

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 30 October 2020

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 21 to 25 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

- We asked adults in England which of the three local COVID alert levels they were in between 21 and 25 October 2020: nearly half (48%) reported that they were in tier 1, nearly 4 in 10 (37%) said they were in tier 2, and 1 in 10 (10%) said they were in tier 3.
- Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) adults in England said it was easy or very easy to find out about the alert level in their area, with nearly 6 in 10 (57%) adults in England referring to television news for information on local restrictions.
- Those who were in higher tier levels in England reported lower levels of socialising with others indoors but the opposite was true for those in local restrictions in Scotland and Wales.
- For all areas with local restrictions, people were more likely to avoid physical contact with older people or other vulnerable people when outside the home.
- The proportion of working adults in England who worked from home in the last week was higher among those living in tier 2 (46%) and tier 3 (42%) than those in tier 1 (37%) – there were similar trends for those working from home exclusively during the week.

Responses to this survey were taken after the UK government announced the introduction of local COVID alert levels in England on 12 October 2020. Responses were also taken both before and after the coronavirus “firebreak” rules were put in place in Wales on 23 October.”

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 6,237 adults aged 16 years and over in Great Britain conducted between 21 and 25 October 2020 (inclusive). Results from this week are based on 4,226 responding adults (68% response rate).

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.

The bulletin this week is based on a much larger sample, approximately three times the size of the previous week, in England. While we work to understand the impacts of this change on the results that we present in this release, we are publishing a condensed version of the bulletin and datasets this week. The new increased survey sample size will allow us to explore additional breakdowns by region and various other characteristics in future weeks.

3 . Local COVID alert levels

On 12 October 2020, the UK government introduced a [local COVID alert system](#) in England. This week we asked people which COVID alert level or "tier" they believed their area was under. Tier 1 is the "medium" alert level and consists of the current national measures, which came into force on 25 September, while tier 2 builds on these national restrictions, particularly limiting mixing with different households indoors, and tier 3 is the "very high" alert level, which extends these restrictions further including restricted mixing with different households indoors and outdoors. Plus restrictions in terms of pubs and bars not serving a substantive meal. Further restrictions may also be in place depending on agreements between national and local government.

This week nearly half of adults (48%) in England reported they were in tier 1, while nearly 4 in 10 (37%) reported they were in tier 2, and 1 in 10 (10%) in tier 3, the remaining 5% did not know or were unsure.

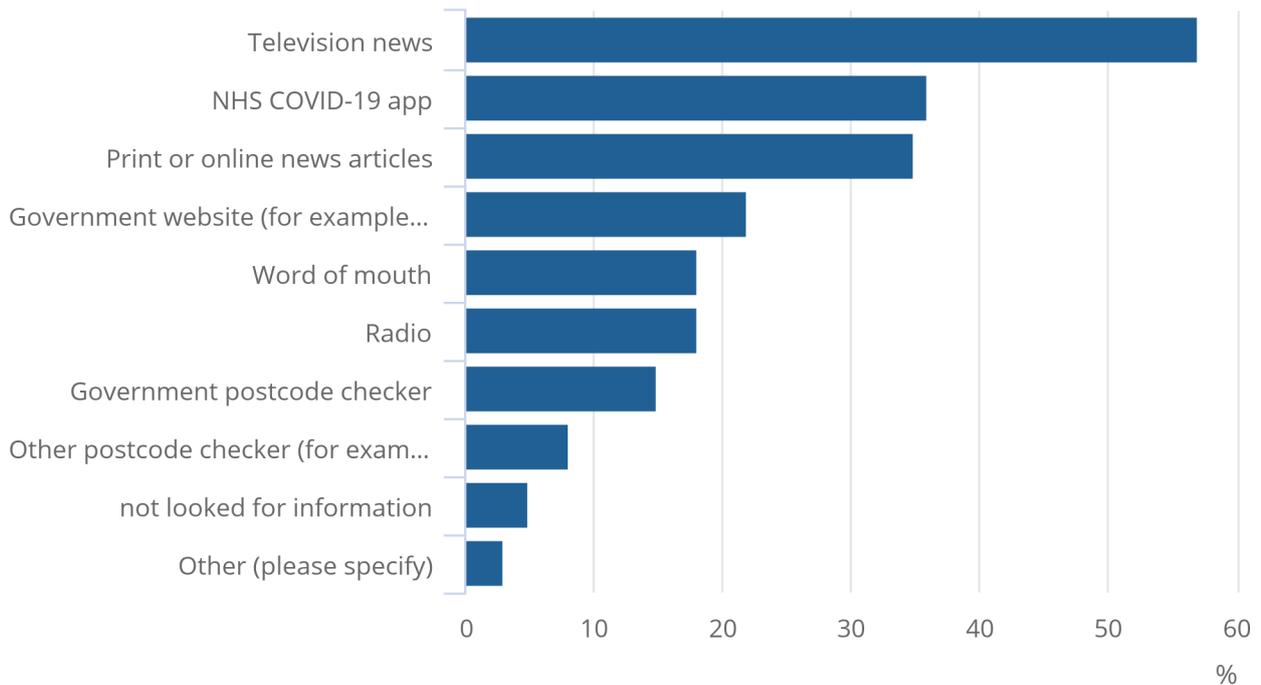
When asked where they looked for information about the restrictions in their area, nearly 6 in 10 (57%) adults referred to television news while 36% referred to the NHS COVID app and 35% to online and print news sources. Other sources of information that people referred to are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Adults in England were most likely to look at television news for information about local restrictions

England, 21 to 25 October 2020

Figure 1: Adults in England were most likely to look at television news for information about local restrictions

England, 21 to 25 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question "Where have you looked for information about the current local COVID Alert Level where you live?"
2. Respondents could choose more than one category so percentages will not sum to 100.

Nearly 8 in 10 people said that it was easy or very easy to find out about the alert levels in their area (78%), while only 2 in 100 (2%) found it difficult or very difficult.

Socialising and meeting up

This week, people were asked to think of the largest group they had met up with indoors (excluding a work or education setting) in the past seven days, including themselves. It is important to note that this group size could include people (partially or solely) from within an individual's household and or support bubble. Therefore it should not be considered a precise measure of compliance with government guidance.

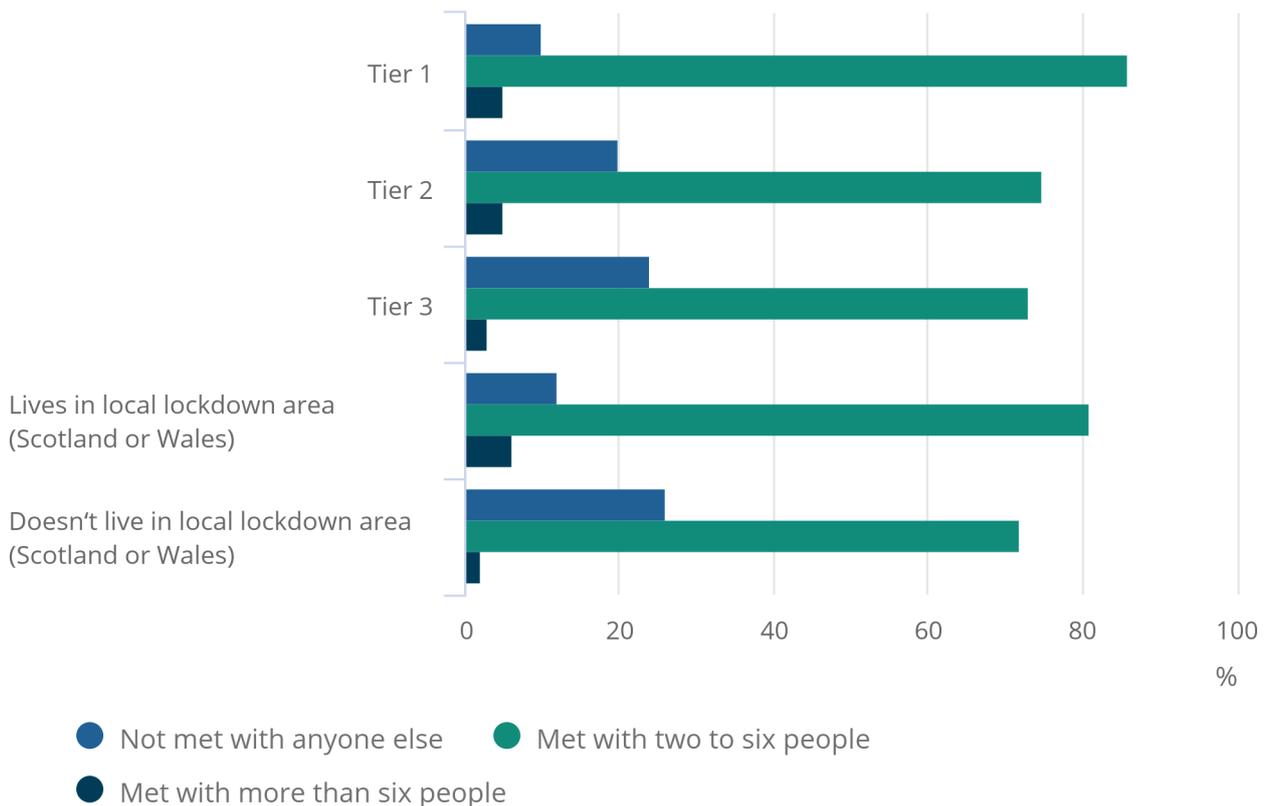
Those who were in higher tier levels in England reported lower levels of socialising with others indoors but the opposite was true for those in local restrictions in Scotland and Wales, as shown in Figure 2. For example, 1 in 10 (10%) adults living under tier 1 restrictions in England said they had not met up with anyone else indoors, compared with 2 in 10 adults (20%) living in tier 2 and nearly a quarter of adults living in tier 3 (24%). Among those adults who met in a group of more than six, 4% met with only people from their household. Among those who had met in a group of between two and six people, 35% said the group only contained members of their household. For those that live in tier 1 alert areas, 25% of those who met in a group of between two and six people had done so only with their household members, and this figure is 45% for those in both tier 2 and 3 areas.

Figure 2: Levels of socialising indoors varied by whether someone was in tiers 1 to 3, or a local restriction area in Scotland and Wales

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020

Figure 2: Levels of socialising indoors varied by whether someone was in tiers 1 to 3, or a local restriction area in Scotland and Wales

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "Excluding work or education, please think of the largest group that you have met with indoors in the past seven days. How many people were in the group including yourself?"
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. The definition is included in the [Glossary](#).
3. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Just over 1 in 10 (12%) of those living in areas with local restrictions in Wales and Scotland said they had not met up with anyone else indoors, compared with over a quarter (26%) of adults in areas not subject to local restrictions.

Social distancing

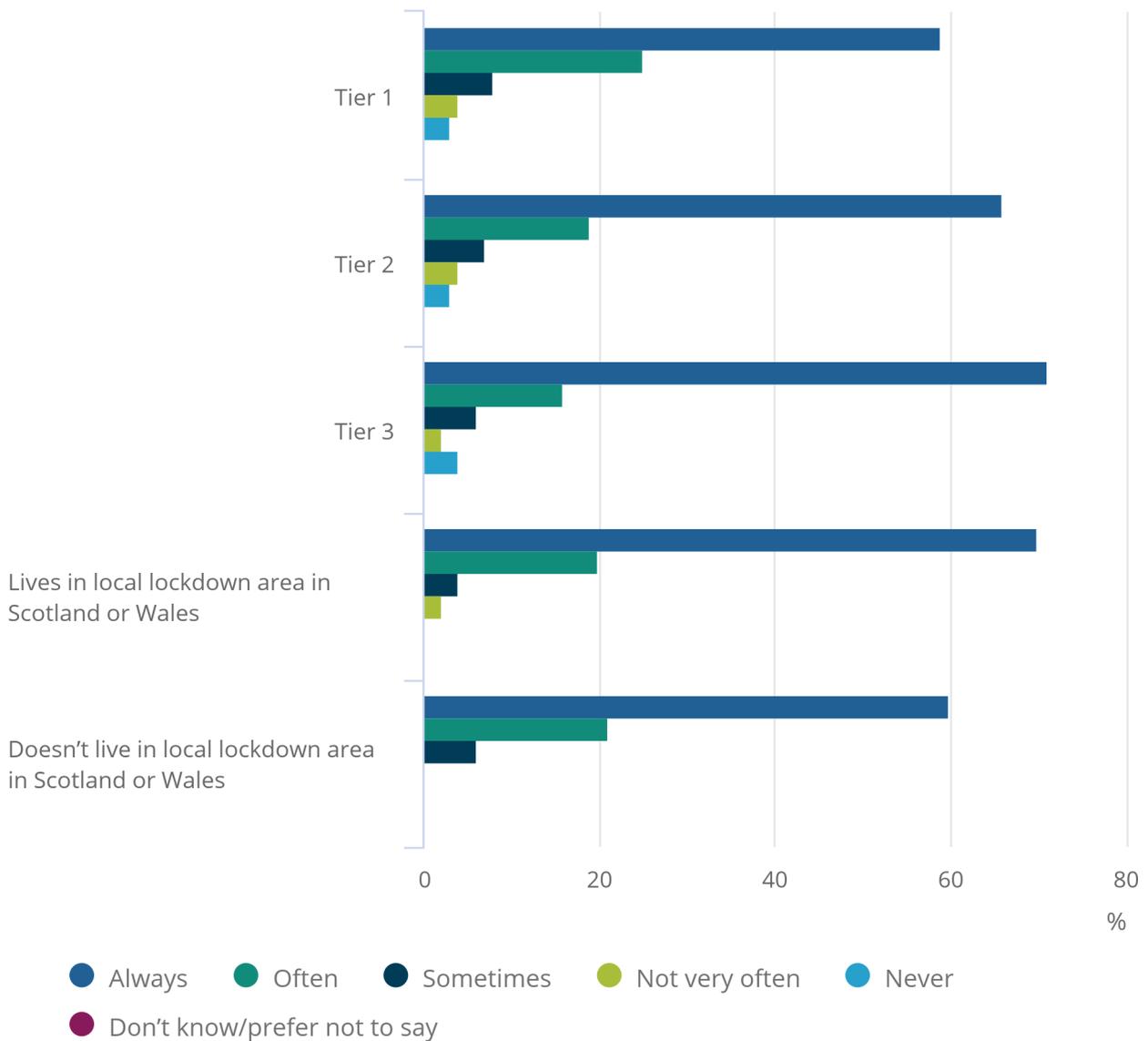
Among those who had socialised indoors or outdoors with people outside their household or support bubble in the past seven days, around 8 in 10 (84%) adults said they always or often maintained social distancing. For those in tier 3 in England and those subject to local restrictions in Wales and Scotland, these proportions were slightly higher, at 87% and 90% respectively.

Figure 3: Maintaining social distancing varies across COVID alert areas

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020

Figure 3: Maintaining social distancing varies across COVID alert areas

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "In the past seven days, when you have met up with people outside of your support bubble, how often have you maintained social distancing?"
2. Base population: adults who had socialised indoors or outdoors with people outside their household or support bubble in the past seven days.

We also asked people who had left their home in the past seven days if they had avoided contact with older people or other vulnerable people. Nearly three-quarters of adults (74%) living under tier 1 restrictions said this was the case, compared with over 8 in 10 (81%) adults who were living in tier 2, and 85% for adults living in tier 3.

Impact on work

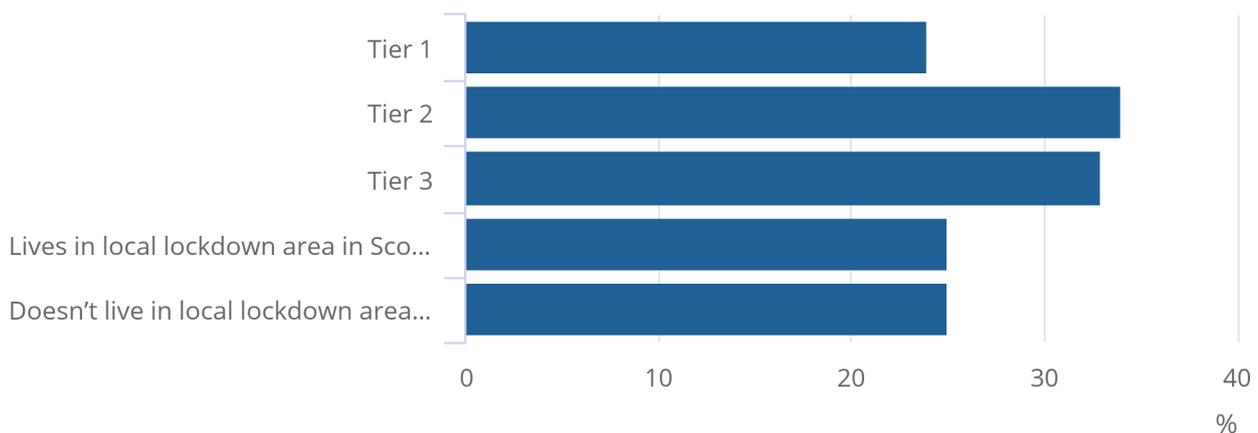
The proportion of working adults in Great Britain who said they had worked from home exclusively this week was higher for those living in tier 2 (34%) and tier 3 (33%), when compared with those living under tier 1 restrictions (24%).

Figure 4: Those who worked exclusively from home during the last week by COVID alert area

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020

Figure 4: Those who worked exclusively from home during the last week by COVID alert area

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question "Among those who were working, the % of adults that had worked from home and not travelled to work".
2. A person is considered to be in a local restriction area or Tier 1, 2 or 3 area if they self-reported as such. This has not been defined by an official list of areas in which people live. The definition is included in the [Glossary](#).

There was also some variation in working patterns when comparing groups under different levels of restrictions. For example, the proportion of working adults in England who worked from home in the last week was higher among those living in tier 2 (46%) and tier 3 (42%), when compared with those living under tier 1 restrictions (37%).

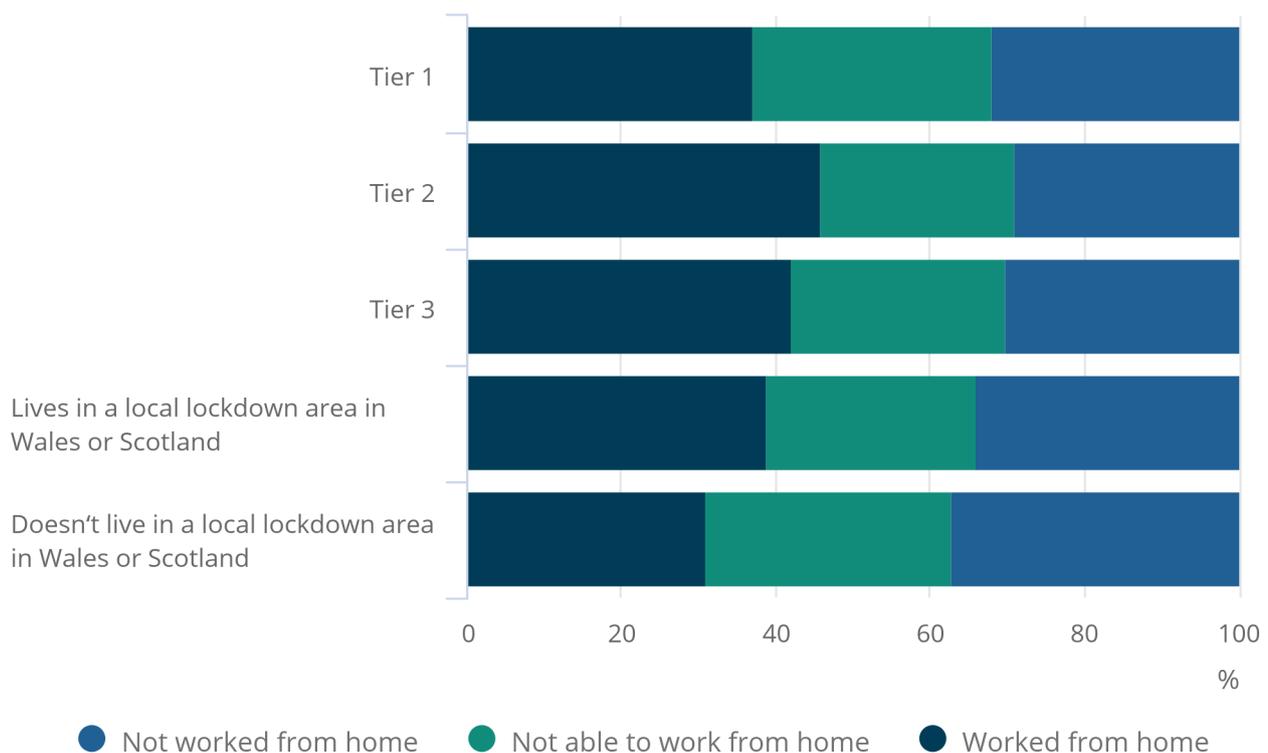
In Scotland and Wales, the proportion of working adults who had worked from home was also higher for those living in a local lockdown area. Just under 4 in 10 (39%) working adults living in a local lockdown area had worked from home, compared with just over 3 in 10 (31%) who did not live in a local lockdown area. However, there was no difference in the proportion working from home exclusively.

Figure 5: Working patterns by COVID alert level in England, and those living with local restrictions in Wales and Scotland

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020

Figure 5: Working patterns by COVID alert level in England, and those living with local restrictions in Wales and Scotland

Great Britain, 21 to 25 October 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question "In the past seven days, have you worked from home because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak?"
2. A person is considered to be in a local restriction area or Tier 1, 2 or 3 area if they self-reported as such. This has not been defined by an official list of areas in which people live. The definition is included in the [Glossary](#).
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 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 30 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.

5 . 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 restriction areas in Scotland and Wales

Those that live in a local lockdown area in Scotland and in Wales are those who responded "yes" to the question "Do you live in an area that is currently under local lockdown measures?", therefore it is self-reported and not measured using an official list of where people live. Please note the survey period covers the periods both before and after the introduction of the national "firebreak" in Wales.

6 . 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, 6,237 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 68% (or 4,226 individuals) for the survey conducted from 21 to 25 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.

Sampling

A sample of 6,237 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.

Weighting

The responding sample contained 4,226 individuals (68% 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 October 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.

7 . 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:

- 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

8 . 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 16 October 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 27 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.