

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 15 January 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 7 to 10 January 2021 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

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## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Understanding the impact on society](#)
3. [Main indicators](#)
4. [Personal well-being](#)
5. [Perceptions of the future](#)
6. [Attitudes to vaccines and mass testing](#)
7. [Behaviours going into lockdown](#)
8. [Social impacts on Great Britain data](#)
9. [Glossary](#)
10. [Measuring the data](#)
11. [Strengths and limitations](#)
12. [Related links](#)

# 1 . Main points

This week, over the period 7 to 10 January 2021, based on adults in Great Britain:

- Compliance with most measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) remained high, with 90% reporting always or often handwashing after returning home, 96% using a face covering, and 93% avoiding physical contact when outside their home.
- Personal well-being scores fell this week, with lower levels of happiness (6.5), satisfaction (6.4) and worthwhile (7.0), and levels of anxiety (4.6) were the highest since April 2020.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of adults felt that life will return to normal in six months or less, compared with 25% over the Christmas and New Year period.
- This week, a similar percentage of adults reported that they were likely or highly likely to have a vaccine if offered, with 86% of adults reporting so compared with 85% over the Christmas and New Year period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021.

We also looked at how the experiences of adults during the latest national lockdown differ from those in the previous period covering Christmas and New Year (22 December to 3 January) and the run up to Christmas (16 to 20 December). We found that:

- This week, nearly 9 in 10 (88%) adults strongly supported or tended to support the current lockdown measures where they live; an increase from the 78% reported over Christmas and New Year and from the 75% reported in the run up to Christmas.
- This week, 9 in 10 (90%) adults said they had left their home for any reason in the past seven days, lower than what was reported over Christmas and New Year (93%) and in the run up to Christmas (95%).
- Over 6 in 10 (62%) adults stayed at home or only left for a limited set of reasons this week, the highest percentage seen since May 2020; up from 41% over Christmas and New Year and up from 32% in the run up to Christmas.
- Meeting up in a public place was 11 percentage points lower this week (6%) than over Christmas and New Year (17%) and 13 percentage points lower than in the run up before Christmas (19%).
- Meeting up in a personal place was 10 percentage points lower this week (4%) than over Christmas and New Year (14%) and 3 percentage points lower than in the run up to Christmas (7%).

## Statistician's comment

“This week, more people are telling us that they are staying at home compared with previous weeks, and fewer of us are meeting up with family and friends outside home. We are still seeing a high level of compliance with measures such as wearing face coverings and social distancing. However, we are also seeing a rise in those saying they are experiencing anxiety, which is back at levels last seen in April 2020.”

Tim Vizard, Principal Research Officer, Office for National Statistics.

## 2 . Understanding the impact on society

This bulletin contains data and indicators from a module being undertaken through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on British society.

This week, we focus on the social impacts during the national lockdown in England announced on 4 January 2021. We compare this with social impacts over Christmas and New Year over the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 and in the run up to Christmas over the period 16 to 20 December 2020. We also comment on the use of local COVID alert levels (tiers) in England. More information on the previous tier structure can be found in the [Glossary](#) section.

The bulletin presents a summary of the results, breakdowns by age, sex, region, country and tier, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, are contained in the [associated dataset](#). Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of this difference.

The latest statistics in this release are based on a survey of 6,030 adults aged 16 years and above in Great Britain conducted between 7 and 10 January 2021 (inclusive). Results from this period are based on 3,833 responding adults (64% response rate).

Throughout this bulletin, "this week" refers to responses collected during the period 7 to 10 January 2021; "over Christmas and New Year " refers to responses collected during the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 and "in the run up to Christmas" refers to responses collected during the period 16 to 20 December 2020.

This bulletin is based on responses in the first week that lockdown restrictions were announced in England in January 2021. Responses for the period cover 7 to 10 January 2021. Some responses cover a seven-day period, which will cover a period before the national lockdown in England where restrictions were slightly different in England, Wales and Scotland.

## 3 . Main indicators

There are several measures in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), such as handwashing, use of face coverings, avoiding physical contact and self-isolating. These indicators are presented at a Great Britain level in Table 1.

### Table 1: Main indicators

Great Britain, 22 December 2020 to 10 January 2021

#### Notes:

1. "This week" refers to responses collected during the period 7 January to 10 January 2021 "Week before" refers to responses collected during the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021.

[Data download](#)

Compliance with most measures remained high this week, with 90% (same in the week before) reporting always or often handwashing after returning home and 96% (97% the week before) using a face covering. This week, a slightly higher percentage of adults reported avoiding physical contact when outside their home, 93% (89% the week before) and to always or often maintain social distance when meeting up with people outside their support bubble, 90% (88% the week before).

### More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [coronavirus roundup](#).
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

## 4 . Personal well-being

This week, there appeared to be a decline in adults' personal well-being scores. Life satisfaction (6.4), feeling that things done in life are worthwhile (7.0) and happiness (6.5) scores all decreased from the week before, while there was an increase in the anxiety score (4.6). This week, the average anxiety score is at its highest since April 2020 (4.9) with 42% of adults reporting high levels of anxiety.

### Figure 1: Personal well-being scores decreased and anxiety scores increased this week

Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2021

#### Notes:

1. Questions: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?" and "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".
2. This question is answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
3. Base: all adults.

[Data download](#)

## 5 . Perceptions of the future

This week, nearly a quarter of adults (24%) felt that life will return to normal in six months or less, compared with 25% over Christmas and New Year. The same proportion (24%) of adults felt that it will take more than a year for life to return to normal, compared with 20% over Christmas and New Year.

### Figure 2: This week, nearly a quarter of adults reported they felt that life will return to normal in six months or less

## Notes:

1. Question: "How long do you think it will be before your life returns to normal?".
2. Base population for percentage: all adults.
3. This figure only includes those who reported that life will return to normal in six months or less, or more than a year. Other reported time periods are included in the [datasets](#).

## 6 . Attitudes to vaccines and mass testing

Following the first coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine being given in the UK on 8 December 2020, COVID-19 vaccination is now being provided in some hospitals and pharmacies, at local vaccination centres run by GPs and at larger vaccination centres and general practice (GP) surgeries to those most at risk. For links to more information please see the [Glossary](#).

A high proportion of adults (86%) reported they would be either very likely or fairly likely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered, continuing the gradual increase from previous weeks; 85% over Christmas and New Year; 82% over the period 16 to 20 December 2020.

This week, a small proportion of adults (5%) reported that they are very or fairly unlikely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered; a fall of 2 percentage points from the week before.

Among those who are very or fairly unlikely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered, the most common reason is that they are worried about the long-term effects on their health (46%), although this was lower than over Christmas and New Year (51%).

### Attitudes to mass testing

In selected areas, the UK and devolved governments are offering tests for the coronavirus (COVID-19) to everyone living or working in the area, whether they have symptoms or not; this is sometimes referred to "mass testing" or "community testing".

This week around 8 in 10 (80%) adults in Great Britain reported they strongly supported or tended to support mass testing for COVID-19, a similar percentage to the week before (81%).

If mass testing were available in their area, around 7 in 10 (71%) of adults said they would be very likely or fairly likely to get a test for COVID-19 even if they had no symptoms; the same percentage to the week before.

Further statistics on vaccines and mass testing can be found in Table 12 in the [accompanying datasets](#).

## 7 . Behaviours going into lockdown

On 5 January 2021, the government announced another national lockdown for [England](#). Similar rules applied for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#), particularly the message to "stay at home", meaning that Great Britain was under a national lockdown at the start of the year in 2021.

Comparisons are made with the experiences of all adults before the national lockdown, specifically between 22 December and 3 January (over Christmas and New Year) when England and Scotland were under local restrictions (tiers), and Wales was under a national set of rules. The definition of tiers is included in the [Glossary](#). Some comparisons are also made with the run up to Christmas between 16 and 20 December.

## Support and understanding of local lockdown measures

This week, nearly 9 in 10 (88%) adults strongly supported or tended to support the current lockdown measures where they live. This is a 10 percentage point increase from the 78% reported over Christmas and New Year and a further 13 percentage point increase from the 75% reported in the run up to Christmas.

When it comes to following the current lockdown measures where they live, a higher proportion of adults found it very easy or easy to follow the rules (77%) than over Christmas and New Year (68%) and in the run up to Christmas (66%).

The percentage of adults finding it very difficult or difficult to follow the current lockdown measures where they live was lower during lockdown this week (9%) compared with over Christmas and New Year (11%) and two weeks ago (12%). However, the most common reasons given for why it was difficult to follow the current lockdown measures were similar for all periods. These were:

- impact on well-being (78% this week; 76% over Christmas and New Year; 73% in the run up to Christmas)
- strain on relationships with family and friends (56% this week; 61% over Christmas and New Year; 59% in the run up to Christmas)
- life events being missed (59% this week; 56% over Christmas and New Year; 62% in the run up to Christmas)

## Leaving home

Under the current lockdown restrictions, people are required to [stay at home](#) except for specific purposes.

This week, 9 in 10 (90%) adults said they had left their home for any reason in the past seven days. A higher percentage of adults reported they had left their home over Christmas and New Year (93%) and in the run up to Christmas (95%). Adults in Tier 4 in England over Christmas and New Year reported the same percentage (90%) to this week's national lockdown.

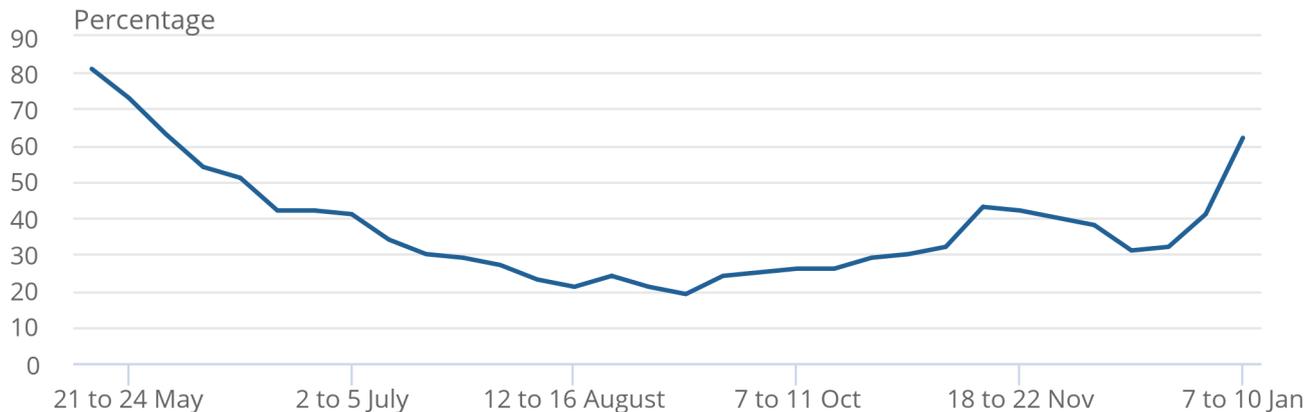
Over 6 in 10 (62%) stayed at home or only left for a limited set of reasons this week; up from 41% over Christmas and New Year and up from 32% in the run up to Christmas. Please note, this question covers the last 7 days and as a result, estimates for this week may include some activities before the introduction of the latest lockdown.

**Figure 3: Six in ten adults said they had stayed at home, or only left home for a limited set of reasons; the highest since May 2020**

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 10 January 2021

Figure 3: Six in ten adults said they had stayed at home, or only left home for a limited set of reasons; the highest since May 2020

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 10 January 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Please see the Notes tab for some considerations with comparability surrounding these dates.
2. From 20 March to 10 May, the "stay at home" measures were defined as leaving your home for only the following reasons: "Key worker travelling to work", "Shopping for basic necessities", "Any medical need" or "Exercise once a day". Any respondent who had either not left their home or left their home in the past seven days for only these reasons was considered to have followed the "stay at home" measures. The estimates from 14 May onwards will be based on these reasons for leaving the house, but may not be directly comparable to previous weeks as "travelling to work" includes all workers.
3. A person is "working" if they had a paid job, either as an employee or self-employed; or they did any casual work for payment; or they did any unpaid or voluntary work in the previous week.

The most common reason to leave home in the past seven days was to go shopping for food and medicine, reported by 72% of adults. This was also the most popular reason over Christmas and New Year (77%) and in the run up to Christmas (77%). As expected over the Christmas and New Year period, a higher proportion of adults reported to have left home to shop for other things (16%) compared with those in lockdown this week (6%).

A higher proportion of adults reported to leave home for exercise, for example, a walk, run or cycle in the past seven days this week (58%) compared with over Christmas and New Year (52%) and in the run up to Christmas (48%).

Meeting up in a public place was 11 percentage points lower this week (6%) than over Christmas and New Year (17%) and 13 percentage points lower than in the run up to Christmas (19%).

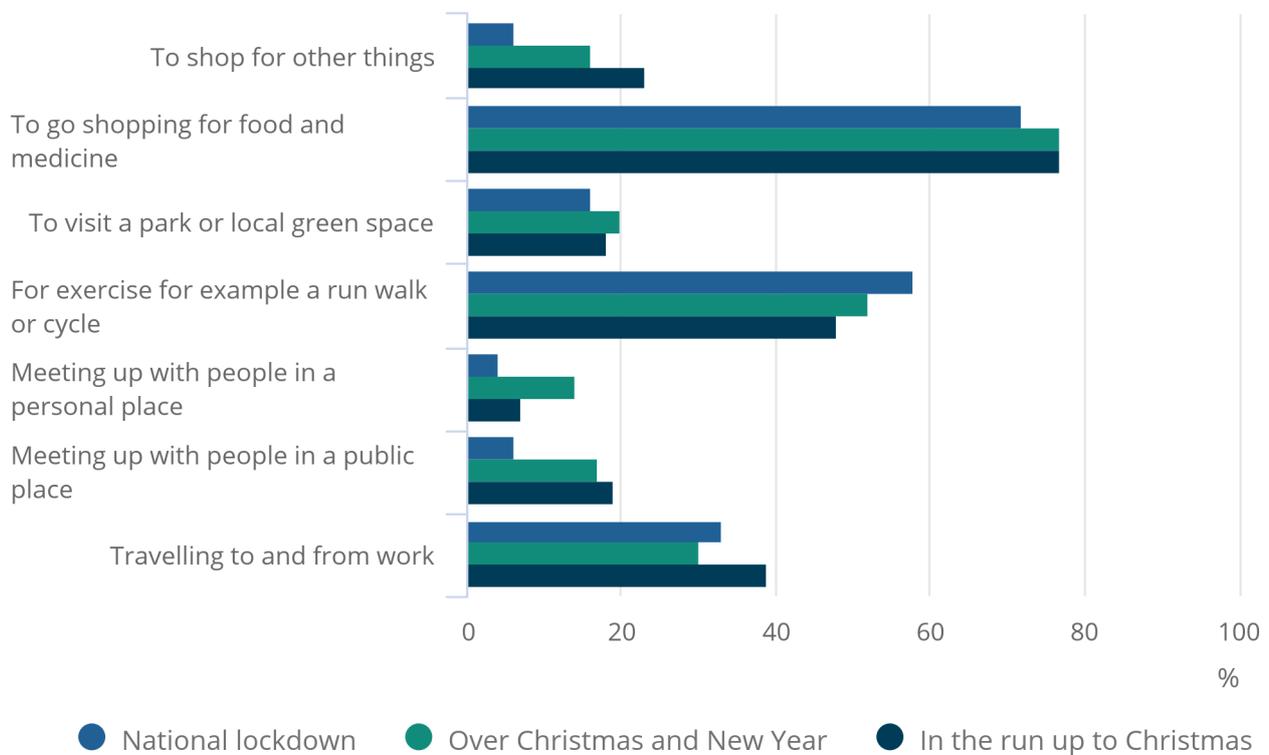
Meeting up in a personal place was 10 percentage points lower this week (4%) than over Christmas and New Year (14%) and 3 percentage points lower than in the run up to Christmas (7%).

**Figure 4: During national lockdown this week, the proportion of adults meeting in a personal or public place fell**

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 10 January 2021

Figure 4: During national lockdown this week, the proportion of adults meeting in a personal or public place fell

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 10 January 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: " In the past seven days, for what reasons have you left your home?"
2. Base population for percentage: all adults.
3. Additional response options are included in the [accompanying datasets](#).

## Impact on life and well-being

This week, nearly 8 in 10 (78%) adults reported that they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on their life right now. A slightly lower percentage was reported by adults over Christmas and New Year (75%) and in the run up to Christmas (72%).

Over 6 in 10 adults (63%) reported a lack of freedom and independence as the main effect on their life this week, with 64% of adults reporting this over Christmas and New Year, similar to those in higher tiers in England over this period (Tier 3: 66%, Tier 4: 66%). In the run up to Christmas, 62% reported a lack of freedom and independence as the main effect on their life.

Over half (56%) of adults reported that their well-being was being affected (for example, boredom, loneliness, anxiety and stress) by the coronavirus pandemic. This was a higher percentage to those over Christmas and New Year (53%) and for adults living in Tiers 3 (53%) and Tier 4 (54%) in England during this period. Adults reporting an effect on their well-being this week were also higher than in the run up to Christmas (51%).

## Impact on work

This week, 53% of working adults reported that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting their work. This is an increase from 47% over Christmas and New Year, which might be expected with people taking time off work over Christmas. However, the percentage was still higher this week than in the run up to Christmas (49%).

Nearly half (48%) of working adults reported travelling to work (exclusively and in combination with working from home). This is an increase from 44% over Christmas and New Year and in the run up to Christmas, 57%. Looking at the tiers structure in England, decreasing proportions were seen in areas of higher tier restrictions over Christmas and New Year (Tier 2: 58%, Tier 3: 49% and Tier 4: 30%).

A higher percentage of working adults (43%) reported working from home because of the coronavirus pandemic in the past seven days, compared with Christmas and New Year (32%) and the run up to Christmas (39%).

It is worth noting that a proportion of working adults not travelling to work or working from home over Christmas and New Year will be because of the Christmas holiday period.

## 8 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](#)

Dataset | Released 15 January 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain. Includes breakdowns by at-risk age, sex and underlying health condition.

## 9 . Glossary

## Lockdown

On 5 January 2021, the government announced another national lockdown for [England](#). Similar rules applied for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#), particularly the message to "stay at home" meaning that adults in Great Britain were under a national lockdown at the start of the year in 2021.

## Tiers

The analysis on tiers is based on the local restriction tier of respondents living in England, as derived from a respondent's local authority (rather than self-reported information). The tier information refers the position for each local authority on 19, 26 and 31 December 2020, and is dependent on the date of survey completion.

The tier system in effect between 20 December 2020 and 4 January 2021 is categorised as follows:

- Tier 1 is the "medium" alert level and consists of a series of measures including not socialising in groups larger than six (indoors and outdoors), also known as the "rule of six"
- Tier 2 is the "high" alert level, for areas with a higher level of infections where some additional restrictions are in place, particularly limiting socialising with anybody outside your household or support bubble in any indoor setting; hospitality venues in this tier face further restriction -- pubs and bars must close unless operating as restaurants and can only serve alcohol with substantial meals
- Tier 3 is the "very high" alert level, for areas with a very high level of infections and where tighter restrictions are in place; these extend restrictions further around mixing with different households indoors and outdoors; hospitality venues such as pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants must close except for takeaway and delivery services
- Tier 4 is the "stay at home" alert level, for areas with the highest level of infections and where the tightest restrictions are in place; these restrictions mean you should not leave your home or garden except where you have a "reasonable excuse"

As parts of England moved into higher alert tiers in December, the numbers of adults in Tier 1 (lowest alert) were small over Christmas and New Year resulting in high variability with estimates. Therefore, where we mention the tier breakdowns, results are focused on tier breakdowns 2, 3 and 4.

## Personal well-being

Personal well-being measures ask people to evaluate, on a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether they feel the things they do in life are worthwhile, and happiness and anxiety yesterday.

## Vaccination for COVID-19

Following the first COVID-19 vaccine being given in the UK on 8 December 2020, the COVID-19 vaccination is now being provided in various locations across the country. The vaccine is being offered in some hospitals and pharmacies, at local vaccination centres run by GPs and at larger vaccination centres and is being given to people aged 80 years and over, people who live or work in care homes and health and social care workers at high risk. [National Health Service \(NHS\) guidance on the COVID-19 vaccine](#) is available.

More information on [the number of people who have received the vaccine](#) is available.

## Working adults

For this survey, a person is said to be a "working adult" if:

- they had a paid job, either as an employee or self-employed
- they did any casual work for payment
- they did any unpaid or voluntary work in the previous week

## 10 . Measuring the data

The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) is a monthly omnibus survey. In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we have adapted the OPN to become a weekly survey used to collect data on the impact of the coronavirus on day-to-day life in Great Britain. In the latest wave, 6,030 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 64% (or 3,833 individuals) for the survey conducted from 7 to 10 January 2021.

The survey results are weighted to be a nationally representative sample for Great Britain, and data are collected using an online self-completion questionnaire. Individuals who did not want to or were unable to complete the survey online had the opportunity to take part over the phone.

The sample size for the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) survey over Christmas and New Year is increased compared with previous weeks because of allowing for a longer data collection period over Christmas and New Year to help improve response.

Where changes in results from previous weeks or differences between groups are presented in this bulletin, associated [confidence intervals](#), which are included in the [associated datasets](#), indicate their significance.

## Sampling

A sample of 6,030 households was randomly selected from those that had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS). From each household, one adult was selected at random but with unequal probability. Younger people were given higher selection probability than other people because of under-representation in the sample available for the survey. The survey also includes a boosted sample for England, to allow more detailed analysis at a regional level, which are available in the datasets.

## Weighting

The responding sample in the week 7 to 10 January contained 3,833 individuals (64% response rate). Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population.

Weights were first adjusted for non-response and attrition. Subsequently, the weights were calibrated to satisfy population distributions considering the following factors: sex by age, region, tenure, highest qualification and employment status. For age, sex and region, population totals based on projections of mid-year population estimates for January 2021 were used. The resulting weighted sample is therefore representative of the Great Britain adult population by a number of socio-demographic factors and geography.

# 11 . Strengths and limitations

The main strengths of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) include:

- it allows for timely production of data and statistics that can respond quickly to changing needs
- it meets data needs: the questionnaire is developed with customer consultation, and design expertise is applied in the development stages
- robust methods are adopted for the survey's sampling and weighting strategies to limit the impact of bias
- quality assurance procedures are undertaken throughout the analysis stages to minimise the risk of error

The main limitations of the OPN include:

- analysis of estimates in Wales and Scotland are based on low sample sizes, and therefore caution should be used with these estimates
- comparisons between periods and groups must be done with caution as estimates are provided from a sample survey; as such, [confidence intervals](#) are included in the datasets to present the sampling variability, which should be taken into account when assessing differences between periods, as true differences may not exist

## 12 . Related links

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Web page | Updated as data become available

Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK and its effects on the economy and society.

### [Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional: week ending 1 January 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 12 January 2021

Provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available.

### [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: September 2020](#)

Article | Released 11 November 2020

The social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people in Great Britain based on indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). Insights from qualitative research commissioned by the Cabinet Office Disability Unit and conducted by Policy Lab help illustrate how these indicators can be experienced by disabled people in day-to-day life.

### [Personal and economic well-being in Great Britain: September 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 10 September 2020

Estimates looking across personal and economic well-being covering the period from 20 March to 26 July 2020, to understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people and households in Great Britain.

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) roundup](#)

Blog | Updated as data become available

Catch up on the latest data and analysis related to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on our economy and society.

### [Coronavirus and the social impacts on the countries and regions of Britain: April 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 26 May 2020

Indicators from the OPN to understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people, households and communities in the countries and regions of Great Britain. This release uses four waves of survey results covering April 2020 to present results for Wales, Scotland and the nine English regions.