

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 16 April 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain. This 10-day collection period is the first to be based wholly after the government Stay At Home measures were introduced on Monday 23 March.

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# 1 . Other pages in this release

Other commentary on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on the UK economy and society is available on the following pages:

- [Coronavirus, UK economy and society, faster indicators: 16 April 2020](#)

## 2 . Main points

- Over 4 in 5 adults in Great Britain (84.2%) said they were very worried or somewhat worried about the effect that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on their life right now.
- Just over half of adults (53.1%) said it was affecting their well-being.
- Nearly half of adults (46.9%) reported high levels of anxiety.
- Just over 1 in 5 adults (22.9%) said it was affecting their household finances.
- Staying in touch with friends and family remotely was the most common action that is helping people cope with staying at home (76.9%).

## 3 . 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. This release updates statistics on concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, the actions people are taking as a result of the pandemic and introduces new information on the financial impact on households and coping strategies whilst staying at home.

It contains breakdowns of results for identified “at-risk” groups that have been advised to take additional precautions; those aged 70 years and over and those with certain underlying health conditions. These conditions are listed in the [glossary](#) section.

This bulletin presents a summary of results, with further data contained in the associated datasets. Further analysis, exploring the impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is having on disabled people, young people and those who are more socially isolated will be published in additional articles over the coming weeks, as well as more in-depth analysis on impacts to people’s finances and their well-being.

The statistics in this bulletin are based on a survey of 1,581 adults in Great Britain (79% response rate) sampled through the OPN conducted online between 27 March 2020 and 6 April 2020 (inclusive).

Throughout this bulletin, "this week" refers to the period 27 March to 6 April 2020, and "last week" refers to the period 20 to 30 March 2020.

## 4 . Concerns about work and household finances

Over 8 in 10 adults (84.2%) said they are very worried or somewhat worried about the effect that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on their life right now. This increases to 89.4% for those aged 70 years and over. For those with an underlying health condition (all ages) it is 85.0%. Figure 1 shows the specific aspects of their lives that people said they were most worried about.

### **Figure 1: People are most worried about the effect of the coronavirus on their well-being, grocery and medication availability and the ability to make plans**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

### **Concerns about work**

Nearly 2 in 5 adults (39.7%) said the coronavirus was affecting their work. For those aged 16 to 69 years, this increased to 47.2%. The main reason for this concern was a decrease in hours worked because of workplace closures or reduced opening times.

For many, this concern was also caused by being asked to work from home, redundancy or closure of their own business. However, for some it was because of needing to work additional hours or not being able to take leave (Figure 2).

### **Figure 2: The main concern about work is a decrease in hours worked**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

### **Concerns about household finances**

Nearly 1 in 4 adults (22.9%) said the coronavirus was affecting their household finances.

The main concern amongst these people was reduced income (72.9%), with 31.9% having needed to use savings to cover living costs and 22.1% saying they were struggling to pay bills (Figure 3).

### **Figure 3: The main concern about household finances is having a reduced income**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

## 5 . Expectations for the future

When considering their future, nearly half of all adults (44.3%) expected their financial position to get a little or a lot worse over the next 12 months. A lower proportion (41.0%) expected to be able to save over this same time.

Over 1 in 3 adults (35.0%) thought it would be between four and six months before their life would return to normal, with another third (32.9%) thinking it will be longer than six months (Figure 4).

## Figure 4: Most people think life will return to normal in four to six months

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

Many adults were more pessimistic when considering the financial future outside their household. Almost 9 in 10 (84.5%) expected the general economic situation in this country to get a little or a lot worse over the next 12 months.

In view of the general economic situation, 40.4% felt now was the right time to save, while only 3.3% thought now was the right time to make major purchases such as furniture or electrical goods.

## 6 . Understanding information about the coronavirus

Just over 4 in 5 adults (83.3%) said they had enough information about how to protect themselves from the coronavirus (COVID-19), an increase from 77.4% last week. For those aged 70 years and over it was 85.3% while for those with underlying health conditions it was 79.8%.

An increased proportion of adults (52.5%) said they had enough information about the UK's plan for dealing with the coronavirus compared with last week (47.8%).

Further statistics on the public's consumption of, and attitudes towards, news and information on the Covid-19 pandemic are being published by [Ofcom](#).

## 7 . Actions undertaken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

This wave of the survey is the first to be collected after the government's [Stay At Home](#) measures were introduced. This advises everyone to stay in their homes apart from a limited number of reasons such as essential shopping, medical reasons, one form of daily exercise and key workers travelling to work. Estimates of the proportion of people following this guidance will be published in the third wave of the survey on 23 April.

### Personal hygiene

Similar to last week, nearly all adults (99.7%) said they had washed their hands with soap and water in the past seven days to avoid infection, with 88.9% saying they washed their hands with soap and water or sanitiser when they arrived home.

### Social distancing

Official advice is to practise social distancing – staying at least two metres away from other people outside your home and to shield vulnerable people, such as those in older age groups or with certain underlying health conditions.

Nearly all adults (96.8%) said they had avoided physical contact (such as shaking hands) with other people from outside their household. There was no statistically significant change from last week (94.3%).

Similarly high proportions of people (92.2%) had said they had avoided contact with older or vulnerable people. Of these, 13.4% said they had avoided someone they were caring for.

## Working from home

An increased proportion of adults in employment said they were working from home this week (45.8%) compared with last week (42.9%). Of those who were in employment and have an underlying health condition, 49.4% said they were working from home.

It is not known whether those who said they were not working from home were still working in their usual place of work or if they had stopped working. More detailed information on changes to labour market participation can be found in the [Faster indicators](#).

## Self-isolation

Alongside the Stay At Home guidance, official advice is that people should self-isolate if they or someone in their household experiences symptoms related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). These results should not be interpreted as an estimate of those with COVID-19 symptoms or those diagnosed with COVID-19.

Over 2 in 5 adults (41.2%) said they had self-isolated (stayed at home) in the past seven days. For those aged 70 years and over, this rose to 62.3%, while for those with an underlying health condition (of all ages) it was 57.5% (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Over 70s are most likely to have self-isolated in the past seven days, though there has been a small increase in those aged 16 to 69 years who are self-isolating**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

Over 3 in 10 (31.6%) adults said someone in their household had self-isolated in the past seven days. For those aged 70 years and over this rose to 42.3% while for those with an underlying health condition it was 41.3%.

Additionally, 7 in 10 adults (71.4%) knew someone living outside their household that had self-isolated.

## 8 . Coping whilst staying at home and community support networks

[Government guidelines](#) to help stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) put strict restrictions on how often we can leave our homes. This means the way we socialise and spend our leisure time is changing.

Despite restrictions on physical contact with others, finding a way to stay in touch with friends and family remotely is the most popular action that is helping people cope whilst staying at home. Spending time with members of their household was also an important part of coping during this lockdown period. Leisure activities such as watching films (55.5%), reading (39.2%), gardening (37.6%) and cooking (34.2%) were also popular.

One of the permitted reasons for leaving your home is to take one form of exercise each day. Nearly half (46.7%) of all adults said this is helping them cope (Figure 6).

## **Figure 6: The majority of adults said staying in touch with friends and family is helping them cope**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

### **Community belonging**

Over half of adults (54.9%) said they have a sense of belonging with other residents in their local community during the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, over 2 in 3 (67.9%) also said they thought people are doing more to help others since the coronavirus outbreak.

A similar proportion (57.0%) said other local community members would support them if they needed help during the coronavirus pandemic. In the past seven days, over half (53.8%) of all adults said they had checked on neighbours who might need help at least once. Additionally, over 1 in 4 (27.7%) said they had gone shopping or done other tasks for neighbours.

## **9 . Indicators of well-being and loneliness**

Just over half of adults (53.1%) said the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting their well-being. This was similar for those with an underlying health condition at 54.7% and lower for those aged 70 years and over at 45.8% (Figure 7).

### **Figure 7: Of those who were concerned about the impact of the coronavirus on their well-being, the majority felt worried about the future, or stressed or anxious**

Great Britain, 27 March 2020 to 6 April 2020

Results for all four measures of well-being are included in the associated [datasets](#), but this summary bulletin will report on how anxiety levels and loneliness are changing through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Nearly half of adults (46.9%) reported high levels of anxiety (a score of 6 to 10), a decrease from last week (49.6%).

Just over 1 in 5 adults (20.1%) said they felt lonely often/always or some of the time and this is similar to last week (23.8%). As is seen in similar reports on loneliness before the pandemic, levels of reported loneliness are lower amongst those aged 70 years and over at 11.6%, which is similar to last week's estimate (12.7%). For those with an underlying health condition it was 25.6% compared with 23.2% last week. However, this was not a significant difference.

More information on loneliness and well-being before the coronavirus pandemic is included in the release [Coronavirus and social relationships and support for vulnerable groups](#).

Table 1 : Indicators of well-being  
Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

	Group	This week (%)	Last week (%)
Wellbeing is being affected*	All adults	53.1	n/a
	70 years and over	45.8	n/a
	Underlying health	54.7	n/a
Mean anxiety score**	All adults	5	5.2
	70 years and over	4.7	4.8
	Underlying health	4.9	5.4
Percentage with high anxiety (score 6-10)**	All adults	46.9	49.6
	70 years and over	42.2	42.8
	Underlying health	45.4	52
Feeling lonely often/always	All adults	5.4	6.3
	70 years and over	1.1	1.9
	Underlying health	11.2	8.4
Feeling lonely some of the time	All adults	14.7	17.5
	70 years and over	10.5	10.8
	Underlying health	14.4	14.8

#### Notes

- \* Question only asked to respondents that said they were very worried or somewhat worried about the affect Covid-19 is having on their life right now. [Back to table](#)
- \*\* "On a scale of 0 to 10, how anxious did you feel yesterday?" [Back to table](#)

## 10 . Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 16 April 2020

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

## 11 . Glossary

### Underlying health condition

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

Alzheimer's disease or dementia; Angina or long-term heart problem; Asthma; Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or Asperger's (Asperger syndrome); Cancer; Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or long-term lung problem; Diabetes; Epilepsy or other conditions that affect the brain; High blood pressure; Kidney or liver disease; Stroke or cerebral haemorrhage or cerebral thrombosis; Rheumatoid arthritis.

## **In employment**

For this survey a person is said to be "In employment" 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.

## **12 . 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 first wave, 2,010 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 79% (or 1,581 individuals) for the survey conducted from 27 March to 6 April 2020.

Throughout this bulletin, "this week" refers to the period 27 March to 6 April 2020, and "last week" refers to the period 20 to 30 March 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.

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

## **Sampling**

A sample of 2,010 households were randomly selected from Wave 3 of 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 older people because of under-representation in the sample available for the survey.

## **Weighting**

The responding sample contained 1,581 individuals. 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 and highest qualification. For age, sex and region, population totals based on projections of mid-year population estimates for March 2020 were used. The resulting weighted sample is hence representative of the Great Britain adult population by a number of socio-demographic factors and geography.

## **13 . 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: 2,010 individuals per week with fewer completed interviews, meaning that detailed analyses for subnational geographies and other sub-groups are not possible
- the mode is online only so the sample may be subject to more bias than usual
- Comparisons between periods and groups must be done so 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.

## 14 . Related links

### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) product page](#)

Product 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 3 April 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 14 April 2020

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

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

Blog | Updated as and when data become available

Catch up on the latest data and analysis related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its impact on our economy and society.