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 1: 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 |

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