime to take place (Clarke, 2012). As the lockdowns restricted the ability to leave the house and interact with the public, it is simple to theorise those certain types of crime that rely on mobility as well as opportunity would decline. Crimes such as robbery and assault could be expected to decline due to less members of the public being present in opportunistic settings late at night, as well as the closure of venues decreasing the amount of alcohol being consumed. Crimes such as burglary could be expected to decrease due to the increased guardianship of the property due to the stay-at-home order, restricting the potential burglar’s access and opportunity. However, other forms of crime could be expected to rise due to the closer proximity and greater time spent together of families within the home, leading to more domestic violence and child abuse (Sri et al, 2021). The lack of physical opportunity for some crimes may have led to an increase in cybercrimes. With the inability to generate an income through either physical crime or having been made redundant due to the pandemic, online fraud as well as email and social media hacking were seen to increase during the immediate months following the lockdown announcement in the UK (Buil-Gil, 2021).

# Bibliography:

Buil-Gil, D. Miró-Llinares, F. Moneva, A., Kemp, S. Díaz-Castaño, N. (2021) Cybercrime and shifts in opportunities during COVID-19: a preliminary analysis in the UK, European Societies, 23:sup1, S47-S59, DOI: 10.1080/14616696.2020.1804973

Clarke, R.V. 2012. Opportunity makes the thief. Really? And so what?. Crime Sci 1, 3 <https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-7680-1-3> accessed [30/06/22]

Department for Transport. 2020. Covid-19 Press Conference Slides: 3 April 2020. Slide 2. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878046/COVID-19_Press_Conference_Slides_-_03_04_2020.pdf> accessed [29/06/22]  
  
Department of Health & Social Care. 2020. Local authority powers to impose restrictions: Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No 3) Regulations 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-powers-to-impose-restrictions-under-coronavirus-regulations/local-authority-powers-to-impose-restrictions-health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-england-no3-regulations-2020#local-authority-powers-under-the-regulations> accessed [29/06/2020]  
  
Euronews. 2020. Coronavirus: Half of humanity now on lockdown as 90 countries call for confinement. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/02/coronavirus-in-europe-spain-s-death-toll-hits-10-000-after-record-950-new-deaths-in-24-hou> accessed [30/06/22]

Farrell, G. and N. Tilley. 2020. Coronavirus: How crime changes during a lockdown. The Conversation, 02 April. [Coronavirus: how crime changes during a lockdown (theconversation.com)](https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-how-crime-changes-during-a-lockdown-134948) accessed [30/06/22]  
  
Institute for Government (IfG). 2022. Timeline of UK government coronavirus lockdowns and restrictions. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/charts/uk-government-coronavirus-lockdowns> accessed [29/06/22]  
  
Johnson, B. 2020. Prime Minister’s statement on coronavirus 25th March. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-25-march-2020> accessed [29/06/22]   
  
Langton, S. Dixon, A. Farrell, G. 2021. Six months in: Pandemic Crime trends in England and Wales. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40163-021-00142-z> accessed [29/06/22]  
  
Lecocq, T. et al. 2020. Global quieting of high-frequency seismic noise due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abd2438> accessed [30/06/22]  
  
Nivette, A.E., Zahnow, R., Aguilar, R. et al. 2021. A global analysis of the impact of COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions on crime. Nat Hum Behav 5, 868–877 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01139-z>   
  
Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021 An overview of workers who were furloughed in the UK. Link: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/anoverviewofworkerswhowerefurloughedintheuk/october2021> accessed [29/06/22]  
  
Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2020. The impact of the coronavirus so far: the industries that struggled or recovered. Link: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/articles/theimpactofthecoronavirussofartheindustriesthatstruggledorrecovered/2020-12-09> accessed [29/06/22]

Sri AS, Das P, Gnanapragasam S, Persaud A. 2021. COVID-19 and the violence against women and girls: ‘The shadow pandemic.’ International Journal of Social Psychiatry.;67(8):971-973. doi:10.1177/0020764021995556

UK Gov. 2020. Police given new powers and support to respond to coronavirus. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-given-new-powers-and-support-to-respond-to-coronavirus> accessed [29/06/22]