NEW RESEARCH YIELDS VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO CONTRASTING EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSES TO COVID-19

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Parallel polls in the United Kingdom and Italy by data firm AUSPEX International show the UK following a similar 'psychological arc' to Italy, but with key differences, such as the former embracing a more authoritarian approach – preferring martial law to the monitoring of personal data – and the latter diverging from the EU into the orbit of China and Russia.

Data-driven communications consultancy AUSPEX International today publishes the findings of online behavioural research comparing emotional and behavioural responses to the Covid-19 pandemic among residents of the UK and Italy.

Scientists calculate that the UK is tracking approximately two weeks behind Italy in the trajectory of the Covid-19 outbreak, and appears to be following a similar 'psychological arc' in its battle with the virus – but with some key differences.

- Almost 70% of Italians believe their country now faces the "highest state of emergency", compared to 38% of Britons, who lag behind in their perception of the gravity of the crisis.
- Italy is turning a corner in the public mood that is still some way off for the UK, with 32% of Italians saying "We have just begun to understand how to win", while 30% of Britons believe "We have just crossed the threshold into the unknown".
- Nearly half of UK residents feel that life is more chaotic now than a month ago, compared to only a third of Italians. There is also a significant difference in optimism between the two countries, with nearly 30% of Italians believing that their country's situation is likely to improve in the next month, but only 12% of Britons.
- UK residents' biggest fear (56%) is of people they know getting sick or dying from the virus, while the biggest concern for Italians is the potential collapse of the economy (60%).
- While both countries' residents overwhelmingly approve of measures such as closing pubs and restaurants and enforced staying at home, they diverge on the imposition of martial law (with 28% of Britons approving, compared to 21% of Italians) and the monitoring of personal data (17% in the UK vs 23% in Italy).
- The UK may have already left the European Union, but the crisis appears to be driving Italy towards the exit as well, with 64% of Italians feeling "Somewhat further apart" or "Much further apart" from the EU – and closer to Russia (50%) and China (74%).

Further data analysis by AUSPEX, using advanced segmentation algorithms, has revealed the populations of each country dividing into five broad groups as they struggle to cope with the effects of the outbreak, with implications for the tailoring of official messaging to encourage positive behaviours and discourage negative ones as the lockdown continues.

Commenting on the findings, AUSPEX Chairman, Ahmad Al-Khatib said:

"By comparing the results in the two countries, we were able to identify different audiences or segments that have a tendency to assume either constructive or destructive behaviours, and to use these insights to help improve the effectiveness of government communications going forward."

AUSPEX Managing Director, Mark Turnbull commented:

"We all have different emotional responses to this crisis, as our analysis shows. And while simple, universal messages, such as 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives' are crucial in helping to slow the spread of the disease in the early stages, managing expectations on more sensitive issues like the lifting of the lockdown may require a more nuanced approach."

Research methodology

- The survey sample was 2,001 respondents in each country – representative by age, gender, region and socioeconomic class, and weighted to ensure a perfect match between the sample and target population of adults.
- AUSPEX used computer assisted web interviewing / self-administered questionnaires, including sections such as zeitgeist; coronavirus knowledge, perceptions and impact; behavioural

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responses and intentions towards Covid-19; media consumption; lifestyle.
- Over 70 online panels were used simultaneously, to adjust for the biases coming from individual panels.

A full infographic report of the findings can be viewed using the following link: www.auspex.ai/covid

or downloaded from the company's website using the following link: www.auspex.ai/coviddownload

Notes to Editors

About AUSPEX International

AUSPEX is a geopolitical communications consultancy focusing on political, social and developmental campaigns that deliver positive outcomes. The company blends acute strategic insight and in-depth understanding of political campaigning with cutting-edge data analytics and behavioural science methods, to help governments, political parties and NGOs to design and deliver more effective communications.

AUSPEX team members have over 30 years' experience in both the political and commercial spheres, including dozens of election campaigns across five continents. Clients have included heads of state, governments, political parties and social movements, as well as regional and national tourism and investment promotion agencies. Projects have ranged from complex political and social research projects to full-scale campaign management.

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