

Poll: British public value protecting lives over economic prosperity during COVID-19 pandemic

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Polling undertaken by Populus for The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, at the University of Birmingham, has found that the UK public value the short-term care for life during the current coronavirus crisis

ahead of protecting the longer-term economic prosperity of the country.

[A poll](#)

[of 2,093 adults in the UK found that 55% agreed that the health of today's](#)

[older generations](#) is more important than long term economic prosperity of future generations, and only 8% disagreed.

There were differences between generations, though as those aged 55 and over (58%) were most likely to agree with the statement than those 34 and under (49%).

The UK public agreed with prioritizing protecting human lives in the short term ahead of prioritizing future economic prosperity (Mean score = -2.89, where -5.00 is protecting [human lives](#) and +5.00 is prioritizing economic prosperity).

The British public also value of the importance of compassion and care in the current coronavirus crisis.

The poll also found that people value care and compassion in others (68%), in leaders and senior politicians (44%), and as a [character](#) virtue that is important to wellbeing (25%) at this time.

Again, though, there were generational differences, with [younger people](#) aged under 35 valuing compassion in others less (62%) than those aged over 55 (75%); less in leaders and senior politicians (42%) than older people (46%); but equally in terms of the value to personal wellbeing (25%).

Having good judgment (66%) was most valued in leaders/senior political

figures, with older people aged 55 and over (78%) valuing this more highly than those under 35 (57%).

These findings, overall, reflect the importance both in recognizing character virtues in people around us, as well as the importance of character to our own wellbeing. We value the judgment and wisdom of our leaders, but recognize, at all ages and locations, the need for care and compassion at this time of crisis.

Professor James Arthur OBE, director of the Jubilee Centre, said, "We are living in unprecedented times, and this crisis is affecting everyone, young and old. What this [poll](#) shows is the importance to people of having good character, particularly the moral virtue of compassion, which is seen in others around us, in our senior leaders, and as vital to our own wellbeing."

Other notable findings include:

- After being compassionate/caring, older people (aged 45+) most value being resilient as important to personal [wellbeing](#), where [young people](#) (18-24) value being motivated;
- Older people (45+) value compassion and caring, community awareness and being of service to others in those around them more so than younger people (18-24), who value wisdom and being motivated more than their older peers;
- There are [regional differences](#) in valuing compassion in others, with London and Scotland valuing [compassion](#) and care the least, and the South West and Wales valuing it the most;
- Socio-economic groups did not affect the data as much as regional and geographic distinctions;
- Young people were also more likely than older people to say they will participate in their communities once the crisis is over as well as place more value on public services, than older peers.

Provided by University of Birmingham

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