

Statistical bulletin

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

New indicators from the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 20 March 2020 to 30 March 2020 to understand the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

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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: 9 April 2020](#)

2 . Main points

- Over 8 in 10 adults (85.8%) in Great Britain said they were either very worried or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family would be infected by the coronavirus (COVID-19); this was higher for “at risk” groups, that is, those aged 70 years and over (91.7%) and those with underlying health conditions (90.4%).
- Over 7 in 10 adults (77.4%) stated they understood how to protect themselves from the coronavirus, however, fewer than half of adults (47.8%) said they had enough information about the UK’s plan for dealing with the coronavirus.
- Almost all the adults (99.8%) said they had washed hands with soap and water to avoid infection in the last seven days, with almost 9 in 10 (89.9%) saying they had increased the frequency of doing so since the coronavirus pandemic.
- Nearly 9 in 10 (89.2%) of all adults either cancelled or postponed plans because of the coronavirus or did not have plans in the past seven days.
- Just over half (50.6%) of all adults said someone had offered to organise or bring food and other essentials if they needed to self-isolate or became unwell; this rose to 83.3% for those aged 70 years and over.

3 . Understanding the impact on society

To understand how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is affecting life in Great Britain, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has started to collect weekly information on people’s experiences and opinions relating to the pandemic. These results will give an insight into how our personal, home and work lives are changing and what the impact is on our well-being and the communities in which we live.

This bulletin begins a weekly series providing an overview of the results from each survey. It contains breakdowns of results for identified “at-risk” groups; those aged 70 years and over and those with certain underlying health conditions. These conditions are listed in the [glossary](#) section. Further articles with more in-depth analysis of specific topics and populations will follow in the coming weeks.

The statistics in this publication are based on a survey of 1,588 adults sampled through the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) conducted online between 20 March 2020 and 30 March 2020 (inclusive). The 10-day data collection period spans the introduction of the [Stay At Home measures](#) by the government on Monday 23 March. Over three-quarters of responses were collected before this date, with the results more likely to reflect opinions at this time.

4 . People’s concerns about the coronavirus pandemic

Over 8 in 10 adults (85.8%) in Great Britain were either very worried or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family would be infected by the coronavirus (COVID-19). There were higher levels of concern amongst those people in the “at risk” groups. When looking at people aged 70 years and over this number rose to 91.7%. For those with an underlying health condition, 90.4% of people said they were very worried or somewhat worried.

Figure 1: How worried or unworried are you that you or someone in your family will be infected by the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Great Britain, 20 to 30 March 2020

When people considered the impact on them, 55.7% of all adults strongly or somewhat agreed that it was going to negatively impact on their household finances. This was lower for those aged 70 years and over, with 33.7% strongly or somewhat agreeing.

Over 8 in 10 adults aged 16 to 69 years (85.7%) who were employed or self-employed were worried that the coronavirus would cause problems for their work. This was lower for those aged 70 years and over (46.1%) who said they were employed or self-employed. There was also widespread belief amongst all adults (96.8%) that the coronavirus would cause problems for the UK economy.

At the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, it was widely reported in the media that some people had been stockpiling certain items. When people were asked in the survey whether they had stockpiled, only 1 in 3 (32.8%) adults said they had purchased extra supplies, groceries and toiletries. However, nearly all respondents (98.5%) said that they thought other people had purchased extra supplies of groceries and toiletries.

5 . Understanding information about the coronavirus

Just over 3 in 4 adults (77.4%) said they had enough information about how to protect themselves from the coronavirus (COVID-19), rising to 85.2% for those aged 70 years and over.

TV or radio were the most popular sources of information having been accessed by 71.2% of all adults. This was higher for those aged 70 years and over (84.4%). Official websites of the NHS and GOV.UK also provided information to over 6 in 10 adults (63.2%) and these websites were also considered the most trusted (48.8%) and helpful (35.5%).

Social media was also one of the sources of information that people had accessed to learn more about the coronavirus. Just over 4 in 10 (44.1%) of people aged 16 to 69 years said they had used social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. This was lower (15.0%) for those aged 70 years and over. This difference was also statistically significant (Figure 2).

When asked about the UK’s plan for dealing with the coronavirus, fewer than half of all adults (47.8%) said they had enough information; this proportion was higher for those aged 70 years and over (61.3%).

Figure 2: Where have you found information about the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Great Britain, 20 to 30 March 2020

Notes:

1. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

6 . Actions undertaken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

People were also asked about the actions they were personally taking to protect themselves and others against the coronavirus (COVID-19). This survey was launched before the [Stay at Home measures](#) were introduced, so information has not been collected on compliance with this guidance here, but will follow in subsequent weeks.

Personal hygiene

Almost all adults (99.8%) said they had washed their hands with soap and water to avoid infection in the last seven days. Of those who had washed their hands with soap and water, 89.8% said they had increased the frequency of doing so since the coronavirus pandemic.

Over two-thirds (69.1%) of all adults also said they had tissues to catch coughs and sneezes. Of these, 42.3% said they had increased this activity since the start of the coronavirus pandemic (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Personal hygiene measures undertaken in the last seven days

Great Britain, 20 to 30 March 2020

Notes:

1. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

Social distancing

One of the official main messages on stopping the spread of the coronavirus was for people to practice social distancing.

Nearly 9 in 10 of all adults (89.2%) cancelled or postponed plans because of the coronavirus in the past seven days. This included not meeting up with people in a public or personal place. Nearly 53.2% of adults said they have postponed or cancelled taking part in regular activities such as exercise classes or attending places of worship (Figure 4).

Figure 4: In the past seven days, have any of your plans been postponed or cancelled because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?

Great Britain, 20 to 30 March 2020

Notes:

1. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

Government guidance also advised trying to “shield” older or vulnerable people. Among all adults, 83.3% said they had avoided contact with older people or other vulnerable people because of the coronavirus pandemic in the last seven days. Of these, 13.4% said they had avoided contact with someone they were caring for.

Social distancing has also impacted on people’s work life. For those who had said they were employed or self-employed, over 4 in 10 (42.9%) of all adults said they had worked from home to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. For those with an underlying health condition, 38.2% 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 homeworking statistics before the coronavirus pandemic can be found in the release on [Coronavirus and homeworking in the UK labour market](#).

Other main advice was that people should self-isolate when they experience symptoms related to COVID-19. This means they are advised not to leave their homes. These results should not be interpreted as an estimate of those with COVID-19 symptoms or those diagnosed with COVID-19.

Over 1 in 3 adults (39.0%) said they had self-isolated (stayed at home) in the past seven days. For those aged 70 years and over, this rose to 64.6%, while for those with an underlying health condition (of all ages) it was 53.4%.

Over 1 in 3 (36.9%) adults said someone in their household had self-isolated in the past seven days. For those aged 70 years and over this rose to 50.1%.

Additionally, 7 in 10 adults (72.9%) knew someone living outside their household that had self-isolated.

7 . Community support networks and impact on well-being

The home and work lives of many people in Great Britain have changed since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is important to remember most people (over 75%) responded to this survey before the government announced the additional [Stay at Home measures](#), which introduced greater restrictions on social interactions outside a household. This will likely be reflected in the responses.

Nearly 1 in 4 adults (23.8%) said they felt lonely often/always or some of the time. As is seen in similar reports on loneliness before the pandemic, levels of reported loneliness are lower amongst those aged 70 years and over (12.7%). For those with an underlying health condition it was 23.2%. 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](#).

There was a general reduction in face-to-face meetings that people said they had with family, friends and neighbours but an increased contact by phone or chatting online.

Over 6 in 10 adults (67.2%) said they had met in person with family members less since the coronavirus pandemic. However, 63.2% said they chatted on the phone or online more often with their family members.

For those aged 70 years and over, 74.0% said they had met family less, while 75.4% in this age group said they had chatted on the phone or online with their family more often than before the pandemic.

Nearly 8 in 10 adults (78.0%) said they had met in person with friends less since the coronavirus pandemic. However, just over half (52.4%) said they chatted on the phone or online more often with their friends.

For those aged 70 years and over, the proportions were higher, 85.1% said they had met friends in person less since the pandemic and 65.0% said they had chatted on the phone and online.

Just over 4 in 10 adults (41.6%) said they had met in person with neighbours less since the coronavirus pandemic, while 12.8% said they chatted with neighbours more on the phone or online. The proportion of those that said they met neighbours less in person was higher for those aged 70 years and over (59.7%) as was the proportion (24.6%) of the same group who said they had chatted on the phone or online with a neighbour.

Just over half (50.6%) of all adults also said someone has offered to organise or bring food and other essentials if they needed to self-isolate or became unwell. This rose to 83.3% for those aged 70 years and over. Those who offered help include family, friends and neighbours (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Who has offered to help you?

Great Britain, 20 to 30 March 2020

Notes:

1. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

8 . Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 9 April 2020

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

9 . 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.

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 this first wave, 2,010 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 79% (or 1,588 individuals) for the survey conducted from 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 1,588 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.

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:

- the sample size is relatively small: 2,010 individuals per week with less completed interviews, meaning that detailed analyses for subnational geographies and other sub-groups aren't possible
- the mode is online only so the sample may be subject to more bias than usual

12 . 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 27 March 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 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.