

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 9 October 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 30 September to 4 October 2020 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

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1 . Main points

- This week, lower levels of socialising were reported; when asked about changes to social contact with friends and family living outside their household in the past seven days, 43% of adults reported meeting with others less often compared with 1% meeting with others more often.
- Levels of socialising varied by whether someone was in a “local lockdown” area; of those in lockdown 34% had not socialised with anyone outside their household, compared with 25% for those not in local lockdown areas.
- Among those who have met up with people from outside their household either outdoors or indoors, the majority (82%) said they always or often maintained social distancing; those who said they did so sometimes, not very often, or never has stayed fairly consistent over the last 3 months and was 17% this week.
- This week, around 7 in 10 (72%) adults were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on their life right now; this is a similar proportion to last week (74%), which was the highest proportion since the end of April (75% over the period 24 April to 3 May).
- Average anxiety scores for all adults have increased this week to 4.3, the highest figure since 3 to 13 April (4.9), while average scores for life satisfaction (6.9), worthwhile (7.4) and happiness yesterday (6.9) were at similar levels to last week.
- Around 1 in 10 (9%) working adults expected to increase their working hours during the month of October, while 6% expected to reduce their working hours, and 2% expected to be made redundant.

2 . Understanding the impact on society

This weekly bulletin contains data and indicators from a new 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.

The statistics in this publication are based on a survey of 2,200 adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain conducted between 30 September and 4 October 2020 (inclusive). Results from this week are based on 1,573 responding adults (72% response rate).

It contains breakdowns of results by sex and for identified “at-risk” groups that have been advised to take additional precautions. This includes those aged 70 years and over and those with certain underlying health conditions. The full list of conditions is included in [Section 7: Glossary](#).

This bulletin presents a summary of results, with further data including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates contained in the [associated datasets](#). Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin, associated [confidence intervals](#) should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of the change.

Throughout this bulletin, “this week” refers to responses collected during the period 30 September to 4 October 2020 and “last week” refers to responses collected during the period 24 to 27 September 2020.

3 . Leaving home

More than 9 in 10 (95%) adults in Great Britain said they had left their home for any reason in the past seven days. This percentage has steadily increased since lockdown measures started to ease and has been over 90% since the end of May (28 to 31 May 2020).

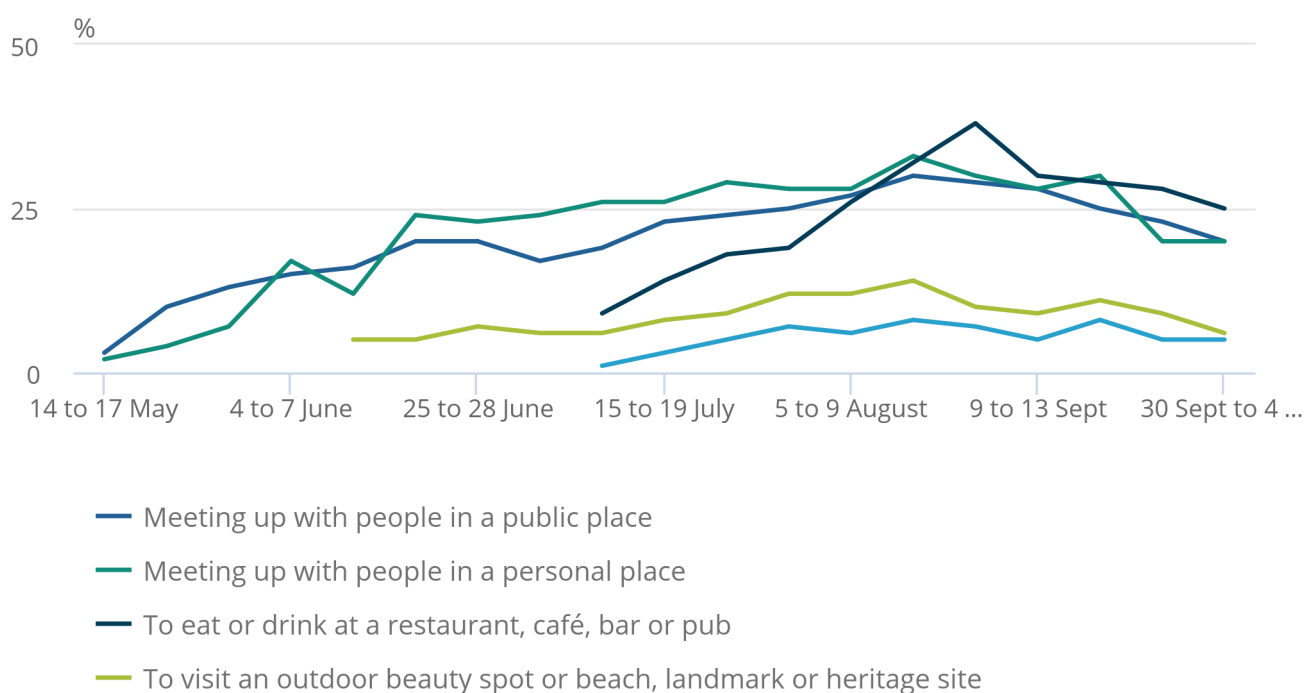
However, in the last couple of weeks people have been less likely to leave home to socialise. There were reductions in the percentages of adults meeting people in a public place, visiting an outdoor beauty spot, and eating or drinking at a restaurant, café, bar or pub. Among those who left home to eat or drink at a restaurant, café, bar or pub in the past seven days, 7% reported that they always or very often order their food and drinks at the counter, compared with 12% last week.

Figure 1: Levels of socialising, visiting an outdoor beauty spot, and eating out have continued to decrease this week after increasing through the summer

Great Britain, May 2020 to October 2020

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Great Britain, May 2020 to October 2020



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: all adults.
3. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

Socialising

This week, around 3 in 10 (27%) adults had not socialised with anyone outside their household in the past seven days, compared to 25% last week. Around 6 in 10 (65%) said they had socialised with between one and five other people at the same time, compared to 68% last week. A further 8% said they had socialised with a group of six or more other people, a similar proportion (7%) to last week.

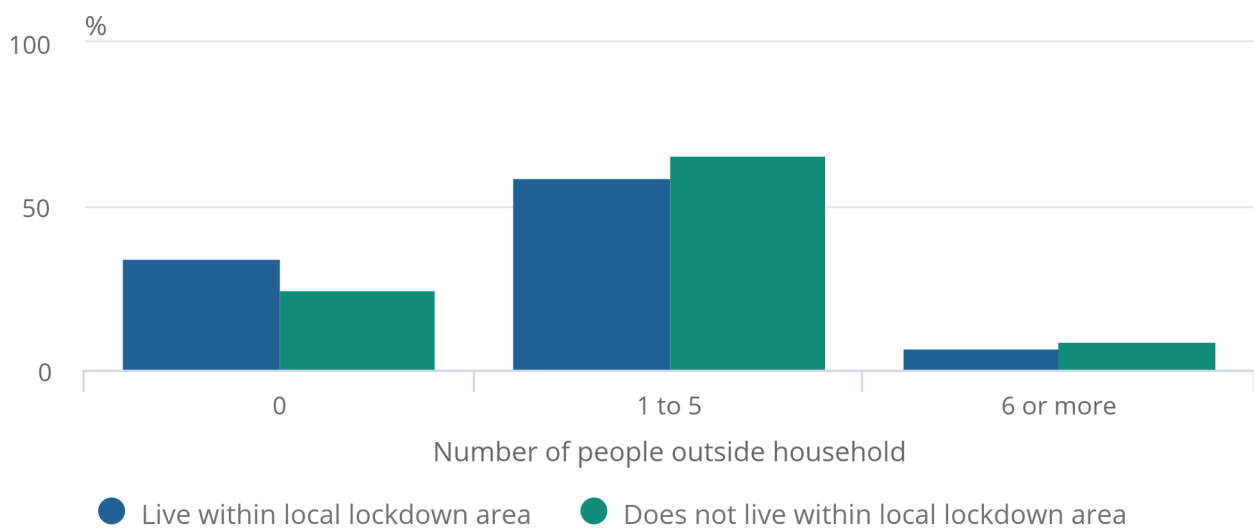
Levels of socialising were reduced when an individual was in a “local lockdown” area. Of those who said they were in a local lockdown area, 34% said they had not socialised with anyone outside of their household, while 59% said they had socialised with between one and five other people at the same time, and a further 7% said they had socialised with a group of six or more other people. For those who said they were not in a local lockdown area, 25% had not socialised with anyone outside their household, 66% had socialised with between one and five, and 9% with six or more.

Figure 2: Levels of socialising varied by whether someone was in a “local lockdown” area

Great Britain, 30 September to 4 October 2020

Figure 2: Levels of socialising varied by whether someone was in a “local lockdown” area

Great Britain, 30 September to 4 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "In the past seven days, what is the maximum number of people from outside your household that you have socialised with at the same time?"
2. A person is considered to be in a local lockdown area if they self-reported as such. This has not been defined by an official list of areas in which people live.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

“Rule of six” measures are in place to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Official guidance on social gathering varies across England, Wales and Scotland. Around 6 in 10 adults (64%) strongly support or tend to support the “rule of six” measures in the country where they live. This was higher for those aged 70 years and over, at 80%. Around 6 in 10 adults (56%) reported that these measures were very simple or simple. These are similar proportions to last week (67%, 82% and 58% respectively).

This week, adults were asked in which ways their social contact with friends and family living outside their household had changed in the past seven days, they reported:

- meeting with others less often, 43% compared with 1% meeting with others more often
- meeting fewer people at a time, 18% compared with 1% meeting more people at a time
- meeting with others outdoors more than indoors, 12% compared with 4% meeting with others indoors more than outdoors

However, 41% of adults said there had been no change in their social contact with friends and family living outside their household in the past seven days.

Social distancing

Among those who have met up with people from outside their household either outdoors or indoors, around 8 in 10 (82%) said they always or often maintained social distancing when meeting up with people outside their support bubble. This was higher for those aged 70 years and over, at 90%. This week 17% of adults said they sometimes, not very often, or never maintained social distancing. This has remained relatively consistent over the last 3 months (17% last week and 16% over the period 8 to 12 July 2020 when this question was first asked).

In England, local authorities are introducing the coronavirus (COVID-19) “Secure Marshals” to help enforce the government’s coronavirus (COVID-19) measures on social distancing. Around 6 in 10 (59%) adults said they strongly support or tend to support their introduction, a similar proportion to last week (62%).

Face coverings

At the time of the survey, face coverings were mandatory on public transport, in shops and in some other enclosed spaces in England, Wales and Scotland. Some different rules applied in local lockdown areas.

More than 9 in 10 (98%) adults who had left their homes said they had worn a face covering to slow the spread of the coronavirus at least once in the past seven days – this has been at a similar level since the end of July.

Face coverings in schools

For those adults with dependent children, 30% said that all or some of the children or young people in their household attending school or college had worn a face covering at any point during school or college. Of those whose children had worn a face covering, 70% said it was mandatory and 27% said it was voluntary.

At the time of the survey, it was mandatory for secondary school pupils to wear face coverings in corridors and communal areas in schools in Scotland, and for children aged five years and over to wear them on dedicated school transport. Face coverings were not mandatory in English schools, but government guidance gave schools and colleges discretion over their use. In Wales, guidance recommended face coverings for those aged over 11 years in indoor settings in which social distancing cannot be maintained, including schools and school transport.

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- 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 . Impact on life and well-being

This week, around 7 in 10 (72%) adults were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on their life right now. This is a similar proportion to last week (74%), which was the highest proportion since the end of April (75% over the period 24 April to 3 May). The main concerns reported by adults were a lack of freedom and independence (56%), and personal travel plans being affected (54%).

Average anxiety scores for all adults have increased this week to 4.3, the highest figure since 3 to 13 April (4.9). Over 3 in 10 (36%) adults report high anxiety levels (a score of 6 or above) rising to more than 4 in 10 (43%) adults if they have a health condition.

Of those who said their well-being has been affected by the coronavirus, around 6 in 10 (63%) said they felt stressed or anxious, and a similar proportion (64%) said they felt worried about the future.

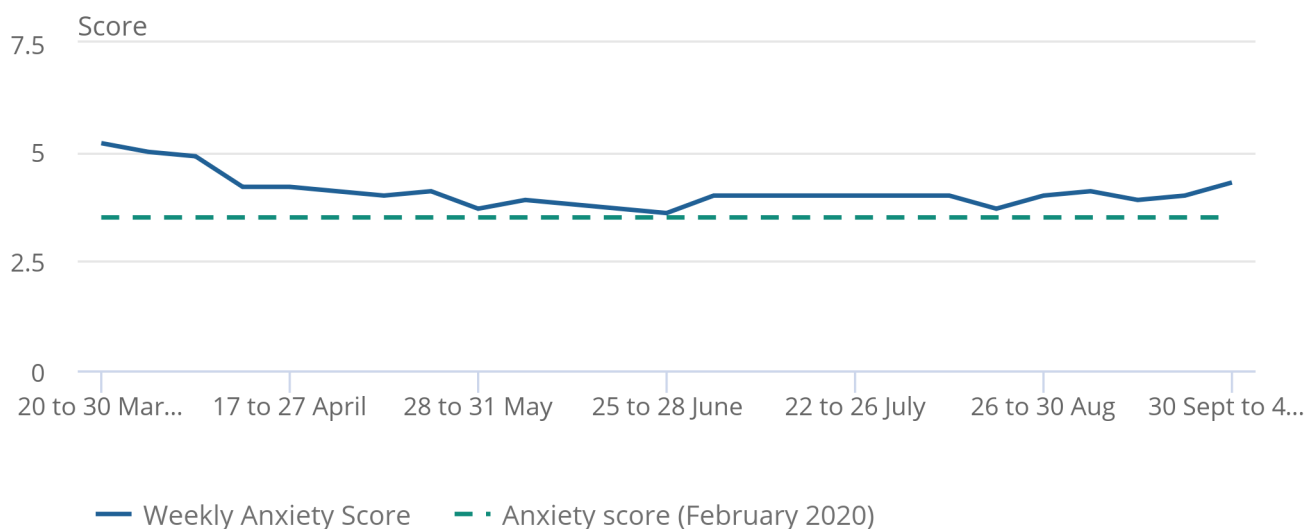
Average scores for life satisfaction (6.9), worthwhile (7.4) and happiness yesterday (6.9) are around similar levels to last week.

Figure 3: Average anxiety scores have increased this week, the highest figures since April

Great Britain, March to October 2020

Figure 3: Average anxiety scores have increased this week, the highest figures since April

Great Britain, March to October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "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

5 . Impact on work

This week, half of working adults (50%) reported that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting their work, the same proportion as last week.

This week, respondents were asked which situations they expected to apply to their work during the month of October. The most common responses related to returning to full-time and part-time work (29% and 11% respectively), or "other" (23%) where most of these respondents indicated that their work situation had remained unchanged. However, around 2 in 10 (19%) working adults reported that they "don't know".

Around 1 in 10 (9%) working adults expected to increase their working hours during the month of October, while 6% expected to reduce their working hours, and 2% expected to be made redundant.

These expectations regarding their work during the month of October were:

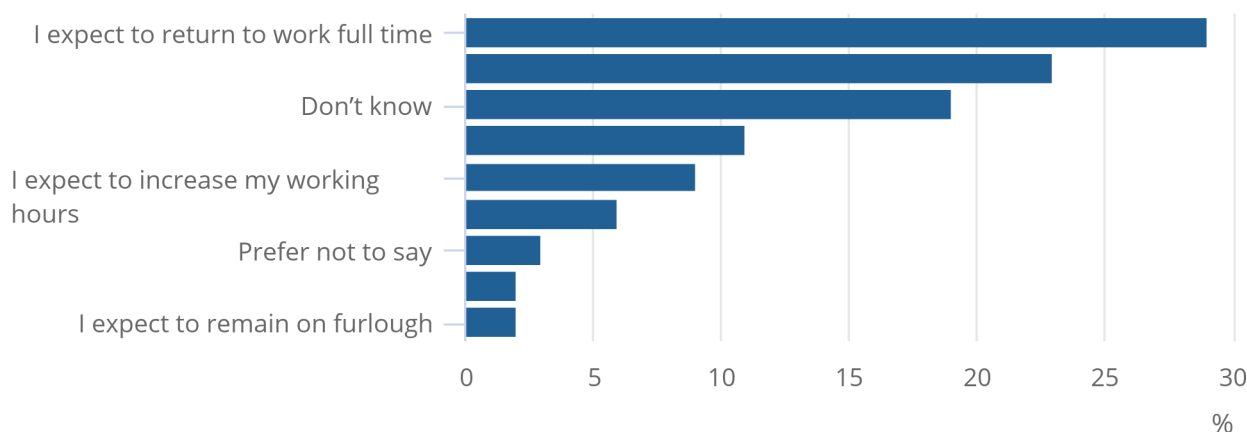
- based on information from their employer (54%)
- based on their own view (48%)
- based on government policy (15%)

Figure 4: There are a variety of situations that working adults expect to apply to their work during the month of October

Great Britain, 30 September to 4 October 2020

Figure 4: There are a variety of situations that working adults expect to apply to their work during the month of October

Great Britain, 30 September to 4 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: “During the month of October, which of the following situations do you expect to apply to your work?”
2. Base population for percentage: working adults. This definition is different to some other surveys and is included in the [Glossary](#).
3. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

Changes to work and skills

When asked how their work had changed since the coronavirus pandemic, working adults reported that they had to work in new ways (68%), take on new responsibilities (27%), use new equipment (29%), and learn new skills (23%). However, around 2 in 10 (20%) working adults reported that their work has not changed since the coronavirus pandemic.

Travel to work

Following government guidance to work from home wherever possible on 22 September 2020, the longer-term trend of travelling to work has changed. The percentage of working adults travelling to work (either exclusively or in combination with working from home) in the past seven days was consistently rising throughout July and August, and reached 64% two weeks ago, before dropping to 59% last week. This week, the proportion has remained stable at 62%. The percentage that worked exclusively at home this week also remained stable - 22% compared with 24% last week.

Among those that had worked from home in the past seven days, the main reasons were:

- their employer had asked them to do so (54%)
- they were following government advice (43%)
- they normally worked from home (29%)

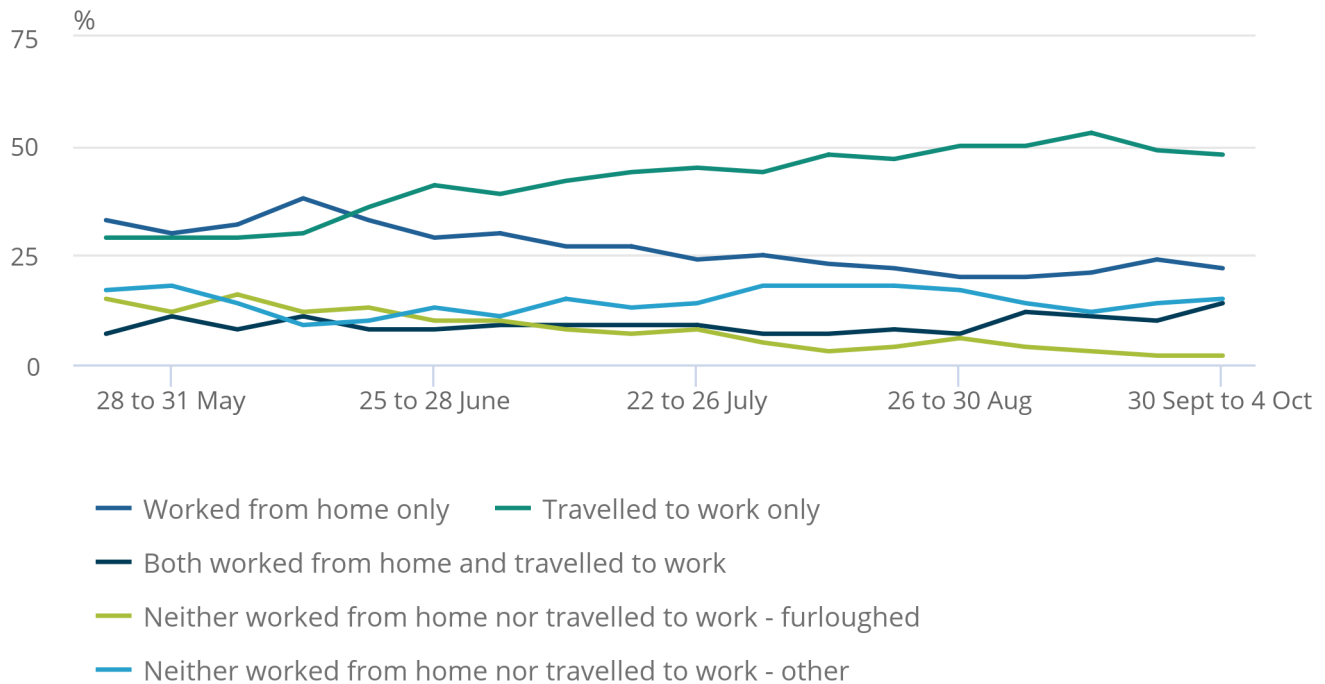
Official estimates of labour market participation can be found in the [Labour market overview](#).

Figure 5: The percentage of working adults that had travelled to work in the past seven days remained stable

Great Britain, May to October 2020

Figure 5: The percentage of working adults that had travelled to work in the past seven days remained stable

Great Britain, May to October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Base population for percentage: working adults. This definition is different to some other surveys and is included in the [Glossary](#).
2. The main reasons for respondents neither working from home nor travelling to work (other) in the past seven days include temporary closure of business or workplace, on annual leave or sick leave, variable hours, being on maternity or paternity leave or being unable to work because of caring responsibilities.
3. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

6 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 9 October 2020

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.

7 . Glossary

Underlying health condition

In this bulletin, adults with an underlying health condition include those with:

- angina or a long-term heart problem
- asthma
- a learning disability such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or Asperger's (Asperger syndrome)
- conditions affecting the brain and nerves, such as Parkinson's disease
- cancer
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or a long-term lung problem
- diabetes
- kidney or liver disease
- a weakened immune system such as the result of conditions as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or treatment for cancer
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease, or if you have had your spleen removed
- being overweight (having a BMI of 40 or above)
- an organ transplant

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

Local lockdown areas

A person is considered to be in a local lockdown area if they self-reported as such. This has not been defined by an official list of areas in which people live.

8 . 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 this wave, 2,200 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 72% (or 1,573 individuals) for the survey conducted from 30 September to 30 October 2020.

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.

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.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [OPN QMI](#).

Sampling

A sample of 2,200 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 and older (over 74 years) people were given higher selection probability than other people because of under-representation in the sample available for the survey.

Further information on the sample design can be found in the [OPN QMI](#).

Weighting

The responding sample contained 1,573 individuals (72% 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 September 2020 were used. The resulting weighted sample is therefore representative of the Great Britain adult population by a number of socio-demographic factors and geography.

9 . 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:

- the sample size is relatively small: 2,200 individuals per week with fewer completed interviews, meaning that detailed analyses for subnational geographies and other sub-groups are not possible
- 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

10 . 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 25 September 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 6 October 2020

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: July 2020](#)

Article | Released 20 August 2020

The social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people in Great Britain based on indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey. 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.