



MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
MALAYSIA



# Online Survey on Public's Understanding, Attitude and Practice Related to Social Distancing

*(\* Now known as Physical Distancing)*

19 JUNE – 19 JULY 2020 ( Initial RMC0 Phase)  
Study ID: NMRR-20-1052-55093

*Institut Penyelidikan Tingkahlaku Kesihatan*  

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*Institute for Health Behavioural Research*

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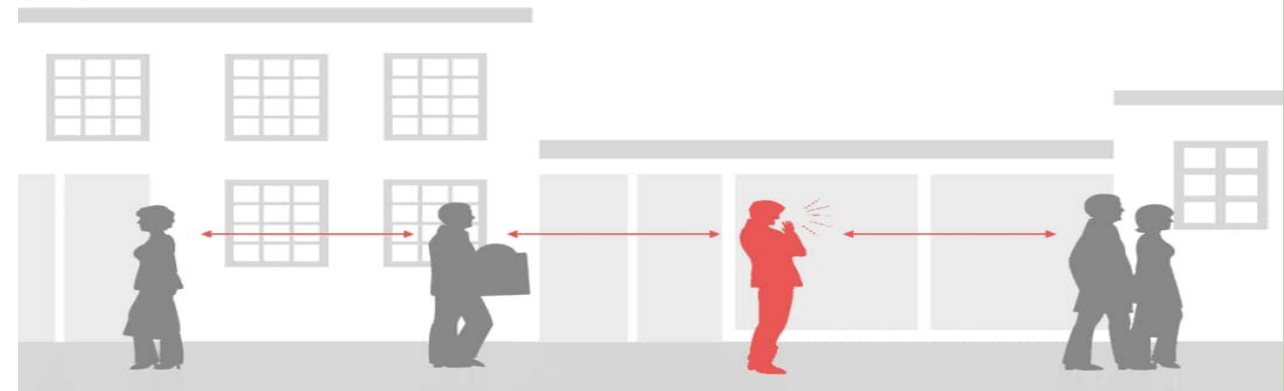
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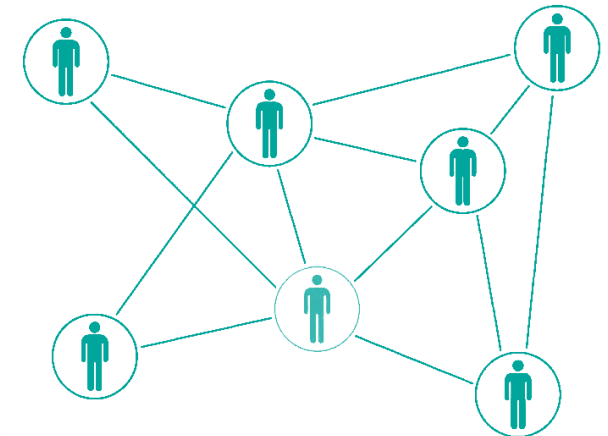


## INTRODUCTION

- While a vaccine is unavailable at the present time, social distancing is one of Ministry of Malaysia's (MOH) key recommended prevention measures for COVID-19 as this measure has proven to be very effective in controlling the spread of the pandemic COVID-19 [1]. Research on social distancing revealed ambivalent public views. Therefore it's important to explore further public's knowledge, self-reported adherence, perceptions and behavior related to social distancing.

## STUDY AIM

- To assess public's knowledge, attitude and practice related to Social Distancing during COVID-19 pandemic (between **19 JUNE – 19 JULY 2020**).



# Methodology

1

## STUDY DESIGN & DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A Cross-Sectional Online Survey. Survey posted via MOH webmaster an social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp)

2

## SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Non Probability Sampling; Unrestricted, Self-selected Survey And Snowballing Method.

3

## TARGET POPULATION

Malaysian internet user aged 18 years and above

4

## STUDY INSTRUMENT

A Pretested & Validated questionnaire on Social Distancing

5

## DATA COLLECTION PERIOD

19 June - 19 July 2020  
(During RMCO Phase)

6

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

Medical Research Ethics Registry (MREC), NMRR-20-1052-55093

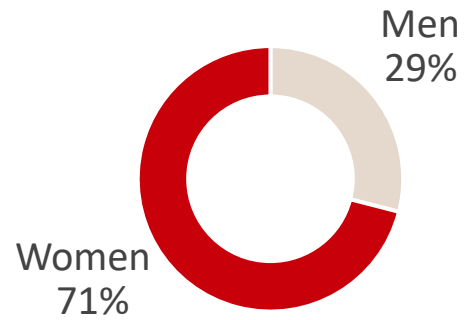
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## TOTAL RESPONSE

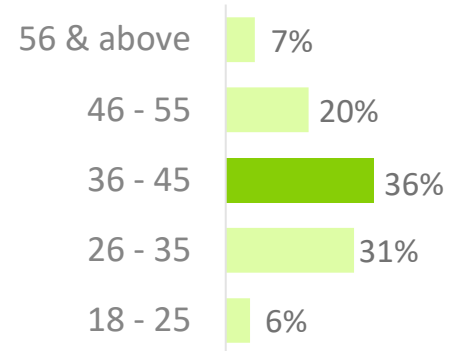
3489 respondents responded  
99.2% (3460 agreed to participate)

# Respondents Profile (n= 3460)

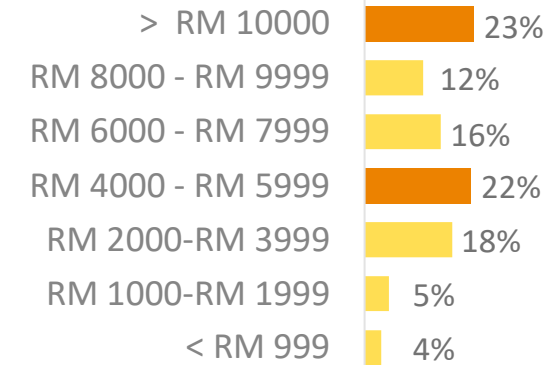
## Gender



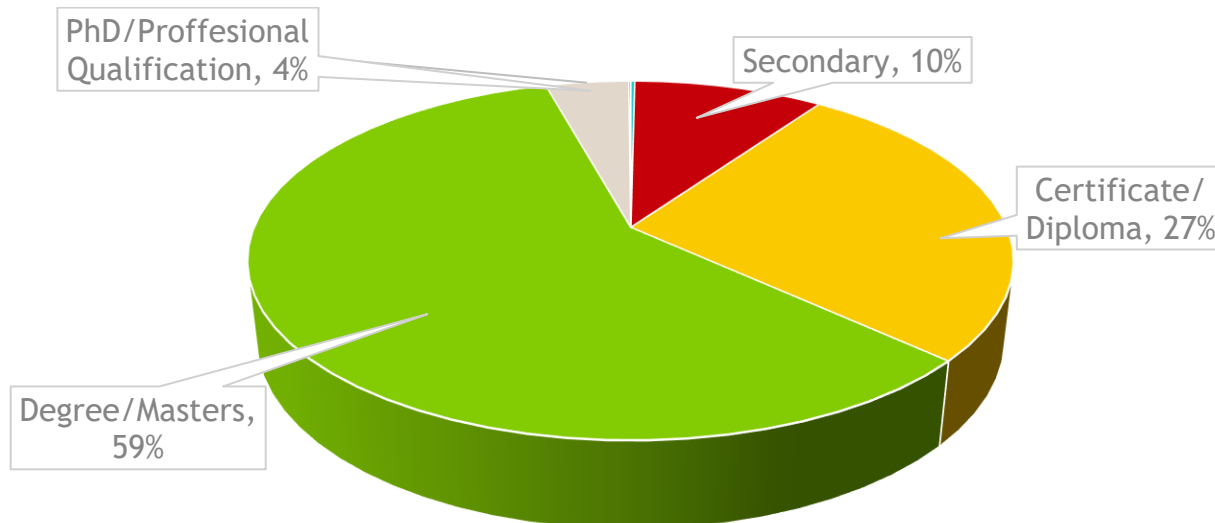
## Age



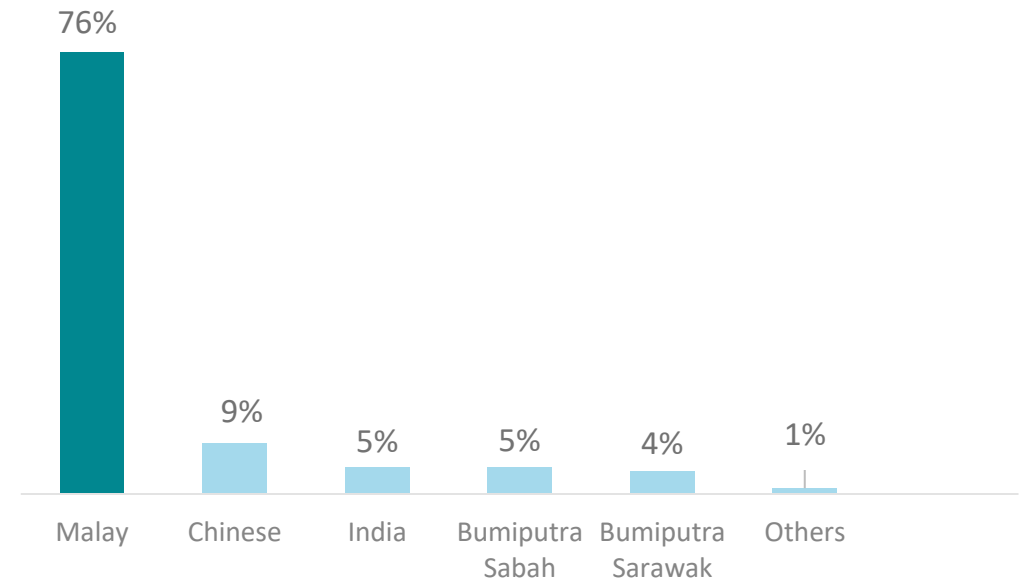
## Income



## Education



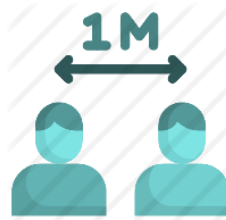
## Race



# Knowledge on Social Distancing

**99.3%**

have to keep a distance at least 1 metre away from others



**96.8%**

avoid gathering in groups



**99.1%**

avoid crowded places



**99.2%**

avoid mass gathering

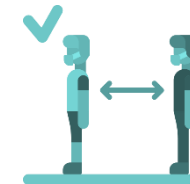


Respondent  
know ...



**99.3%**

avoid touching gestures when greeting people eg : *Bersalam* or handshake



**98.8%**

to keep Physical Distance from someone



**93%**

Disagree Social Distancing means to stop communicate with someone

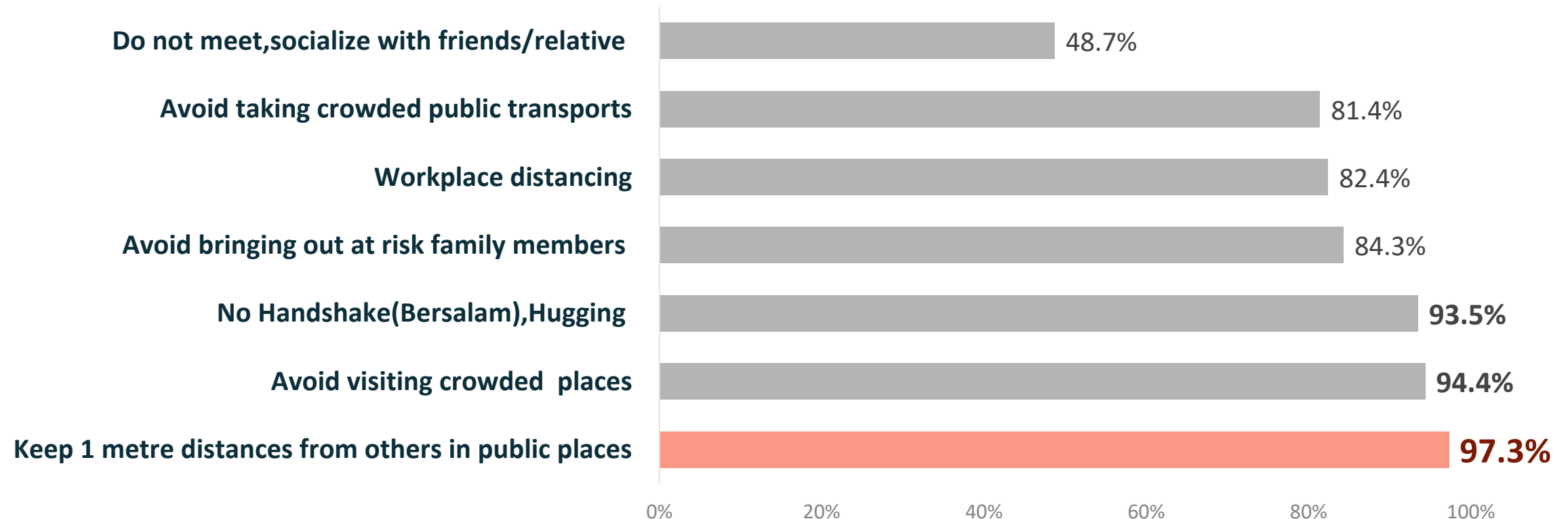
# Respondents Current Social Distancing Practices

98.8%

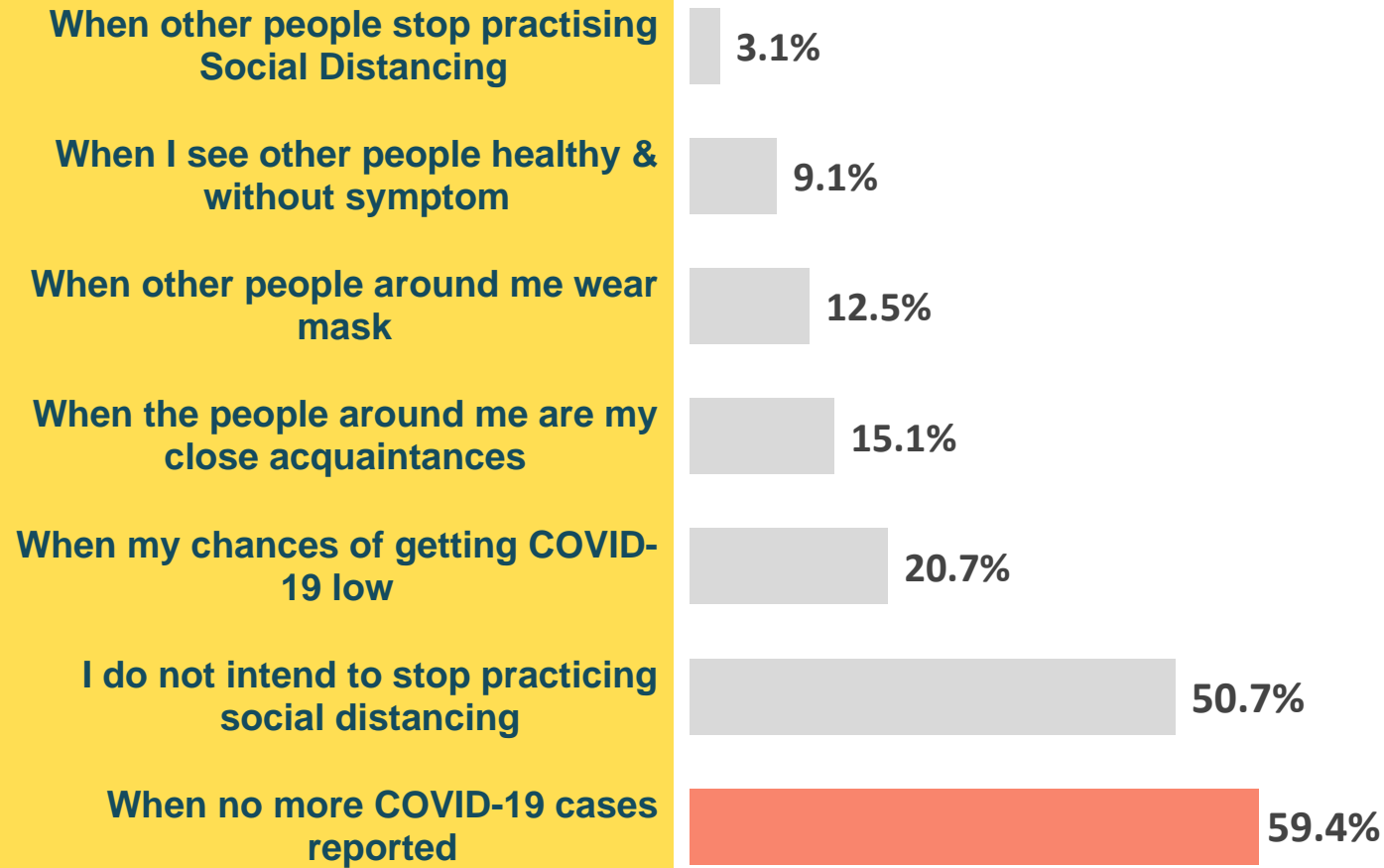
Report **practising** Social Distancing as advised by MOH

77.5%

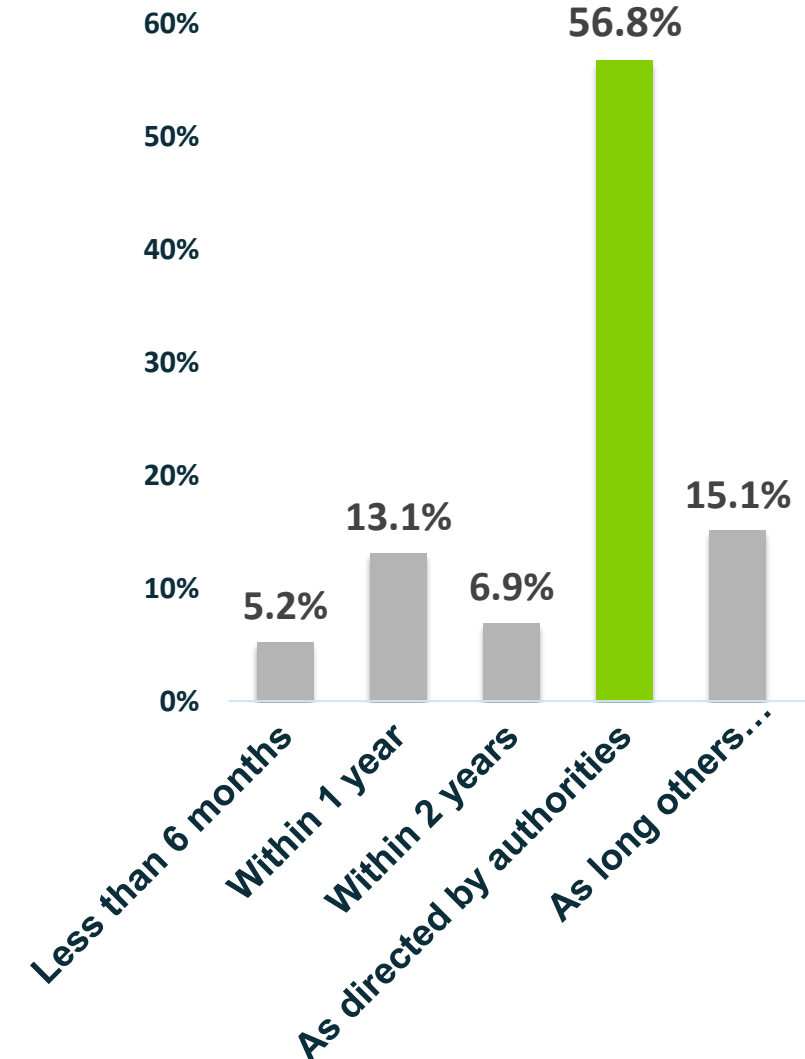
**Intend to continue practising** Social Distancing even after RMCO ends



## When Respondents Will Stop Practicing Social Distancing ?



## Duration of Time Period Respondents Can Tolerate Social Distancing





## Locations Difficult To Practice Social Distancing



**52.2%** says difficult to do Social Distancing at **Wholesale/Wet Market**



**44.1%** says difficult to do Social Distancing at **Shopping Malls/Complex**



**42.8%** says difficult to do Social Distancing at **Sundry/Grocery Shops, Convenient Store**



**40.2%** says difficult to do Social Distancing at **Supermarket/Hypermarkets**

## Locations Seen Others Not Practising Social Distancing



**55.6%** seen others not practising Social Distancing at **Wholesale/Wet Market**



**50.8%** seen others not practising Social Distancing at **Shopping Malls/Complex**



**47.1%** seen others not practising Social Distancing at **Sundry/Grocery Shops, Convenient Store**



**42.9%** seen others not practising Social Distancing at **Supermarket/Hypermarkets**



**42.9%** seen others not practising Social Distancing at **Restaurants**

## Reasons Difficult To Practise Social Distancing



## PERCEPTION ON BENEFITS OF PRACTICING PHYSICAL DISTANCING



REDUCES PERSONAL RISK OF COVID-19 INFECTION

94.7% Agreed



STOPS COVID 19 TRANSMISSION IN COMMUNITY

91.9% Agreed



OWN HEALTH IS PROTECTED

82.9% Agreed



HEALTH OF PEOPLE AROUND IS PROTECTED

82.5 % Agreed



TO AVOID LOSS OF LIFE DUE TO COVID 19

67.8% Agreed

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL DISTANCING

82% Agree they will adhere strictly to social distancing as how during the MCO

97.2% Agree social distancing is the new normal need to be adapted

97% Agree will practice social distancing seriously as everybody potential to be infected

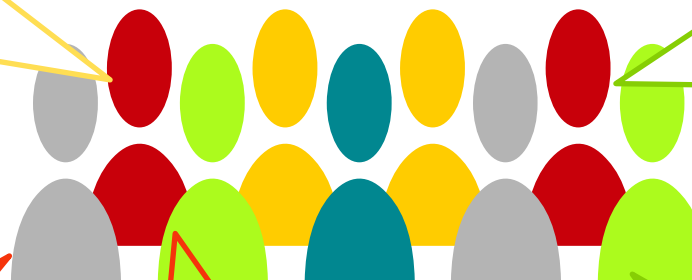
89% Agree law action taken on owner of premises /business operations that doesn't follow SOP guidelines

95.9% Agree social distancing effective measure to control the spread of COVID-19 infection

91.4% Agree they get tensed when see others don't practice social distancing in public places

92% Agree they will be exposed to health severity of COVID 19 if don't practice social distancing

95.8% Agree social distancing is effective in reducing risk of getting infected with COVID 19



# Respondents Intentions To Practice 3W (WASH, WEAR, WARN)

## 1) Wash



**97.8%** Agreed to wash hands frequently with water and soap.



**89.8%** Agreed to bring own hand sanitizer and use it every time after touching surfaces at public

## 2) Wear



**85.2%** Agreed to wear face mask every time when leaving house

## 3) Warn



**95.6%** Agreed to avoid bringing out at-risk family members to the public place

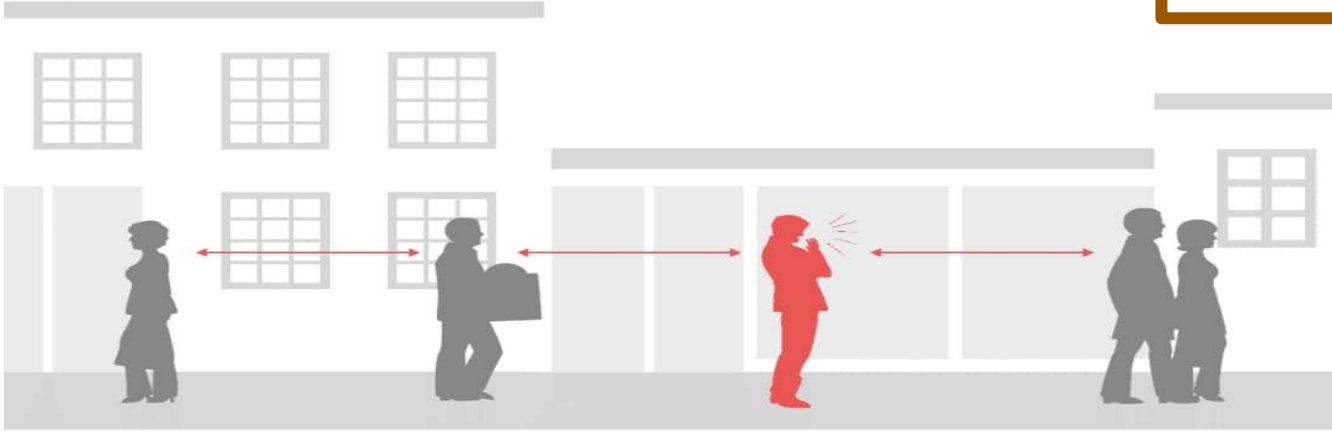
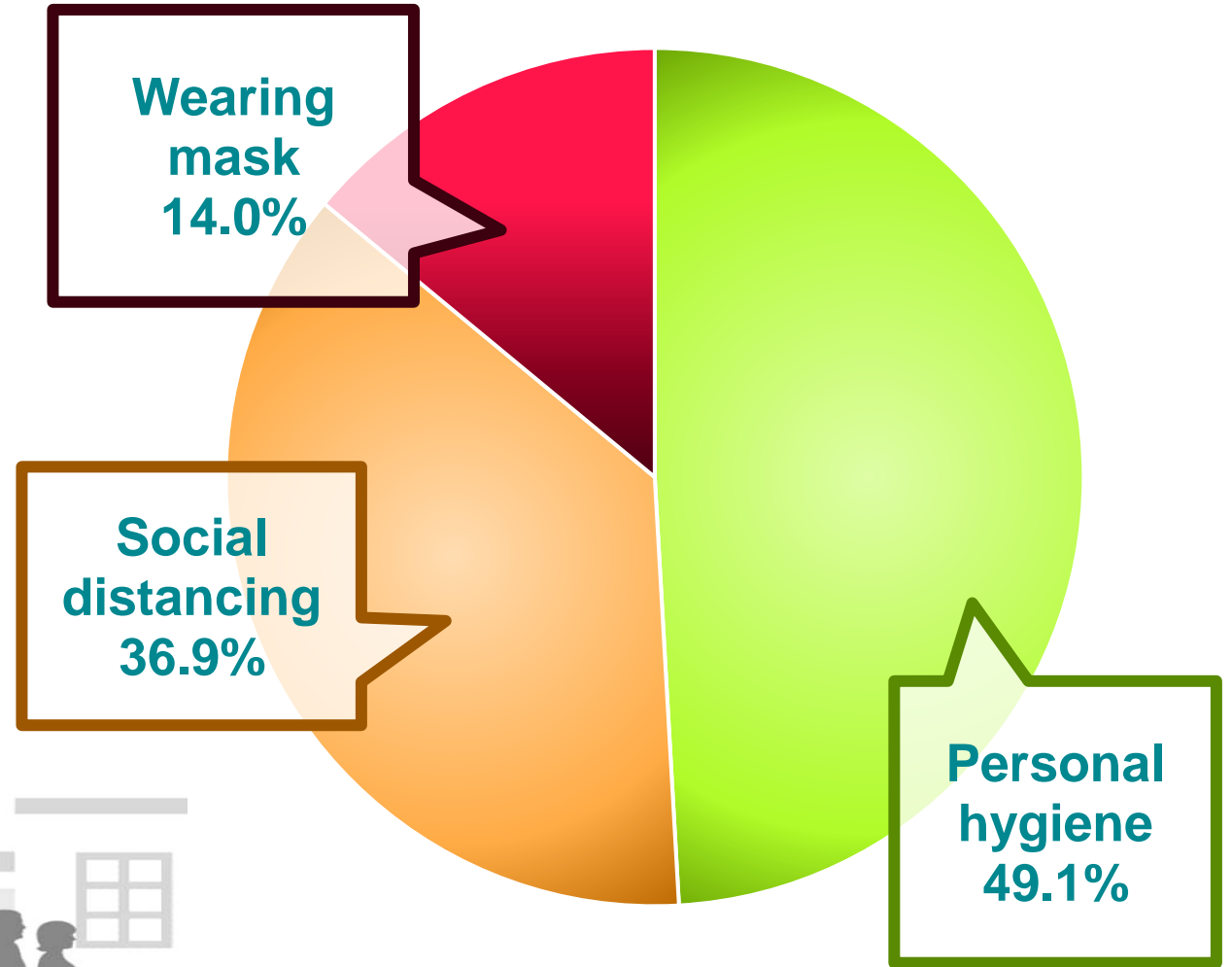


**95.1%** Agreed to seek treatment at hospital or clinic if develop symptoms like fever, cough.

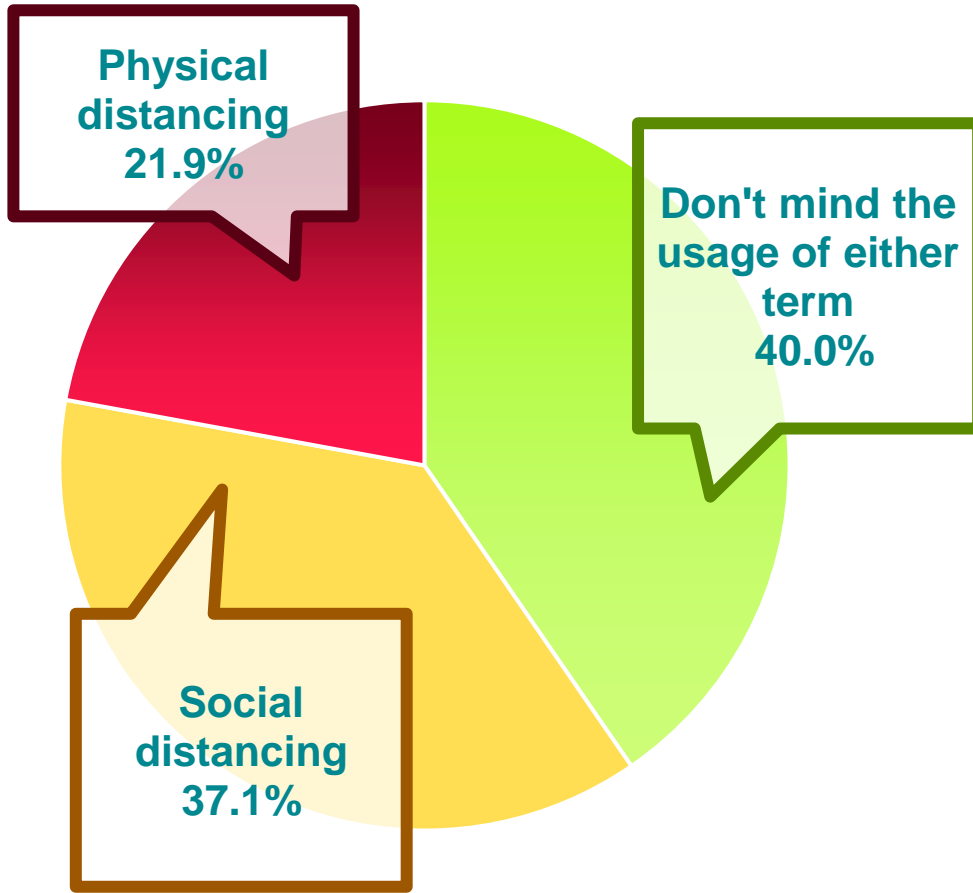


**79.0%** Agreed to avoid hanging out for leisure activities with friend or working colleagues

# Respondents Ranking on **MOST IMPORTANT COVID-19 PREVENTION PRACTICE**



# Respondents opinion on **APPROPRIATE TERM : SOCIAL DISTANCING OR PHYSICAL DISTANCING ?**



## Why choose **SOCIAL DISTANCING** Term ?

- *A term people **already used to. Less confusion...***
- *“Istilah sosial **lebih sesuai** untuk digunakan **menggambarkan sesuatu** yg berkaitan dengan perihal masyarakat...”*
- *“Istilah ini **digunakan dari mula PKP diperkenalkan dan telah digunakan di semua tempat**, sekiranya diubah ramai yang mungkin tidak memahaminya..”*

## Why choose **PHYSICAL DISTANCING** Term ?

- *“**Clearer and precise...**”*
- *“It is more **understandable** for our community as there is 'physical' visual as compared to 'social'...”*
- *“Istilah tersebut **menepati tata perlakuan yang di kehendaki** dalam usaha memutuskan rantai Covid-19. Mudah di fahami oleh segenap lapisan masyarakat...”*

# CONCLUSION



Survey findings showed generally respondents have **high knowledge and positive attitudes** towards **practice of Social Distancing (SD)**.

However **there were discrepancies** in their response **towards practice component**



Majority (**> 95%**) responded **practicing SD** as advised by MOH such as keeping at least one meter distance and avoiding crowded places

But, **50%** responded they had **difficulties practicing SD** at **certain public places** such as wholesale or wet market, shopping malls, supermarkets/ hypermarkets and grocery stores.





# CONCLUSION



The **two main reasons** affecting their SD practices are due to **confined spaces in building, public places or transport** and **when other people don't practice it**, possibly attributed to nature of human to follow **common practiced norms in society**.

**Majority** of respondents **perceived benefit** of practicing SD is it helps **to reduce COVID-19 infection risk** only around **60% agreed** that it **helps to avoid loss of life**.



Only around **60% agreed** that it **helps to avoid loss of life**. This can be possibly explained by **low incident of death cases** in this country that may had caused public to **perceive COVID-19 as not life threatening**.

**Personal Hygiene** is ranked as the **most important** COVID-19 prevention measure followed by **social distancing** and **wearing mask**.

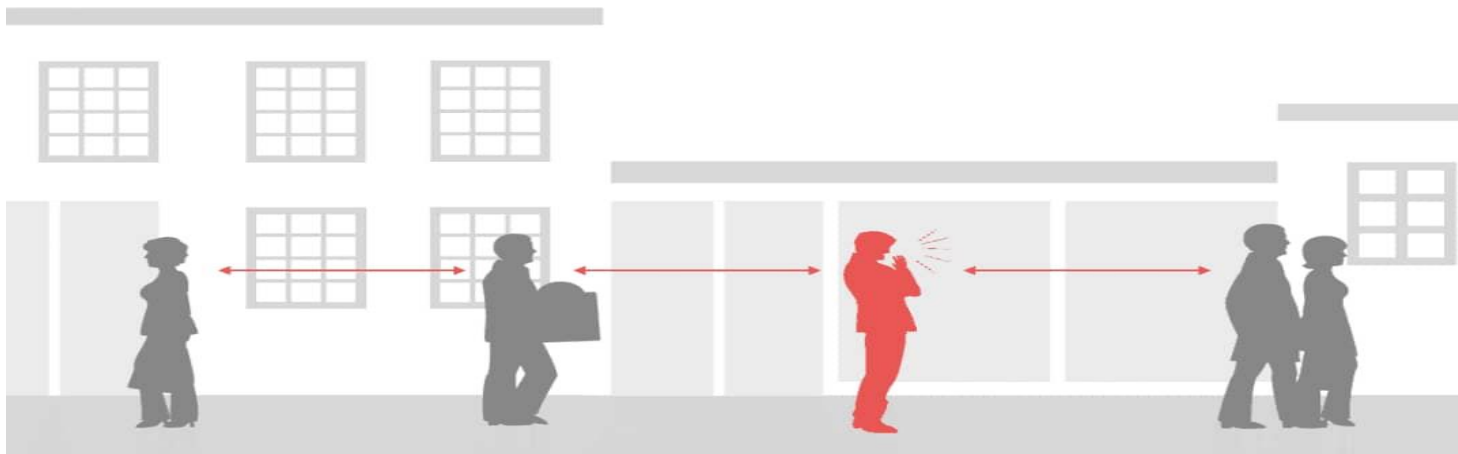


# CONCLUSION



Regardless to high level of knowledge portrayed by respondents in this survey, due to human tendency of **needing close interactions** [4] and the **need to follow the common norms practiced** in society and having poorer control over it, it affects the practice of SD.

**Strict enforcement** of Government **on Standard Operating Procedures for Social Distancing** at public places will **enhance the adherence to this practice among public.**



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# LIMITATIONS

Non probability sampling method used, and the survey was web-based, therefore is a potential for selection bias and unrepresentativeness of the study population. However the study findings can present an approximate or proxy indication on general public views regarding social distancing measures.

This study was conducted at the initial stage of RMCO whereby the term Social Distancing was still in use. Starting August 2020, the official terminology used by MOH is Physical Distancing.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the Director General of Health Malaysia for his permission to present and share this research findings.



# REFERENCES

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4. Mukherjee, Nabanita & Das, Arindam. (2020). Knowledge, attitude and perceived effectiveness about social distancing during COVID-19. *International Journal of Advanced Education and Research* ISSN: 2455-5746; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.34 Received: 05-05-2020; Accepted: 07-05-2020; Published: 18-06-2020 [www.alleducationjournal.com](http://www.alleducationjournal.com) Volume 5; Issue 3; 2020; Page No. 69-76
5. Public perceptions and experiences of social distancing and social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic: A UK-based focus group study Simon N Williams, Christopher J Armitage, Tova Tampe, Kimberly Dienes *medRxiv* 2020.04.10.20061267; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.10.20061267>