Public attitudes to Coronavirus

April summary

Public attitudes team, COVID modelling and analysis hub

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Introduction

This report includes some high level findings from recent polling work on public attitudes to the Coronavirus pandemic in Scotland. It is not intended to provide comprehensive analysis of the large amount of polling information available, but rather to draw together findings on some key indicators.

This report contains brief descriptions and explanations of the included measures.

The Coronavirus pandemic represents a rapidly changing situation, and the polling surveys have been developed at pace. Results should be interpreted in that context, recognising the limitations of the data sources, detailed below.

Data sources

The sources are the Ipsos MORI Global Advisor dataset and a YouGov weekly surveys of respondents in Scotland. In the former, data are collected online by Ipsos MORI as part of a multi-country survey on the Global Advisor platform. Scottish Government commissioned a Scotland boost to the UK sample in this study. The YouGov weekly survey was a bespoke commission by Scottish Government. Further information about these sources can be found in Annex A.

Scottish Government receives weekly outputs from these sources, and this report contains results for the six week period from the week commencing 16 March to the week ending 24 April 2020, inclusive. Due to the evolving situation and responses to Coronavirus, some questions were not asked at all waves. The dates included in the charts denote the fieldwork dates from the wave of the survey that the data point relates to.

Throughout this report, the data source used is clearly denoted.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in the research methodologies used in this polling research. The sample sizes (see annex A for details) limit meaningful subgroup analysis. Both surveys are based on non-probability research panels, which means representativeness is achieved using quotas. Furthermore, the nature of online research also inherently excludes those who do not have internet access. These data sources nevertheless provide useful and timely information, as long as appropriate caveats are applied.

As each of the surveys has been conducted using a quota sample, rather than a random probability sample, statistical significance can only be used on an indicative basis. Differences over the survey waves are only highlighted if they are likely to be significant, however not all significant differences have been described.

Overall trends and key points

There are a number of trends observable across the polling data;

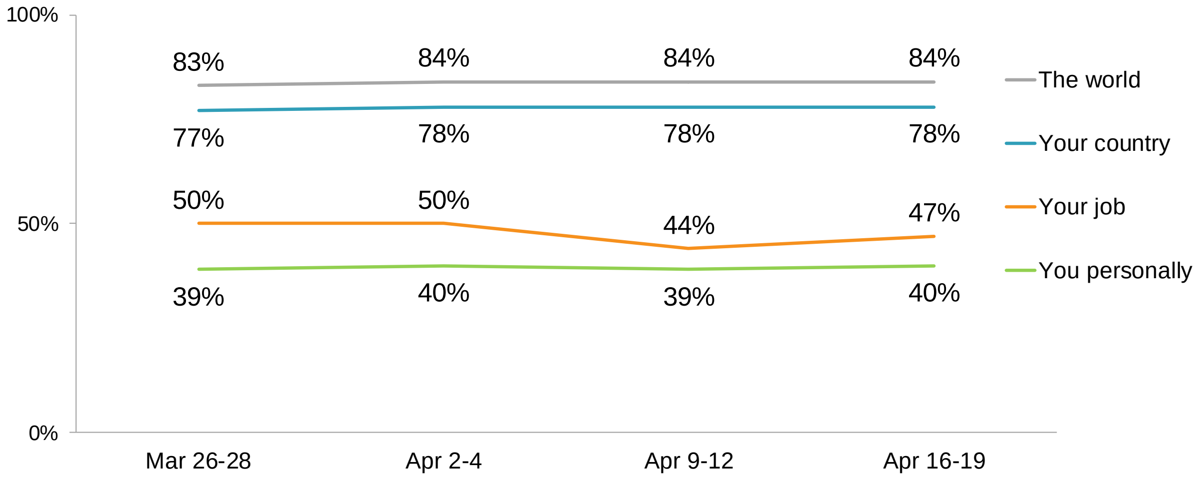
- Across a number of measures, attitudes shifted at the end of March but remained stable in April. In particular, levels of anxiety and worry associated with Coronavirus were high at the end of March but have fallen in April (while still remaining relatively high).
- Awareness of, and claimed adherence to, compliance measures was high and remained stable in April. There are, however, some indications that support for following government advice and staying at home has weakened recently though remains high.
- Concerns about the potential financial impacts of Coronavirus appear to be slightly higher than concerns about the health impacts, although the latter was taken increasingly seriously in April.
- The NHS was consistently rated highly in terms of doing a good job to contain the virus in April.
- Levels of trust in information from Scottish Government was similar to those for the World Health Organisation and Local Health Authorities[1].

Views on Coronavirus

Threat perception

Respondents were asked to what extent they perceive Coronavirus as a threat to a range of dimensions of life. As shown in Figure 1, over the past few weeks, the 'threat to country' was consistently perceived to be higher than the 'threat to your job', and 'threat to you personally'. However the threat 'to the world' was more likely to be considered a threat than any of these other aspects. Levels of perceived threat to each of these dimensions of life have remained remarkably consistent throughout the time period.

Figure 1: Proportion who consider there to be a very high/high threat from Coronavirus



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=652-668)

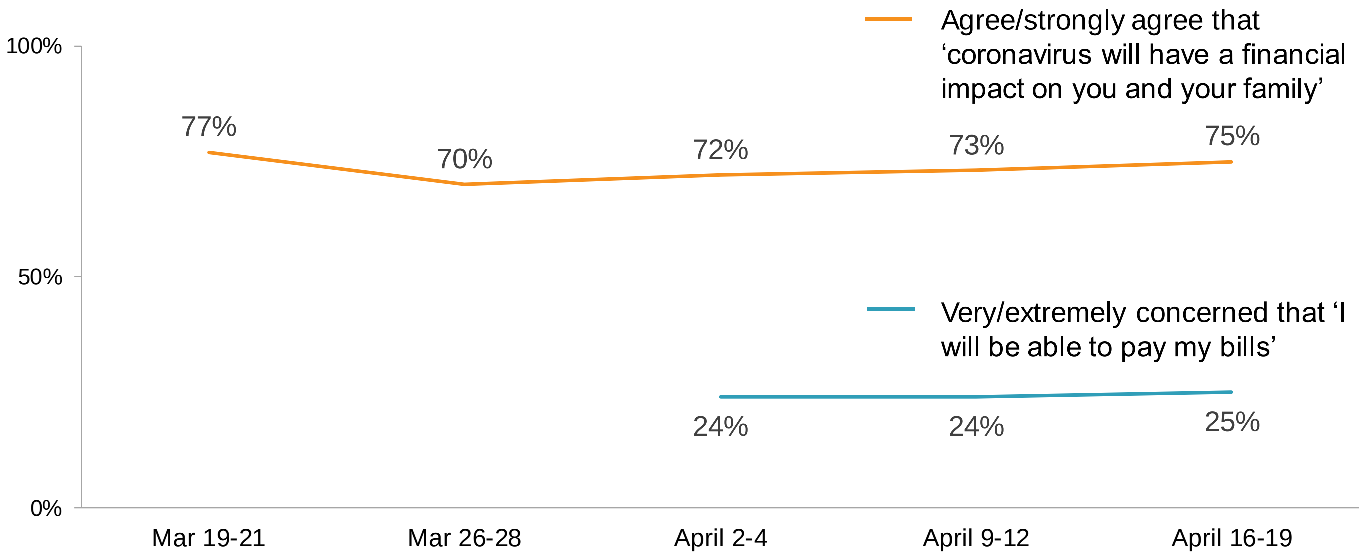
[1] This wording is used in the questionnaire as the survey is administered across multiple countries

Impact of Coronavirus

Financial impact

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements about financial impact and economic recovery, and also for their level of concern towards a number of different situations. As shown in Figure 2, three out of four respondents expect there to be a financial impact on themselves and their family; and a quarter were also very/extremely concerned about paying their bills. Results for these measures have remained relatively stable throughout April.

Figure 2: Proportion who agree/agree strongly or were very/extremely concerned with the statements shown

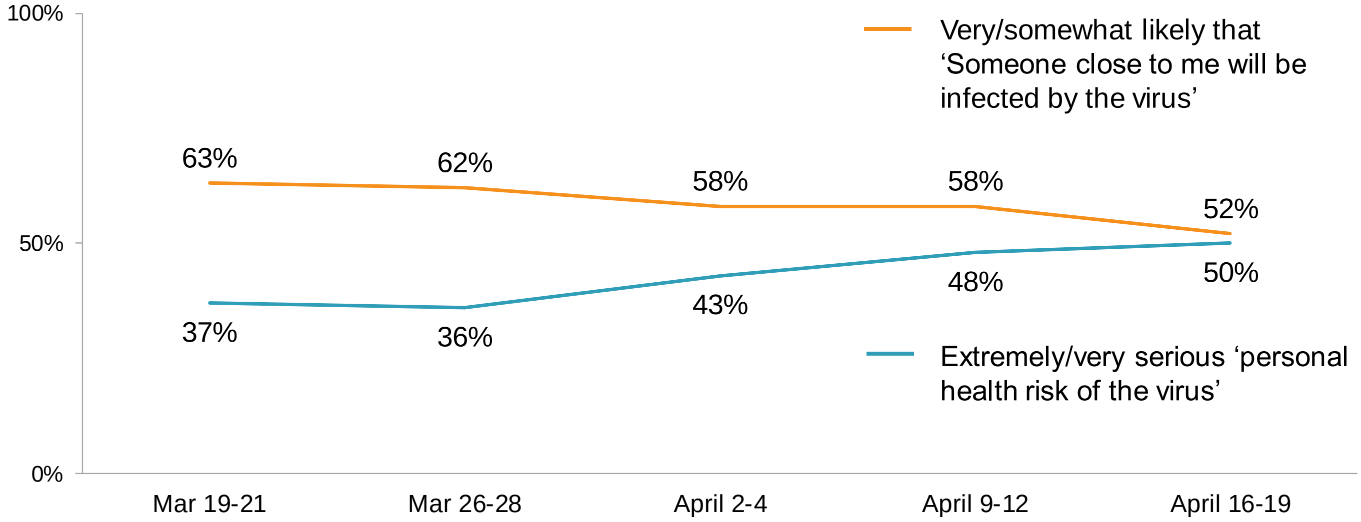


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=568-668)

Health impacts

To understand the perceived health risk of Coronavirus, respondents were asked how serious they considered the 'personal risk of the virus' to be. The proportion who considered it an extremely/very serious risk increased between the end of March and middle of April. Conversely, the proportion who thought it very/somewhat likely that someone close to them would be infected fell over the same period.

Figure 3: Proportion who answered extremely/very serious risk or very/somewhat likely to the statements shown



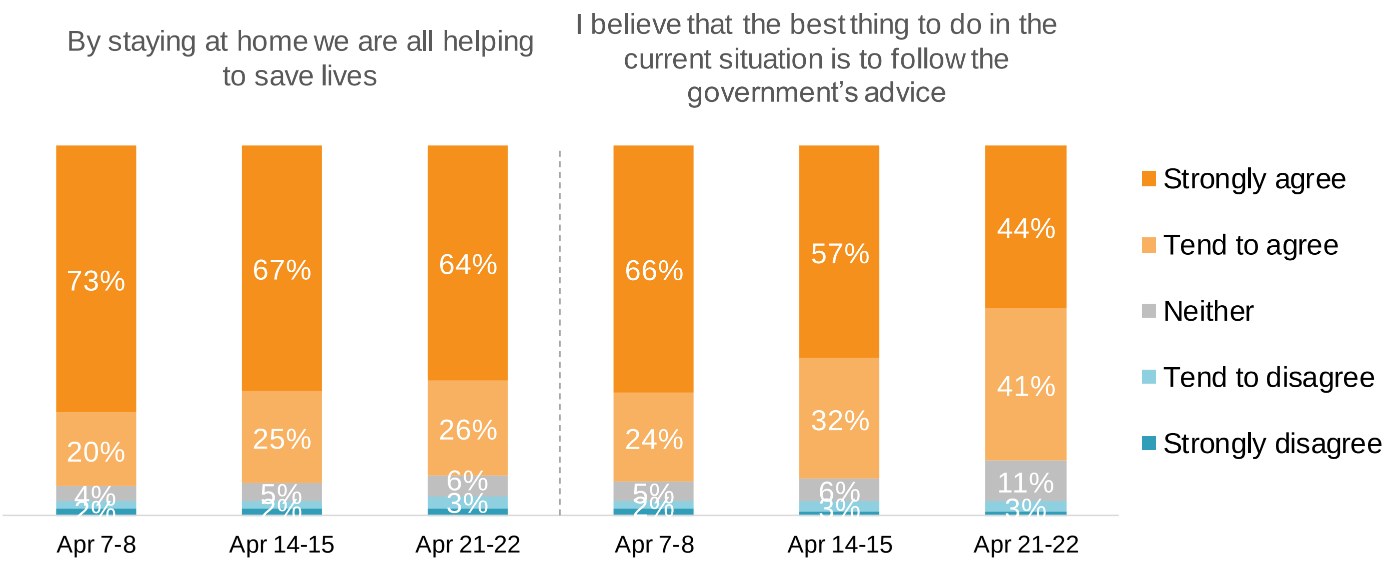
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=568-668)

Compliance

Views on guidance

Respondents were asked about their views on government guidance and advice. The vast majority agreed that the best thing to do is follow government advice; however, as shown in Figure 4, the proportion who strongly agreed with that statement has fallen over the past three survey waves. However, agreement overall remains high at 85%. There was also a slight fall in April in the proportion who strongly agree that 'by staying at home we are all helping to save lives'. Strong agreement with this statement nevertheless remains high at 64% of respondents.

Figure 4: Proportions who agreed or disagreed with each statement on government advice and guidance



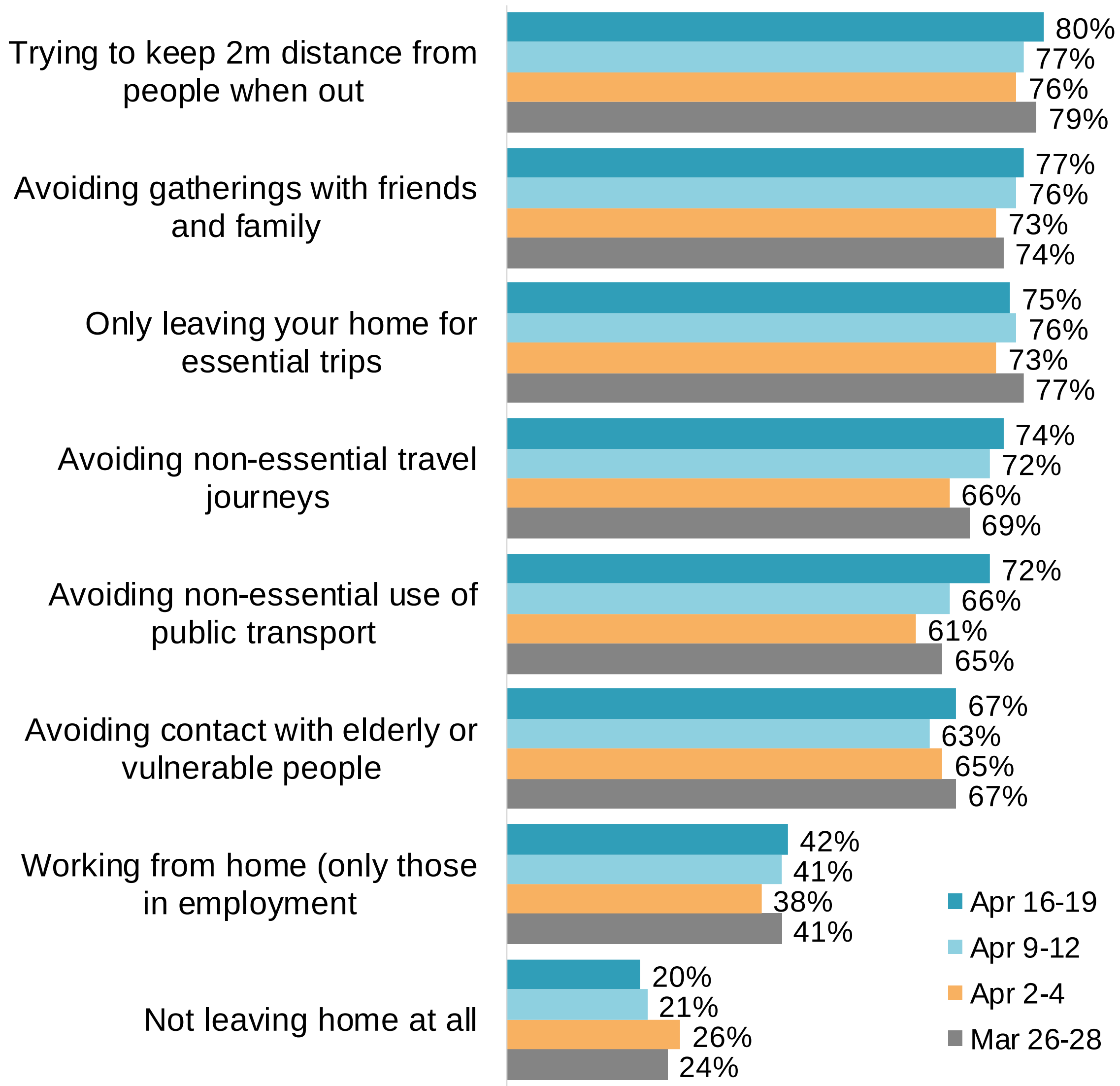
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1002-1042)

Levels of compliance

Respondents were asked which social distancing guidelines they were following from a list provided. As shown in Figure 5, the majority of respondents said they were following guidance about avoiding contact, gatherings and non-essential travel or trips, with relatively little change over the month. However, there are still a substantial minority of respondents not following each of the guidelines.

Of those who were employed, just under half said they were working from home. As many as one in four respondents indicated they were not leaving their home at all.

Figure 5: Proportions following each of the social distancing measures



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=652-668)

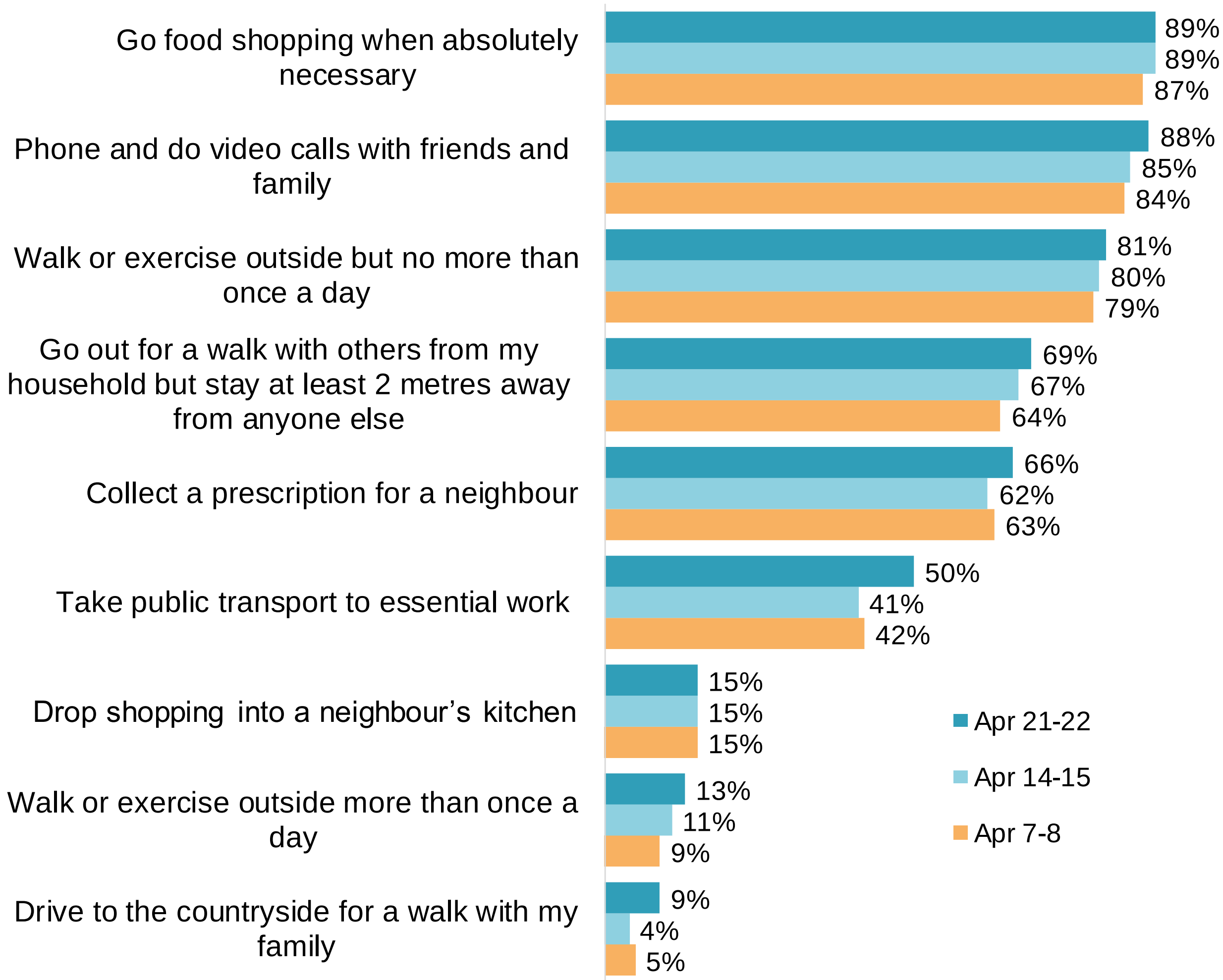
Knowledge of acceptable actions

Respondents were asked which of a list of actions were acceptable, given that the government has been asking people to stay at home. There was little change in people's perceptions throughout April.

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of respondents were aware that, in a household where no-one has symptoms, they can go food shopping, phone/video call friends and family, walk/exercise outside once a day and collect a prescription for a neighbour. Half were aware that they can take public transport to essential work, and this had increased in the latest survey wave.

Only a small proportion identified 'incorrect' actions as acceptable – dropping shopping into a neighbour's kitchen, walking/exercising outside more than once a day and driving to the countryside for a walk.

Figure 6: Proportions who think each of the below actions is acceptable in a household where no one has symptoms



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1002-1042)

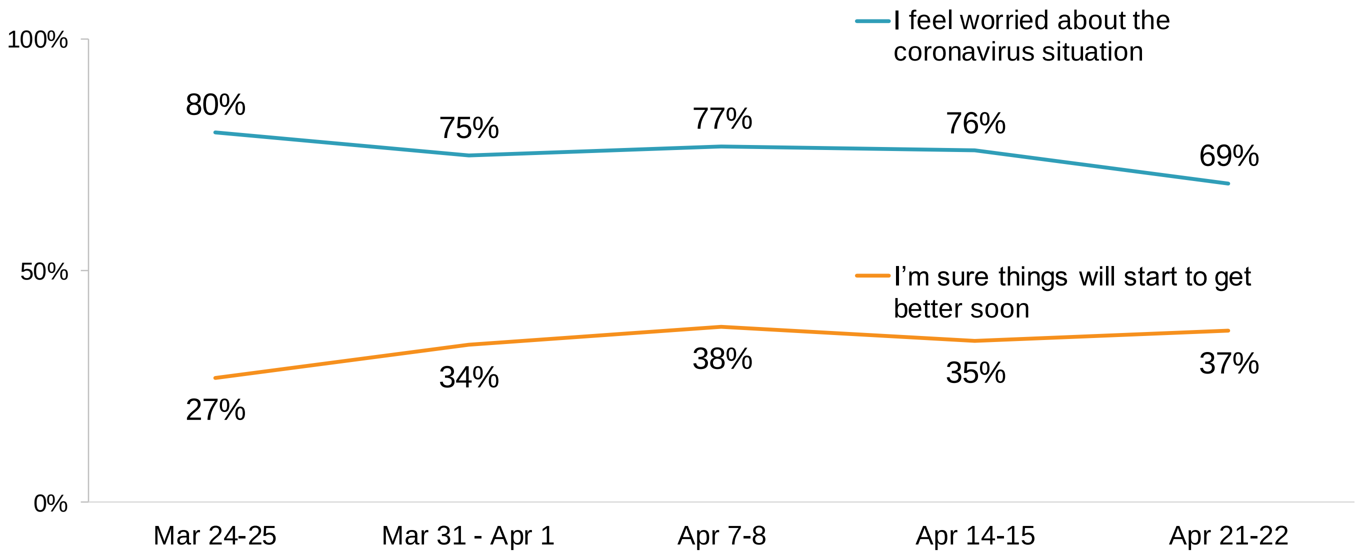
Wellbeing

Worry and optimism

To understand worry and optimism in relation to Coronavirus, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements shown in Figure 7.

The vast majority agreed or strongly agreed that they feel worried about the Coronavirus situation. There has, however, been a decline in the proportion feeling worried, compared with the end of March. This decline has been driven by a fall in those who strongly agreed with this statement (43% on March 24-25 compared with 25% on April 21-22). Similarly, the proportion who agreed with the statement that things will get better soon was higher in the most recent wave compared with the first wave.

Figure 7: Proportion of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with each statement



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=912-1042)

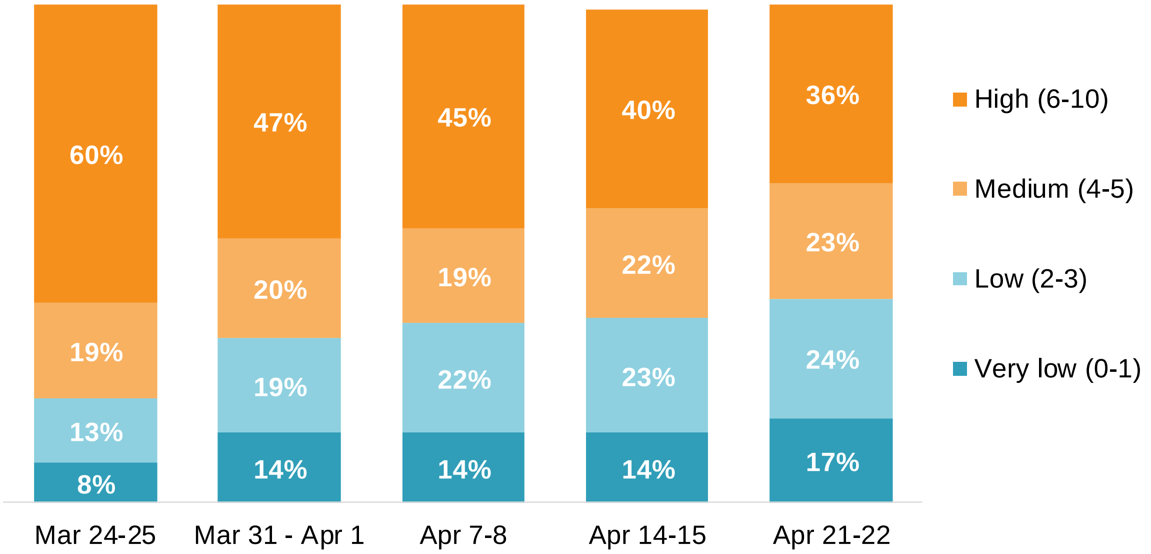
Levels of anxiety and happiness

The YouGov survey included two of the Office of National Statistics' (ONS) wellbeing questions[2] to measure levels of anxiety and happiness. Respondents were asked how anxious and how happy they felt 'yesterday', on a scale of 0 to 10.

As shown in Figure 8 overleaf, anxiety levels were very high towards the start of the lockdown period, but appear to have decreased throughout April.

[2]https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/surveysusingthe4officefornationalstatisticspersonalwellbeingquestions

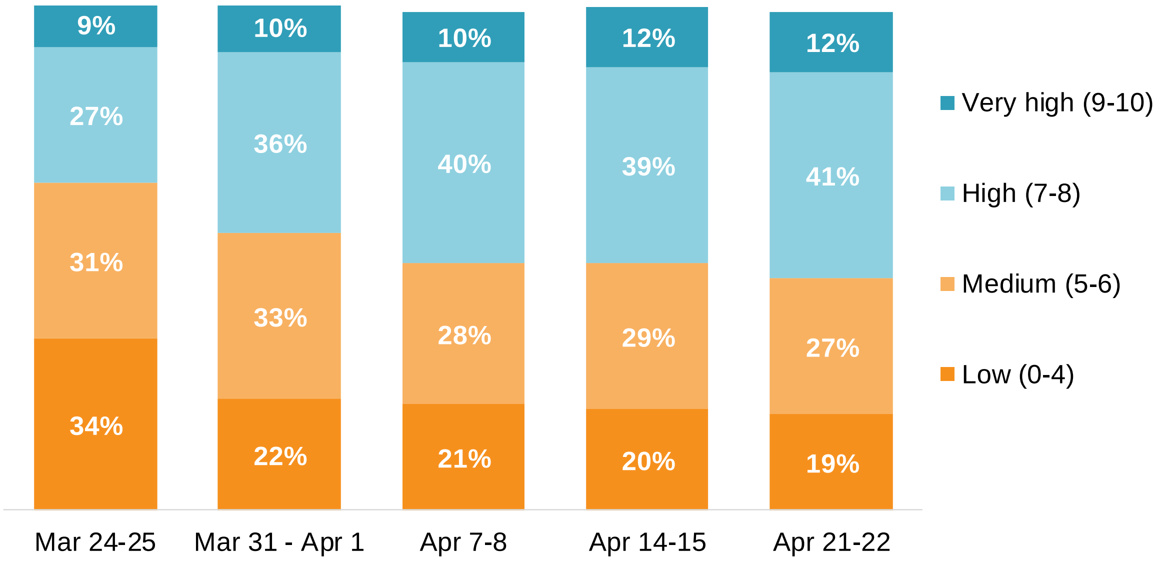
Figure 8: How anxious respondents felt yesterday on a scale of 0-10



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=912-1042)

Similarly, respondents were most likely to be unhappy (rating of 0-4) and least likely to be happy (rating of 7-8) at the end of March. Unhappiness levels fell at the start of April and remained stable throughout the remainder of the month; happiness increased in early April and has also stayed stable since then.

Figure 9: How happy respondents felt yesterday on a scale of 0-10



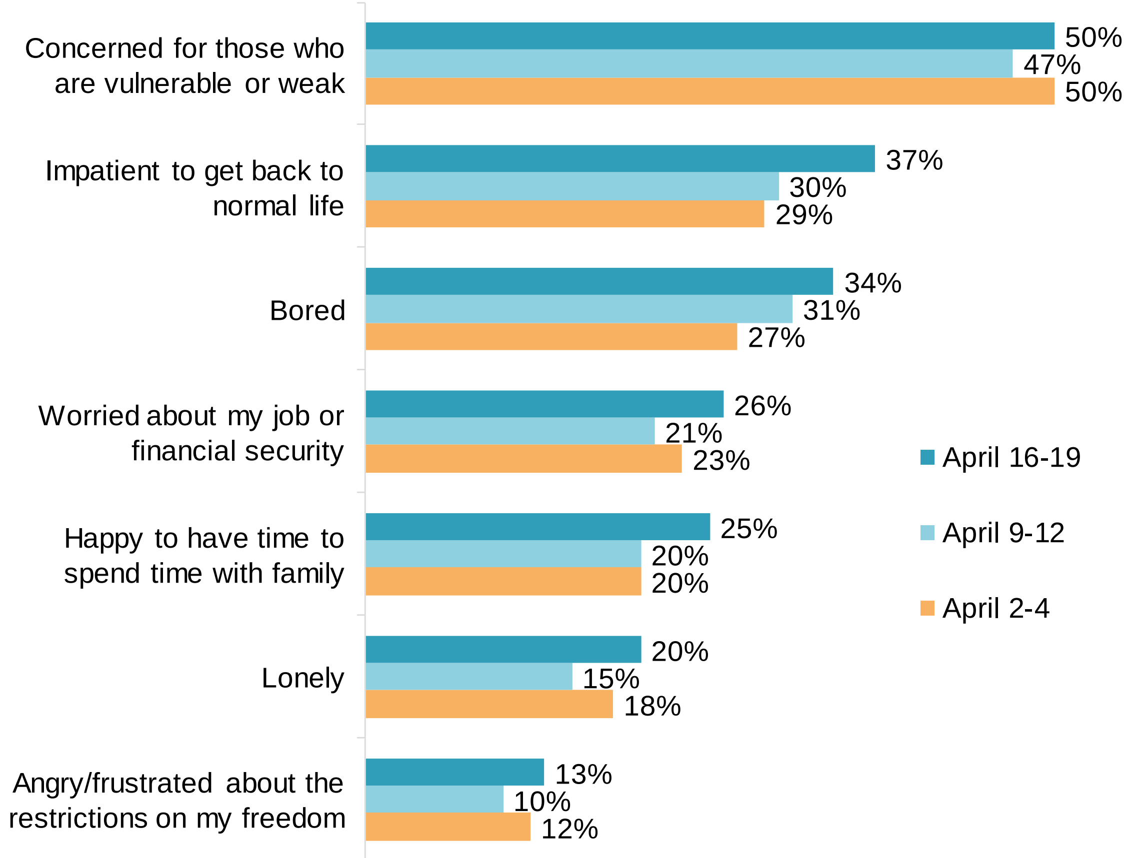
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=912-1042)

General feelings

To gauge feelings about Coronavirus, respondents were shown a list of options and asked which best applied to them. Respondents were able to choose more than one option. As shown in Figure 10, the most common feeling, consistent over the three waves included, was ‘concern for those who are vulnerable and weak’.

In the most recent wave, an increase is seen in the proportion who felt ‘impatient to get back to normal life’, as well as small increases in the proportions who felt ‘worried about their job or financial security’, ‘happy to have time to spend with family’, and ‘lonely’.

Figure 10: Proportions who chose each option



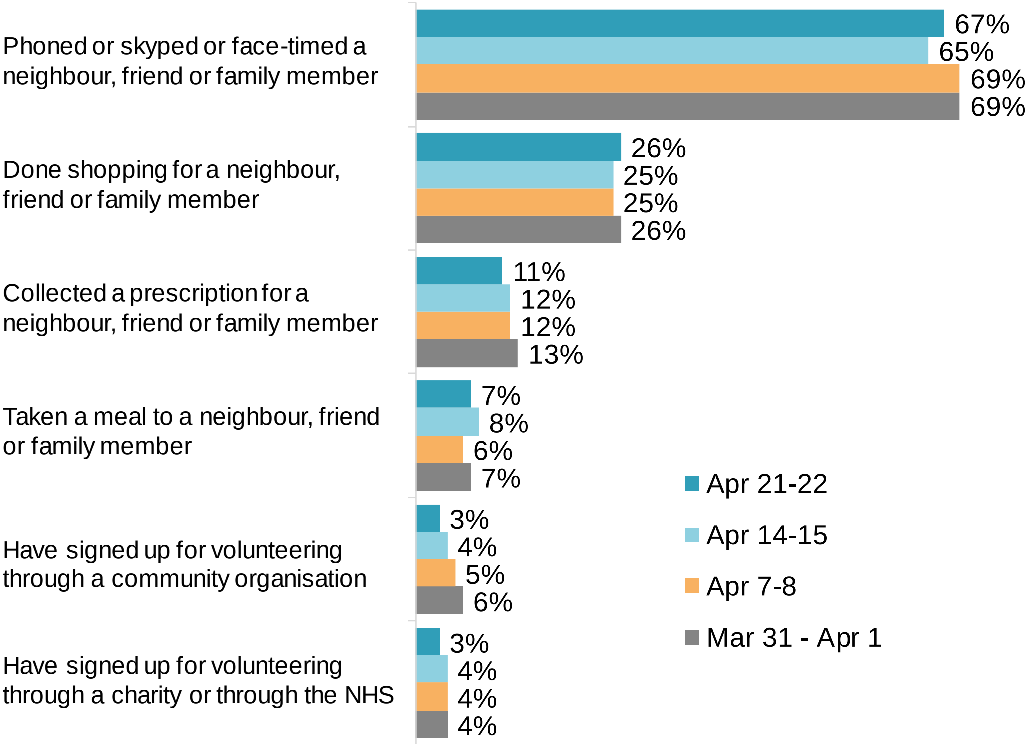
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=652-665)

Community support

Community activity

Respondents were shown a list of activities and asked to indicate those they had undertaken in the last week. Two-thirds had phoned/skyped, and a quarter had done shopping for a neighbour, friend or family member. A small proportion had signed up to formal volunteering activities, such as through a community organisation, a charity or the NHS. These measures have remained stable in April.

Figure 11: Proportion who had done each of the activities shown in the last week

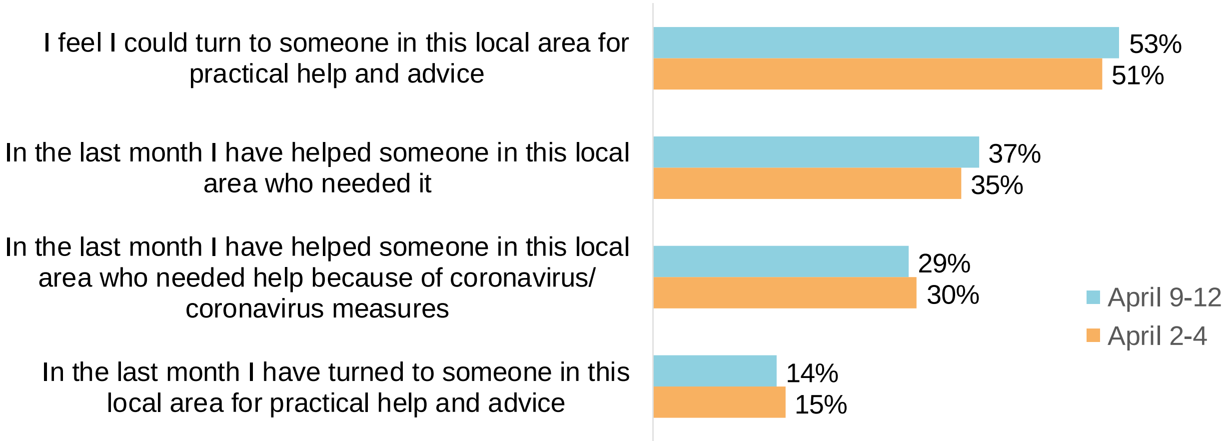


Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1002-1042)

Social capital

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about help and advice in their local area. Around half agreed that there was someone in the local area they could turn to for help and advice, and just over a third agreed they had provided help to someone locally who needed it.

Figure 12: Proportion who agree strongly/tend to agree with each of the statements show



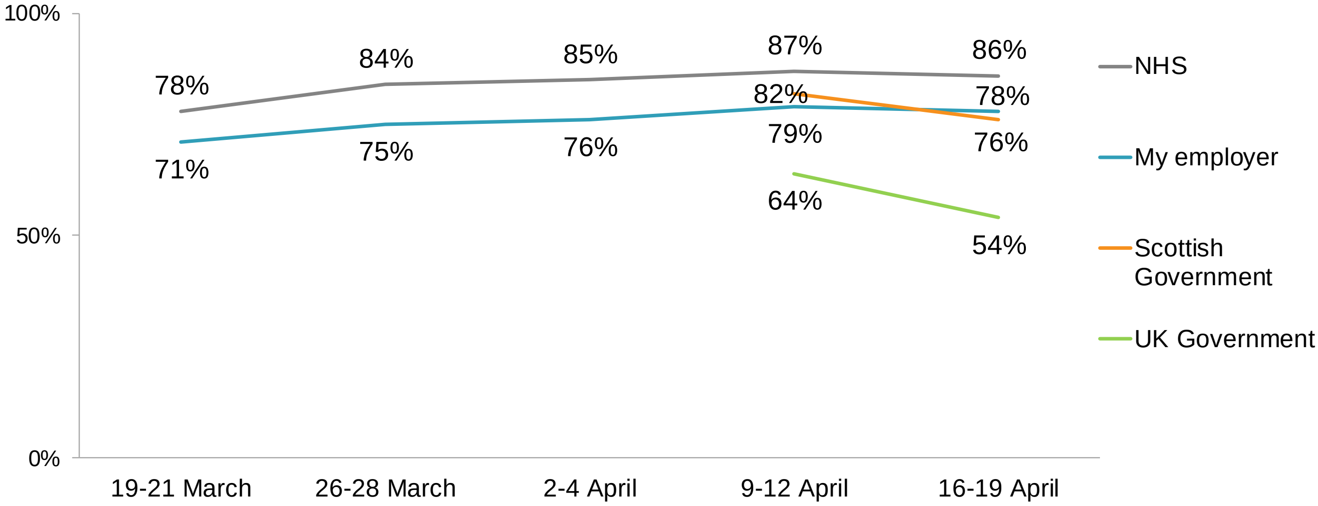
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=652-665)

Views on government and information sources

Rating of government

Respondents were asked how good or poor a job various institutions were doing to contain the spread of the virus[3]. Figure 13 below shows that respondents have been fairly consistent in their high rating of the NHS and their own employer. Scottish respondents have rated the Scottish Government more highly than the UK Government for the past two waves, but ratings for both fell in the most recent week.

Figure 13: Proportion who rate each as doing a good/very good job to contain the spread of Coronavirus



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=568-668)

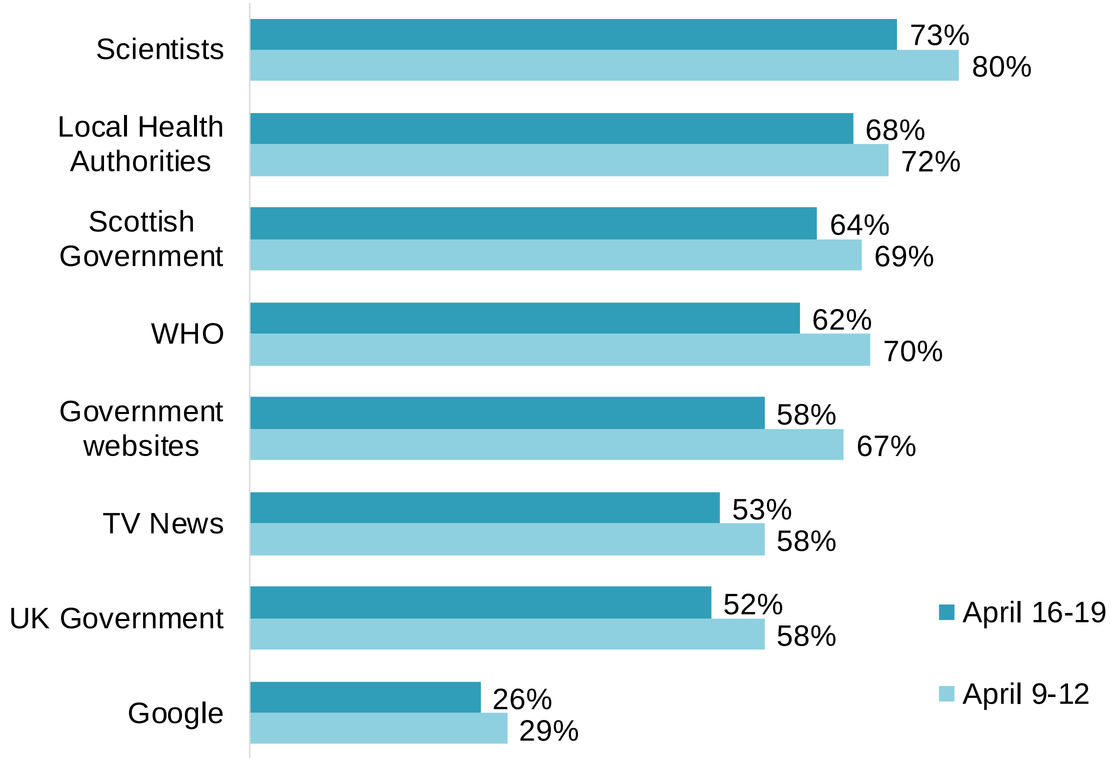
[3] In earlier survey waves, respondents in Scotland were shown the wording 'the Government of Scotland', but in the latest two waves this was replaced with separate questions about 'Scottish Government' and 'UK Government'. Results from the previous waves are therefore no longer comparable and so are not shown.

Trust in information sources

Respondents were also asked about the degree to which they trusted various sources to deliver information about Coronavirus. As with the previous measure, Scottish respondents were asked about Scottish Government separately in the latest two survey waves.

Scientists were regarded as the most trusted source. Levels of trust in Local Health Authorities, The World Health Organisation (WHO) and Scottish Government were very similar, though trust in all sources shown fell in the latest survey wave. Respondents in Scotland were more likely to completely/mostly trust information from Scottish Government than from UK Government.

Figure 14: Proportion who completely/mostly trust information from each source

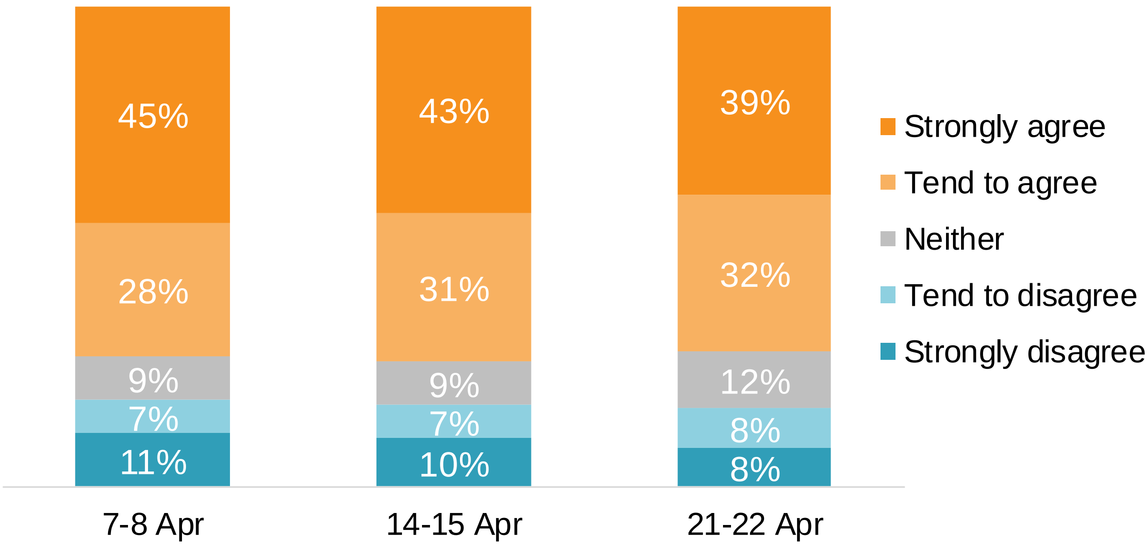


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=658-665)

Trust in Scottish Government advice and guidance

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they trust the advice from Scottish Government. The majority agreed with this statement and this has remained relatively stable in recent weeks.

Figure 15: Proportions who agreed or disagreed that 'I trust the advice and guidance from the Scottish Government to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives'



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1002-1042)

Further information

The data sources used in this report are ongoing, and Scottish Government will publish another similar report in future. This report will contain findings from May as well as the final week of April.

Annex A: Sample sizes

The Ipsos MORI sample is broadly representative of the adult population aged 16-74. Data is weighted to reflect the age and gender profile of the Scottish population aged 16-74. A Scottish boost sample was included in the Ipsos MORI global adviser attitudes survey from wave 5 onwards.

YouGov apply weighting to the data to match the population profile to adjust for any over/under representations and to maximise consistency from wave to wave. Parameters used include age, gender, social class, region and level of education.

Table 1: Fieldwork information

Name	Sample size	Age group	Field dates
Ipsos MORI Global Advisor	Scotland: Wave 5 – 568 Wave 6 – 668 Wave 7 – 652 Wave 8 – 665 Wave 9 – 658	16-74	Wave 5: 19-21 Mar Wave 6: 26-28 Mar Wave 7: 2-4 April Wave 8: 9-12 April Wave 9: 16-19 April
YouGov weekly survey	Wave 1 – 912 Wave 2 – 1039 Wave 3 – 1002 Wave 4 – 1002 Wave 5 – 1042	18+	Wave 1: 24-25 Mar Wave 2: 31 Mar – 1 Apr Wave 3: 7-8 April Wave 4: 14-15 April Wave 5: 21-22 April

Fieldwork dates cover the period where the bulk of the survey fieldwork was completed.

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