

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 2 October 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 24 to 27 September 2020 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

Contact:
Andrea Lacey and Bonang Lewis
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.
gov.uk
+44(0)1633 651663

Release date:
2 October 2020

Next release:
9 October 2020

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1 . Main points

- Levels of socialising, eating out and travel have decreased this week after increasing through the summer; the percentage of adults that left their home to meet up with people in a personal place had the largest decrease, at 20% this week compared with 30% last week.
- Levels of socialising varied by whether someone was in a “local lockdown” area; of those in lockdown 37% had not socialised with anyone outside their household, compared with 22% for those not in local lockdown areas.
- 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.
- There was a decrease in the proportion of working adults travelling to work this week, with around 6 in 10 (59%) doing so (either exclusively or in combination with working from home), compared with 64% last week.
- This week, nearly three-quarters of adults (74%) were very or somewhat worried about the effect of COVID-19 on their life right now; the highest proportion since restrictions started easing at the end of May (67% over the period 21 to 24 May).
- Of those who have people in the household attending university this year and are very or somewhat worried about students returning, 67% said they were most worried about the quality of education that they will receive due to changes made because of the coronavirus.

Responses to this survey were taken after the UK Government and devolved administrations announced changes to national measures in response to the coronavirus on 22 September 2020. However, most questions relate to the past seven days, therefore responses this week may relate to before these measures were put in place.

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 24 and 27 September 2020 (inclusive). Results from this week are based on 1,587 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 8: 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 24 to 27 September 2020 and "last week" refers to responses collected during the period 16 to 20 September 2020.

3 . Leaving home

More than 9 in 10 (94%) 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 most recent week people have been less likely to leave home to socialise. The percentage of adults that left their home to meet people in a personal place (for example, visiting family and friends at their home) had the largest decrease from last week. This week, 2 in 10 adults (20%) said they had done this activity, compared with 30% last week.

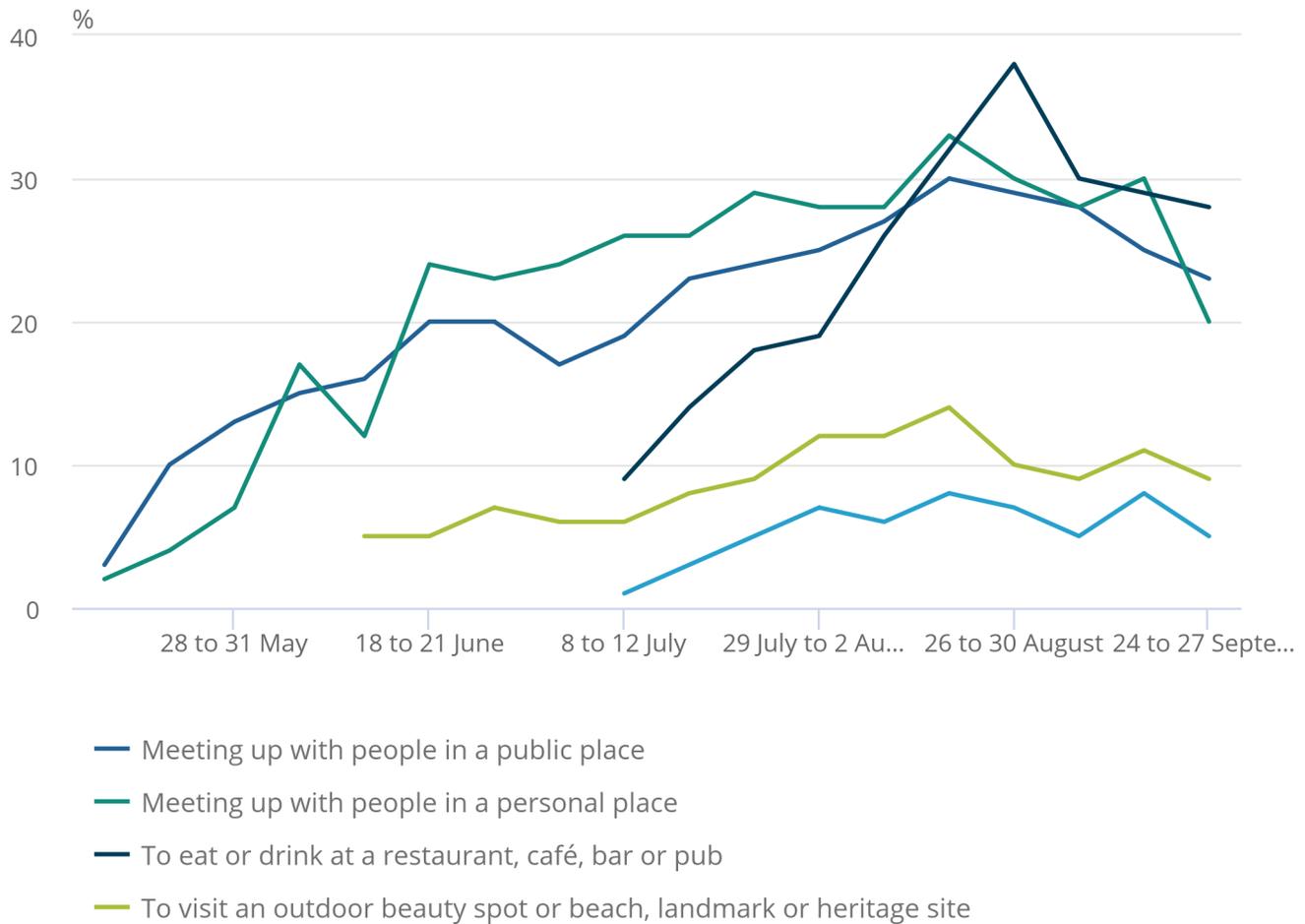
There were smaller reductions in the percentage of adults meeting people in a public place and eating or drinking at a restaurant, café, bar or pub. Around 4 in 10 adults (43%) reported that they were very comfortable or comfortable about eating indoors at a restaurant, compared with 46% last week and 21% when the hospitality sector first started to reopen in England (over the period 2 to 5 July). Among those who left home to eat or drink at a restaurant, café, bar or pub in the past seven days, 12% reported that they always or very often order their food and drinks at the counter.

Figure 1: Levels of socialising, eating out and travel have decreased this week after increasing through the summer

Great Britain, May 2020 to September 2020

Figure 1: Levels of socialising, eating out and travel have decreased this week after increasing through the summer

Great Britain, May 2020 to September 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.

“Rule of six” measures are in place to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Responses for this survey were collected after this new guidance came into effect. Official guidance on social gathering varies across England, Wales and Scotland. Around 7 in 10 adults (67%) strongly support or tend to support the “rule of six” measures in the country where they live. Around 6 in 10 adults (58%) reported that these measures were very simple or simple.

This week, levels of socialising varied. A quarter of adults (25%) said they had not socialised with anyone outside their household in the past seven days. Around 7 in 10 adults (72%) said they had socialised with between one and six other people at the same time, and a further 3% said they had socialised with a group of more than six other people.

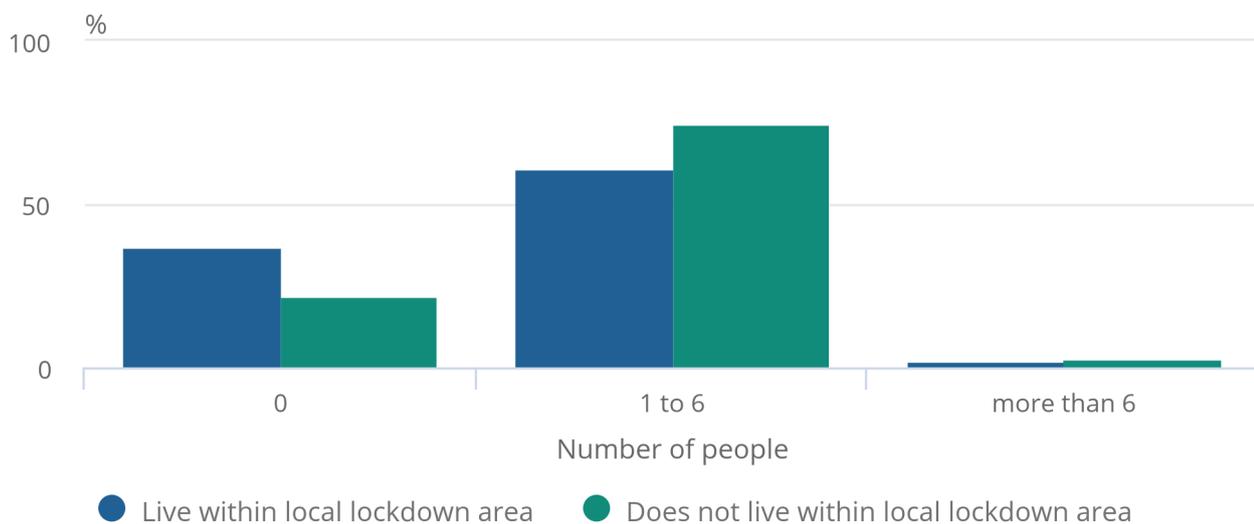
Levels of socialising were reduced when an individual was in a “local lockdown” area. Of those who said they were in a local lockdown area, 37% said they had not socialised with anyone outside of their household, while 61% said they had socialised with between one and six other people at the same time, and a further 2% said they had socialised with a group of more than six other people. For those who said they were not in a local lockdown area, 22% had not socialised with anyone outside their household, 74% had socialised with between one and six, and 4% with more than six.

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

Great Britain, 24 to 27 September 2020

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

Great Britain, 24 to 27 September 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.

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 . Preventative measures

Official guidance varies across England, Wales and Scotland.

Information about the coronavirus

Across Great Britain, nearly 9 in 10 adults (85%) said they had enough information about how to protect themselves from the coronavirus (COVID-19) and this has been at a similar level since June 2020.

This week, respondents were also asked if they had enough information about government plans to manage the coronavirus pandemic. Across Great Britain, nearly half of adults (45%) said they felt they had.

Social distancing

Among those who have met up with people from outside their household either outdoors or indoors, around 8 in 10 (82%) said when they met up with people outside their support bubble they always or often maintained social distancing. This was higher for those aged 70 years and over, at 90%. This is a similar proportion to around two months ago, over the period 8 to 12 July (82% and 88% respectively).

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

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 and Scotland but only on public transport in Wales. Some different rules applied in local lockdown areas.

More than 9 in 10 (97%) 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.

Hand washing

In the past seven days, around 9 in 10 (91%) adults who left their home said they always or often washed their hands with soap and water straight away after returning home for a public place. This is a lower proportion (94%) to the end of May (28 to 31 May 2020), when lockdown measures started to ease. At the beginning of lockdown, over the period 27 March to 6 April 2020, 100% of adults said that in the past seven days they had washed their hands with soap and water to avoid infection.

5 . Impacts on life and work

Impact on life

This week, nearly three-quarters of adults (74%) were very or somewhat worried about the effect of COVID-19 on their life right now. This is the highest proportion since restrictions started easing at the end of May (67% over the period 21 to 24 May). The main concerns reported by adults were a lack of freedom and independence (54%), and personal travel plans being affected (54%).

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.

Responses to the survey were collected after the change in government guidance on working from home was announced on 22 September 2020.

There was a decrease in the proportion of working adults that report travelling to work at least some of the time. Around 6 in 10 (59%) working adults travelled to work (either exclusively or in combination with working from home) in the past seven days, compared with 64% last week, the main change coming from those who had exclusively travelled to work. There was an increase in the percentage that worked exclusively at home this week – 24% compared with 21% 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 (55%)
- they were following government advice (48%)
- they normally worked from home (32%)

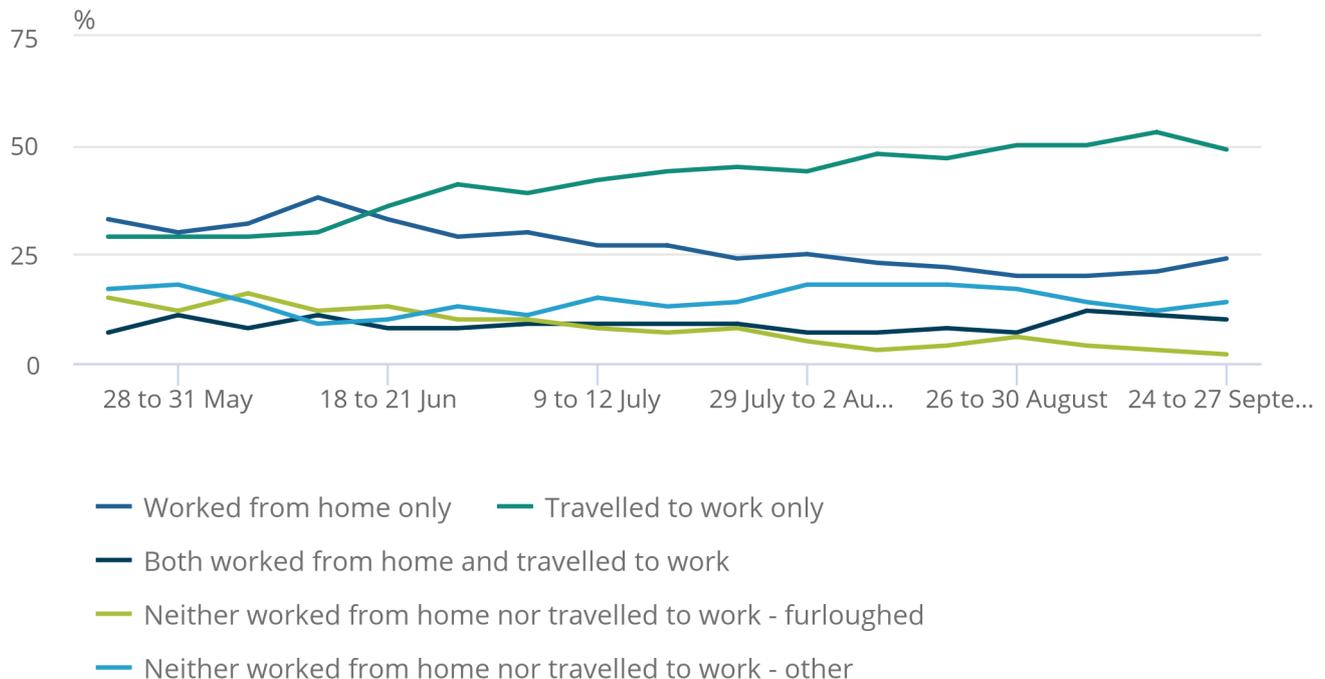
Official estimates of labour market participation can be found in the [Labour market overview](#).

Figure 3: There was a decrease in the percentage of working adults that had travelled to work in the past seven days

Great Britain, May to September 2020

Figure 3: There was a decrease in the percentage of working adults that had travelled to work in the past seven days

Great Britain, May to September 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.

Future plans for returning to work

Government [guidance on working from home](#) was announced on 22 September 2020. This specified that to help contain the virus, office workers who can work effectively from home should do so.

Around 4 in 10 (37%) working adults reported that they intend to work from home in the next seven days if they are able to do so.

Among those that intend to work in the next seven days, the main reasons were:

- their employer had asked them to do so (56%)
- they were following government advice (46%)
- they normally worked from home (33%)

6 . Return to universities

University students are starting and returning to university during September and October. More than half of adults (53%) reported they are very or somewhat worried about students returning to university this year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

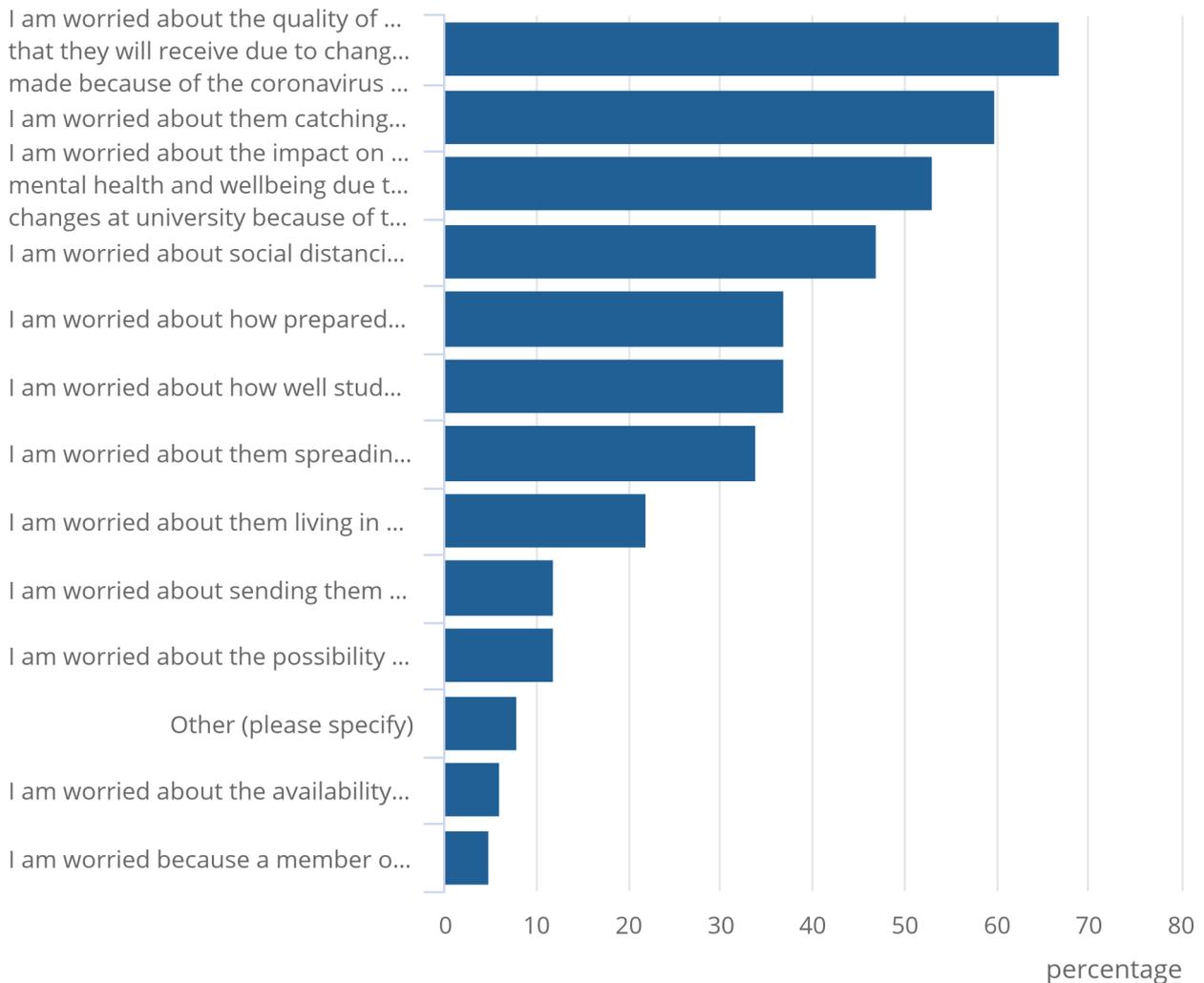
Of those who have people in the household attending university this year and are very or somewhat worried about students returning, 67% said they were most worried about the quality of education that they will receive due to changes made because of the coronavirus.

Figure 4: Those with students in the household, and who had concerns about attending university this year, listed the quality of education that would be received as their largest concern

Great Britain, 24 to 27 September 2020

Figure 4: Those with students in the household, and who had concerns about attending university this year, listed the quality of education that would be received as their largest concern

Great Britain, 24 to 27 September 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "There may be many reasons why people worry about students attending university this year. Which, if any, of the following reasons describes why you are worried?"
2. Base population: Those who are worried or somewhat worried about students returning to university this year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and those with people that usually live in their household will be attending university this year.
3. Respondents asked to select all that apply.

Among those who have people in the household attending university this year, more than half (53%) reported that they will be living in shared accommodation such as halls of residences, or shared private houses or flats. Of those, 52% were very or somewhat worried about them living in shared accommodation this year, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Those who have people in their household attending university this year, reported the following main actions they would take if the university student who usually lives in their household had symptoms or tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19) while living away from home:

- encourage the student to get tested (75%)
- encourage the student to self-isolate where they live (69%)
- encourage the student to tell the university (61%)

7 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 2 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.

8 . Glossary

Underlying health condition

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

- Alzheimer's disease or dementia
- 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
- stroke or cerebral haemorrhage or cerebral thrombosis
- rheumatoid arthritis

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.

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, 2,200 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 72% (or 1,587 individuals) for the survey conducted from 24 to 27 September 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 1,587 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.

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: 2,200 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

11 . 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 11 September 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 22 September 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](#)

Articles | 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.