

# How long is it until we see the signs of anger?

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What has amazed me throughout the coronavirus crisis has been how compliant populations have been. Fear has been the predominant sentiment, and because of that people have done what has been asked of them. I'm not saying that is wrong: what I am suggesting is that this period may be coming to an end.

There have, of course, been periods of stress. Dominic Cumming's trip to Barnard Castle helped no one because his explanation of it was simply not credible. The prospect of further successful lockdowns thereafter was reduced. The exam fiasco was, however, more significant: public anger forced change upon the government. I strongly suspect that two further factors are now going to deliver the same outcome.

Firstly, any attempt to impose widespread heavy fines upon the community for failing to lockdown is going to cause anger and resentment, particularly when it is literally impossible to know what the rules are on any one day. Unless considerable constraint is shown it will be very easy for the legal system to be overwhelmed by any attempt to impose lockdown through the courts. For those who doubt this, just think back to the era of the poll-tax non-compliance: the courts were overwhelmed with cases and policy had to change as a consequence.

That, however, will not be the most significant point of friction unless the police get carried away with their new powers, which I hope they do not. Instead, the most significant friction will, once again, come through the education system. There are two issues here, both of which could explode quite soon.

The first is, of course, the position of university students. I completely understand why students have returned to university, even when it was already apparent that their student experience was not going to be normal. Purely pragmatically, for most young people between 18 and 21 there are a few other options but study at present. Work is already desperately scarce. The option of volunteering has all but disappeared. Travel is virtually impossible. Going to university makes sense in that case.

But, government failure to deliver an effective test and trace system that makes

working anywhere safe has undermined universities' chances of supplying anything like a normal undergraduate experience for most students.

And coronavirus lockdowns are destroying the at least as important opportunity for life experience that university provides.

Of course students are angry, most especially when they are accumulating debt at a rate of more than £1,000 a month for this non-experience. And their parents are angry to, as I know from talking to them.

It is not going to be long before this situation explodes, and when it does expect massive knock-on consequences, including courts being overwhelmed with rent non-payment litigation. Unless the government gets their act together on this issue they are in very deep trouble indeed.

The same can also be said of a second issue, and that is next year's school examinations. Only Scotland has, so far, shown any initiative on this issue, but the likelihood is that fair examinations of 16 and 18-year-olds cannot happen next year using current systems. This will only be exacerbated as the scale of lockdowns increases.

Again, stress is going to rise unless arrangements are put in place to ensure that fairness is going to happen. Already it would seem essential that a mix of assessment and teacher grading be used to compensate for the fact that many students have lost significant parts of their education, but which parts of the curriculum will have been forgone by each student will differ, meaning that a coordinated exam approach is almost impossible to deliver already. I predict as much anger will be forthcoming on this issue in due course as happened over the summer of 2020.

People were compliant with coronavirus demands because they shared a sentiment in common, which was fear. People share other sentiments as well. Another is a sense of justice. And then there is hope for younger generations, which is an almost universal sentiment. Injustice matched with the denial of hope to young people is a powerful motivator to populations at large, and not just the young people directly affected. There is a rebellion looming in this country at present because the government does not appear to appreciate this. This anger may not spill over, but I will be astonished if it doesn't.