

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 22 May 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 14 to 17 May 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

- The most common impact of the coronavirus on people's lives this week is a lack of freedom and independence, with nearly 2 in 3 adults (65%) saying this was impacting them.
- Around 8 in 10 adults (80%) said they had enough information to protect themselves; a decrease on recent weeks and a similar level to the start of lockdown measures.
- Around 1 in 7 (14%) adults had not left their home over the past seven days; for those with an underlying health condition, 1 in 3 (33%) had not left their home.
- Over 4 in 10 adults (41%) felt unsafe when leaving their home because of the coronavirus; for those with an underlying health condition this rose to over half (54%).
- Just under 4 in 10 adults (39%) said they had visited a park or public green space in the past seven days and of these, 17% said they had met up with friends or family from outside their household.

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 bulletin are based on a survey of 995 adults (50% response rate) sampled through the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) conducted between 14 and 17 May 2020 (inclusive). This is a shortened collection period to previous waves of the survey to allow more timely analysis of how people's lives are changing during the pandemic.

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 the [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.

Because of changes to some of the questions on the survey and the change to the collection period, direct comparison with previous weeks should be made with caution. Further details can be found in the [Measuring the data](#) section.

3 . Concerns about the coronavirus

Almost three-quarters of adults (72%) in Great Britain said they were concerned about the effect that the coronavirus (COVID-19) was having on their life. Concerns among at-risk groups remain higher, with nearly three-quarters (73%) of those aged 70 years and over and more than four in five (82%) of those with an underlying health condition saying they had these concerns.

Women also showed higher levels of concern than men, with 8 in 10 (79%) women concerned about the effect that COVID-19 was having on their life compared with less than 7 in 10 (66%) men.

Results for this survey are the first to be collected following the announcement of changes to Stay at home guidance on Sunday 10 May.

The most common concern is a new category this week of “lack of freedom and independence”, with 65% of adults saying this is affecting them. This reflects the other common concerns of an inability to make plans (54%) with personal travel plans and life events also being affected.

8 in 10 (80%) adults said they had enough information about how to protect themselves from COVID-19. This compares with 83% at the start of the lockdown (collected 27 March to 6 April 2020). Just over 4 in 10 (41%) adults said they had enough information about the UK’s plan to deal with COVID-19, which is the lowest since lockdown began.

People’s expectations for how long their life will be disrupted are continuing to increase. This week, a quarter of people (25%) now believe that it will be more than a year before life returns to normal, compared with 1 in 10 (11%) after the first week of lockdown.

Looking at the differences between men and women, men were less optimistic, with 3 in 10 (31%) thinking it would take more than a year before life returns to normal, compared with 2 in 10 (20%) of women thinking it would take more than a year.

When thinking about the future, over 1 in 5 (21%) adults said the pandemic had made them more concerned about climate change, with 3 in 5 (60%) saying their concern had stayed the same. Over 9 in 10 (92%) adults agreed Stay at home measures had positively affected the environment. Of these, over 9 in 10 (91%) also said they thought where changes had been positive, society should try to keep doing them.

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 our studies and surveys are [serving public need](#).

Impact on work

Although an equal amount of men and women were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their work (45%), the main issues differ between the two groups. Of those who said their work had been impacted in the past seven days, the most common impacts for men were being furloughed, being asked to work from home and having a decrease in hours worked.

For women, similarly the most common impact was being furloughed, but they were more likely to say they were finding working from home difficult and be concerned about their health and safety at work compared with men.

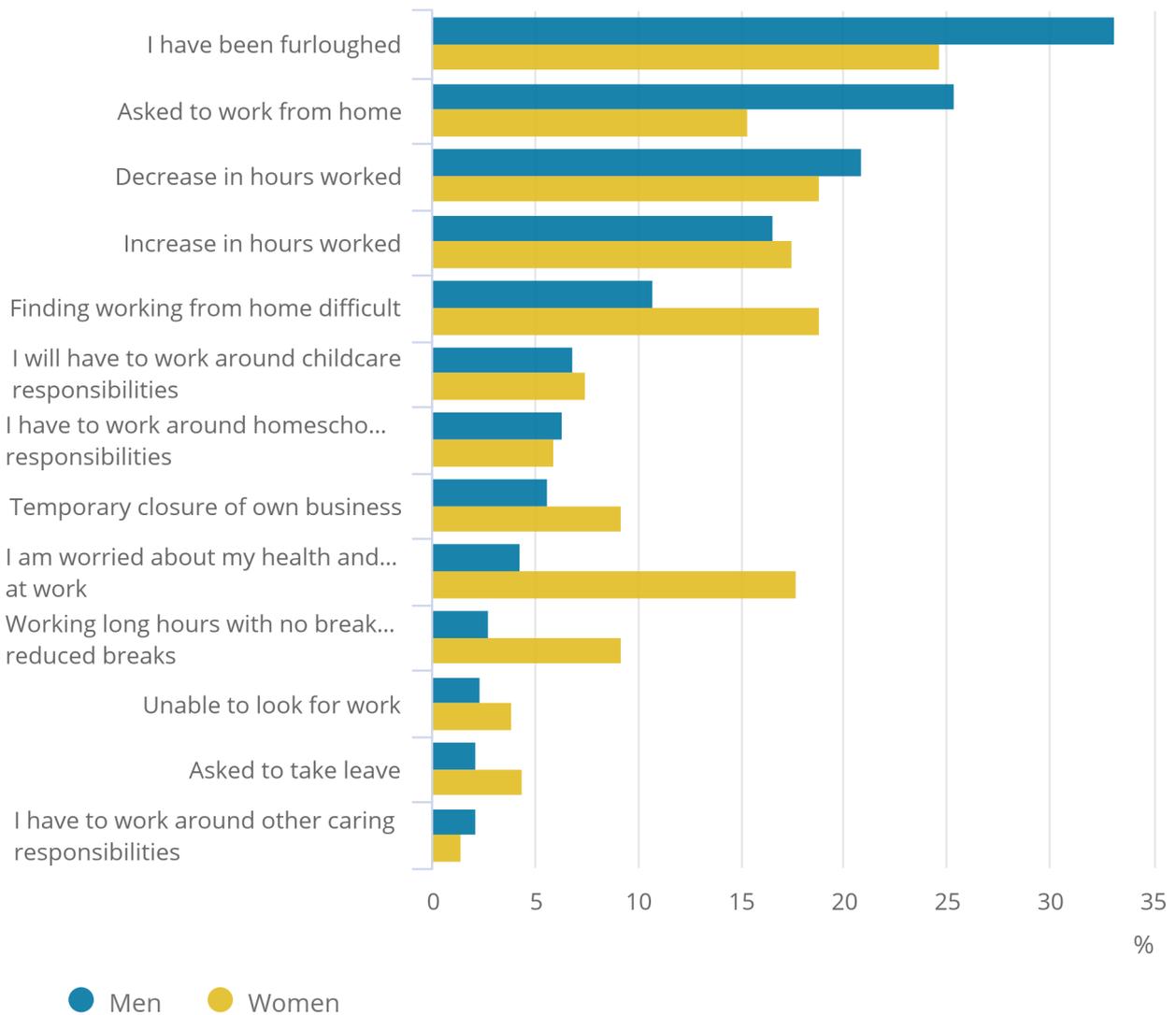
Further details on changes to labour market participation and the impact on businesses from the coronavirus can be found in [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society](#).

Figure 1: Men and women have different concerns about work

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020

Figure 1: Men and women have different concerns about work

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "In the past seven days how has your work been affected?"
2. Base population for percentage: adults aged 16 years or over who said coronavirus was affecting their work.
3. [Estimates of levels of furloughing](#) are available.
4. Responses for the categories "unable to work at all due to caring responsibilities"; "unable to take leave"; "unable to work due to self-isolation"; "unable to work at all due to childcare responsibilities"; "unable to work at all due to homeschooling responsibilities"; "redundancy"; "permanent closure of own business"; and "unable to work due to lack of public transport" have been suppressed due to low sample sizes.
5. Response rate of "other" has been removed from the chart.

4 . Actions undertaken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

Staying at home

Of adults in Great Britain, around 1 in 7 (14%) said they had not left their home for any reason in the past seven days. This was 1 in 3 (33%) for those aged 70 years and over, and 33% for those with an underlying health condition.

The proportion of people that say they have either not left their home, or only left to travel to and from work; to do essential shopping; for medical reasons or for daily exercise, is 81% (Figure 2). This is similar to previous weeks.

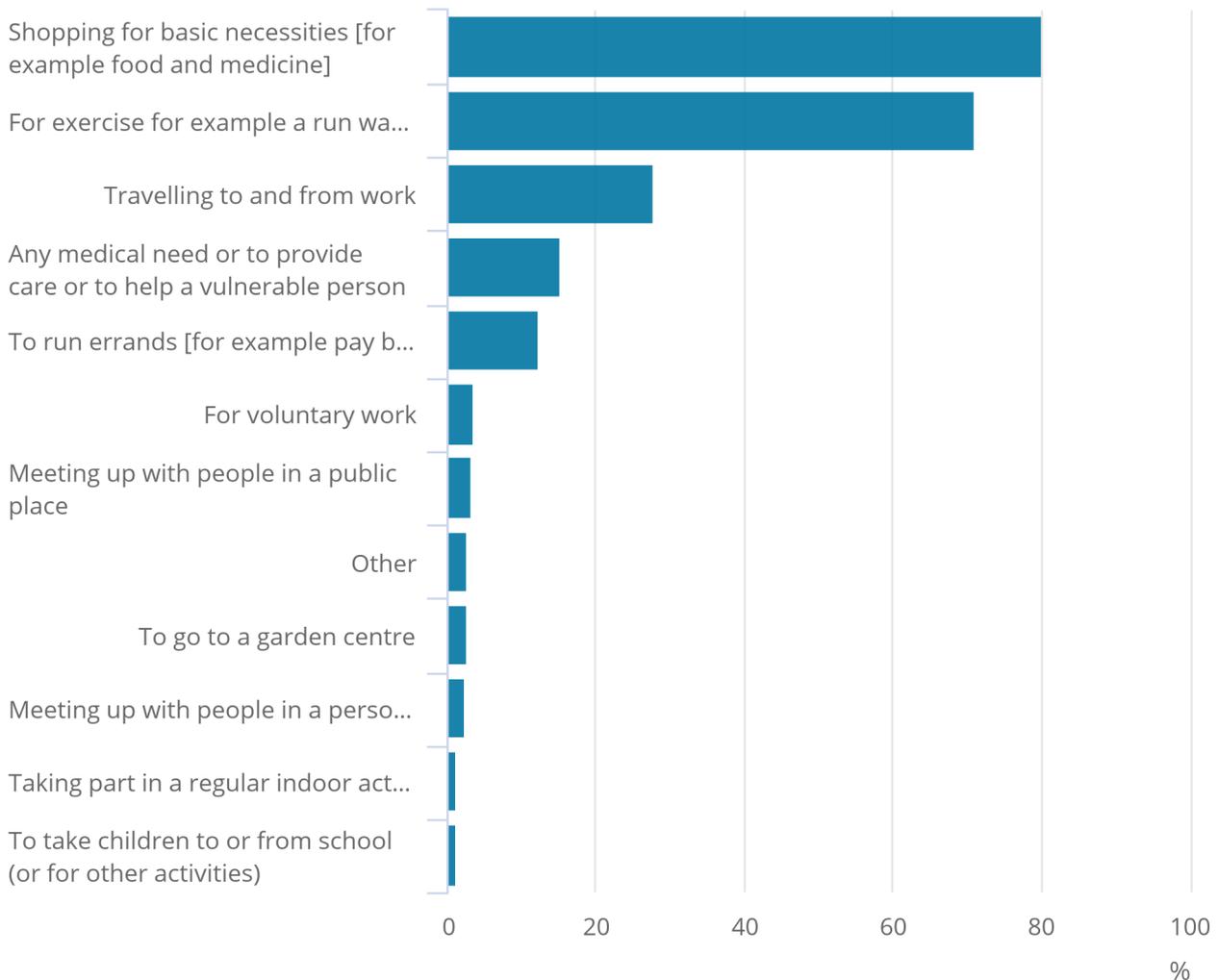
Guidance on staying at home varies in England, Scotland and Wales. Results in this weekly bulletin are presented for Great Britain only.

Figure 2: The most common reason for leaving home was shopping for basic necessities such as food and medicine

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020

Figure 2: The most common reason for leaving home was shopping for basic necessities such as food and medicine

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 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. Respondents were asked to select all that apply.
3. The values for "to visit a tourist attraction"; "travel within the UK for holidays or short breaks"; "travel outside of the UK for work"; "travel outside of the UK for holidays or short breaks" and "none of the above" have been suppressed because of small sample size.
4. Base population: adults that said they had left their home in the past seven days.

Just under 4 in 10 adults (39%) said they had visited a park or public green space in the past seven days. Of these, 17% said they had met up with friends or family from outside their household.

Over 4 in 10 (41%) adults say they feel unsafe or very unsafe outside of their home. For those aged 70 years and over this is 39% and for those with underlying health conditions this increases to 54%.

Self-isolation

Official advice is that people should self-isolate if they or someone in their household experiences symptoms related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Some people may choose to self-isolate for other reasons, so these results should not be interpreted as an estimate of those with COVID-19 symptoms or those diagnosed with COVID-19.

In the past seven days, 1 in 5 adults (20%) said they had self-isolated; this is the lowest level across all the weeks data have been collected. For those aged 70 years and over, more than 1 in 4 (44%) said they had self-isolated, while for those with an underlying health condition (all ages) it was 35%.

Just under 1 in 5 adults (17%) were in households where everyone had self-isolated over the past seven days, again the lowest proportion across the weeks.

Working from home

A slightly lower proportion of adults in employment said they had worked from home at some point this week (41%) compared with previous weeks (46% for 27 March – 6 April).

New [government advice](#) for workers in England stated they should travel to work if their workplace was open and they could not work from home. See Table 1 for homeworking and travel to work trends this week.

Table 1: Place of work
Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020

Place of work	All persons	Men	Women
Percentage of people who worked from home only	33	34	32
Percentage of people who both worked from home and travelled to work	8	7	9
Percentage of people who travelled to work only	29	32	27
Percentage of people who neither worked from home nor travelled to work	30	27	32

Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes

1. Base population for percentage: all adults who said that they were working. [Back to table](#)
2. Base population for percentage: all adults in employment. [Back to table](#)

More detailed information on changes to labour market participation can be found in [Coronavirus and the latest indicators for the UK economy and society](#).

Social distancing

Social distancing guidance advises physical contact with others should be kept to a minimum. Nearly all adults (97%) said they had tried to stay at least two metres away from other people when outside their home.

Shielding older or vulnerable people from the risk of infection is also important. Again, a consistently high proportion of adults say they are avoiding contact with older or vulnerable adults, this week it is 9 in 10 (90%). Amongst these, 1 in 10 (10%) say the people they are avoiding are those to whom they provide care.

5 . Unity, kindness and equality

Expectations for unity, kindness and equality in Great Britain after recovery from the coronavirus (COVID -19) pandemic are similar to previous weeks.

The largest change is in people's expectations for unity. Just over 2 in 10 (22%) believed that Britain was very or somewhat united before the coronavirus pandemic. However, just under 5 in 10 (49%) said they thought that Britain would be united once we have recovered from the coronavirus pandemic (Figure 3).

Women expected greater unity than men after the pandemic, with 57% believing Britain would be very or somewhat united compared with 41% of men.

Similarly, 4 in 10 adults (42%) believed that Britain was somewhat or very kind before the coronavirus pandemic, and a larger proportion of 6 in 10 (61%) said that Britain would be kinder once we have recovered from the coronavirus pandemic.

Again, more women than men expected people to be kind after the pandemic and saw a greater change in attitude.

There was a smaller change in expectations for equality in Britain. Just under 1 in 5 adults (15%) felt that Britain was somewhat or very equal before the pandemic, with the proportion feeling that Britain would be equal after the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic rising to 22%.

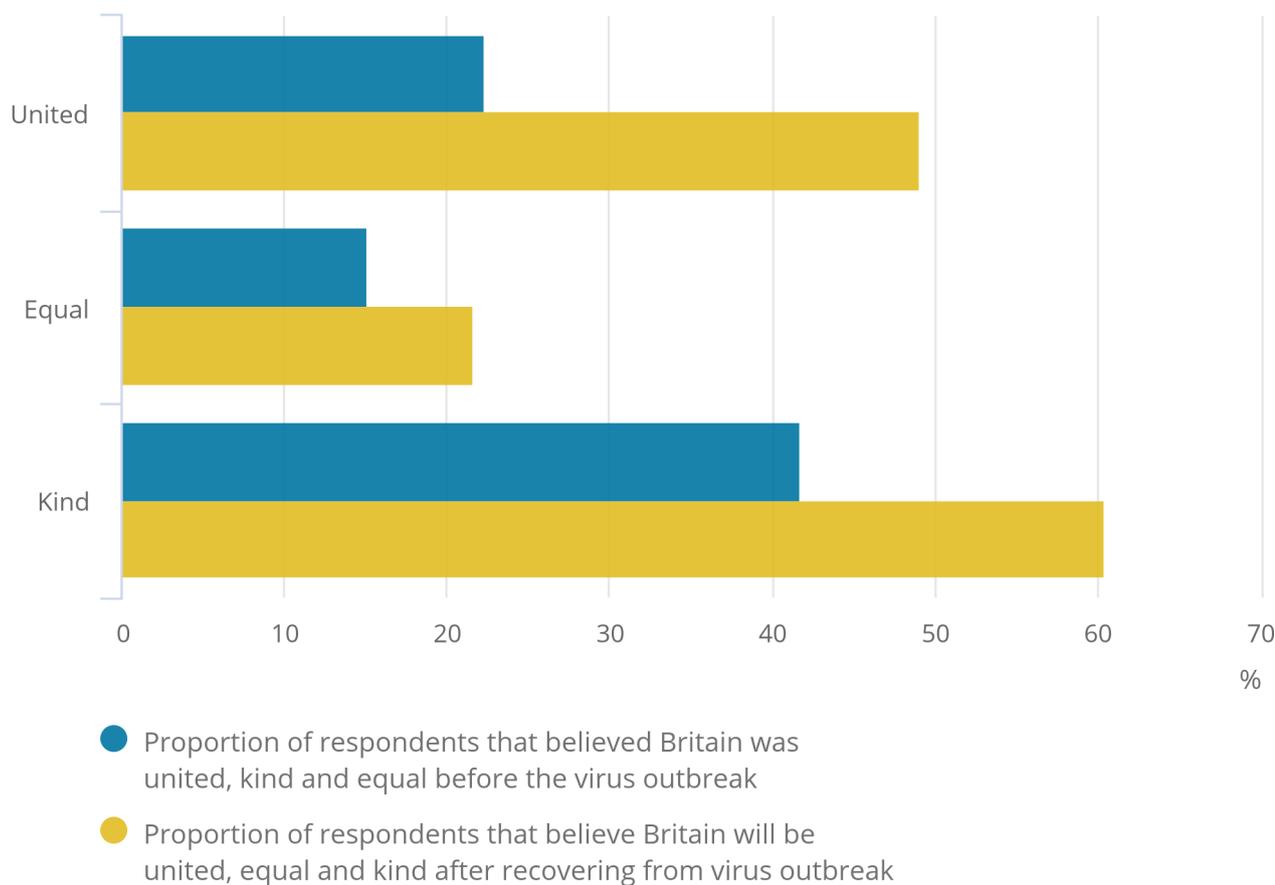
Again, more women than men believed that Britain was very or somewhat equal both before and after the pandemic, and women saw a greater change in attitude, from 16% before the pandemic to 24% after we have recovered.

Figure 3: More people believe that Britain will be united and kinder following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, than it was before

Great Britain, 24 April to 3 May 2020

Figure 3: More people believe that Britain will be united and kinder following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, than it was before

Great Britain, 24 April to 3 May 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Proportion of respondents that believed Britain was united, kind and equal before the coronavirus pandemic.

6 . Indicators of well-being and loneliness

Over 4 in 10 adults (43%) said their well-being was affected. The proportion remained lower for those aged 70 years and over, at 34%, and higher for those with an underlying health condition, at 55%.

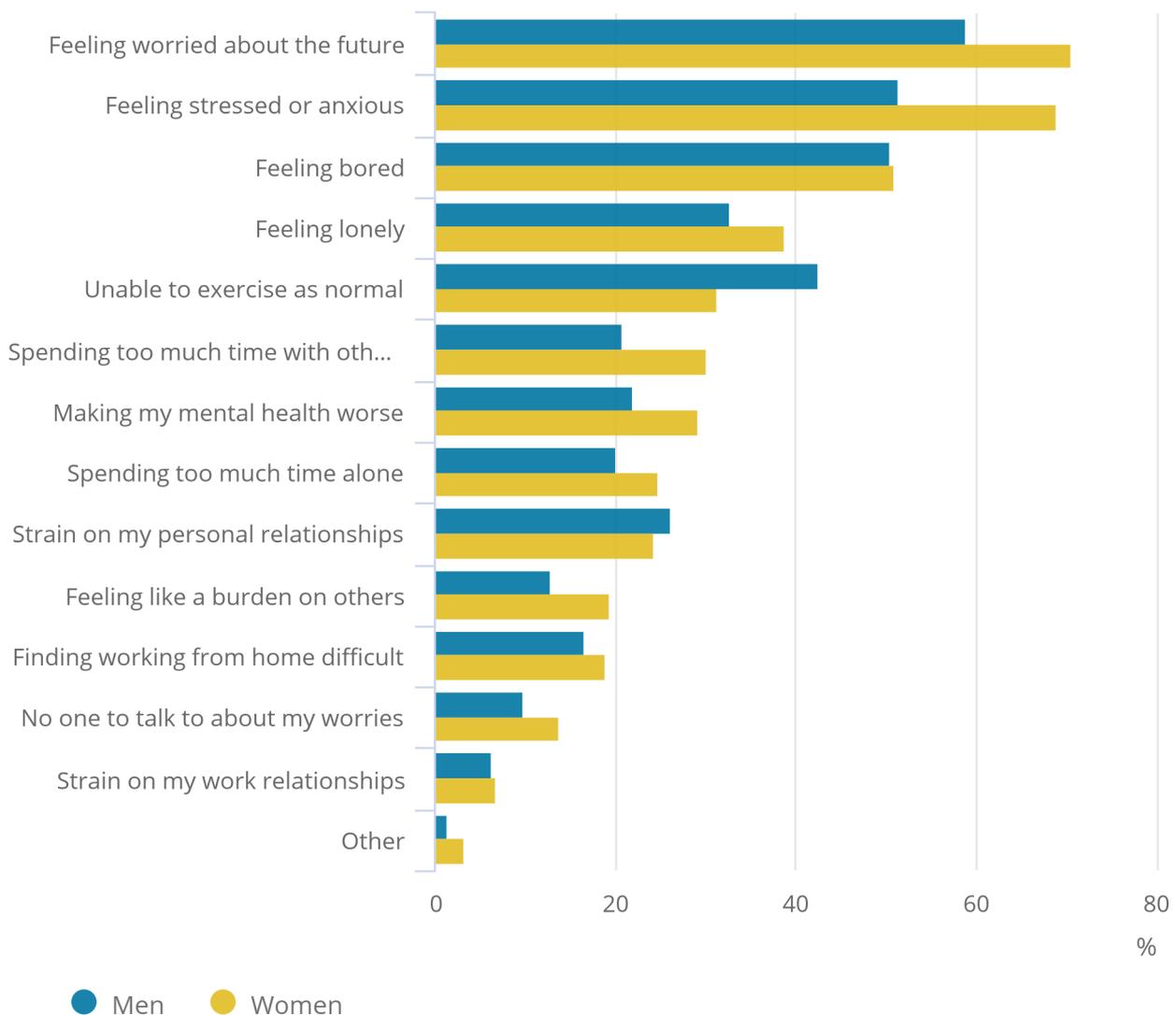
Among adults, 40% of men and 46% of women were concerned about well-being and the most common issues affecting this well-being are similar to previous weeks. For both men and women who reported that their well-being was being affected, the most common reason given was feeling worried about the future, with 6 in 10 (59%) men and 7 in 10 (71%) women citing this issue (Figure 4). Just over half of men (52%) felt stressed or anxious compared with nearly 7 in 10 (69%) women. Half (51%) felt bored, with no difference between men and women. Just under 4 in 10 (37%) said not being able to exercise as normal was impacting their well-being, with a greater proportion of men (43%) compared with women (31%) reporting this impact.

Figure 4: Women generally felt more worried about the future, stressed and anxious compared with men

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020

Figure 4: Women generally felt more worried about the future, stressed and anxious compared with men

Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Anxiety levels, although higher than before the pandemic, have shown a general downward trend through the weeks of lockdown. For adults overall, this trend has levelled this week and similar proportions report high levels of anxiety to recent weeks. However, for those with an underlying health condition, anxiety levels show an increase.

Table 2: Indicators of well-being
Great Britain, 14 May to 17 May 2020

	Group	14 - 17 May (%)	24 April - 3 May (%)
Wellbeing is being affected	All adults	43	42
	70 years and over	34	32
	Underlying health	55	45
Mean anxiety score*	All adults	4	4.1
	70 years and over	3.9	3.8
	Underlying health	4.7	4.5
Percentage with high anxiety (score 6-10)*	All adults	32	33
	70 years and over	32	29
	Underlying health	47	40
Feeling lonely often or always	All adults	6	5
	70 years and over	7	3
	Underlying health	13	10
Feeling lonely some of the time	All adults	18	16
	70 years and over	13	12
	Underlying health	17	21

Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes

1. Because of a change in the routing of the questionnaire, results for % who say well-being is affected are not directly comparable between weeks. This week all adults were asked how their life was impacted. In previous weeks, only those who said they were very or somewhat worried about how the coronavirus was affecting their life were asked how it was being impacted. [Back to table](#)
2. * Anxiety is measured on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely” [Back to table](#)
3. “This week” refers to the period 14 to 17 May, and “last week” refers to the last published period of 24 April to 3 May 2020.” [Back to table](#)

The full scores for the four measures of personal well-being are included in the associated [datasets](#).

7 . Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 22 May 2020

New 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.

8 . Glossary

Underlying health condition

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

- angina or 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 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)
- given an organ transplant

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; they did any casual work for payment; or they did any unpaid or voluntary work in the previous week.

9 . 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, 2,010 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 50% (or 995 individuals) for the survey conducted from 14 to 17 May 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 complete the survey online were given the opportunity to take part over the phone.

Where changes in results from previous weeks 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 [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey QMI](#).

Sampling

A sample of 2,010 households were randomly selected from the Annual Population Survey (APS), which consists collectively of those respondents who successfully completed the last wave of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) or the local LFS boost. 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. Further information on the sample design can be found in the [OPN QMI](#).

Weighting

The responding sample contained 995 individuals (50% 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, employment status, National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) group and smoking status. For age, sex and region, population totals based on projections of mid-year population estimates for May 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.

Data collection period

The data collection period for this wave of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey has been reduced to four days from 10 or 11 days on previous waves. The time between the survey closing and results being published has also been reduced to allow more timely analysis of how attitudes and experiences are changing through the pandemic as changes are made to government guidance.

Data were collected for Wave 7 and 8 of the survey from 1 May to 10 May and from 7 to 17 May respectively. Because of resource constraints it has not been possible to analyse these data separately in the weekly bulletin, but they will be included in the additional topic-based articles being published over the next few months. The data will also be available through the UK Data Service in the usual way.

10 . 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
- 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

11 . 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 8 May 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 19 May 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](#)

Article | Released 24 April 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) covering the period 27 March 2020 to 13 April 2020 on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people in Great Britain.

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

Bulletin | Released 4 May 2020

Estimates looking across personal well-being and economic well-being covering the period October 2019 to April 2020 to understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people and households in Great Britain.

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

Blog | Updated as and when data become available

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