

Statistical bulletin

Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 8 January 2021

Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey covering the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

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Release date:
8 January 2021

Next release:
15 January 2021

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1 . Main points

Over the Christmas and New Year period 22 December to 3 January, based on adults in Great Britain:

- Compliance with most measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) remained high, with 90% reporting always or often handwashing after returning home, 97% using a face covering, and 89% avoiding physical contact when outside their home.
- Personal well-being scores remained relatively stable compared with last week.
- A quarter (25%) of adults felt that life will return to normal in six months or less, compared with 22% the week before.
- There has been an increase in those likely or highly likely to have a vaccine, with 85% of people reporting so, compared to 78% over the period 10 to 13 December 2020.

We also looked at activities over the Christmas period, and how this compared with Christmas plans. We found:

- Among those who responded to the survey over the Christmas period, 44% reported that they had formed an exclusive Christmas bubble on 25 December; a slightly lower percentage compared with half of adults (50%) who reported they were planning to form a Christmas bubble when surveyed between 10 and 13 December.
- Among those who responded to the survey over the Christmas period, 18% reported that they found it very difficult or difficult to follow the government rules.
- Of those, nearly half (48%) reported that the reason was they had already made plans before the rules for Christmas changed.

2 . Understanding the impact on society

This bulletin contains data and indicators from a 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.

We examine the latest statistics for Great Britain over the Christmas and New Year period 22 December to 3 January. For more details see the [Measuring the data section](#).

The bulletin presents a summary of the results. Breakdowns by age, sex, region, country and tier, including [confidence intervals](#) for the estimates, for the estimates, are contained in the [associated dataset](#). Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the [statistical significance](#) of this difference.

The latest statistics in this release are based on a survey of 6,030 adults aged 16 years and above in Great Britain conducted between 22 December and 3 January 2020 (inclusive). Results from this period are based on 3,756 responding adults (62% response rate). Data from the week before, collected over the period 16 to 20 December 2020 (inclusive), can also be found in the [accompanying datasets](#).

Throughout the bulletin:

- "Christmas and New Year" refers to responses collected during the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021
- "week before" refers to responses collected during the period 16 December to 20 December 2020

Some data are based on responses before lockdown restrictions were announced in England and Scotland. Estimates are based on responses over the period 23 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 where restrictions were different in each of the UK countries. For some questions, respondents were asked to consider the past seven days so some responses may relate to before restrictions were announced. For more information see [Glossary](#).

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [coronavirus roundup](#).
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

3 . Main indicators

There are several measures in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), such as handwashing, use of face coverings, avoiding physical contact and self-isolating. These indicators are presented at a Great Britain level in Table 1.

Table 1: Main indicators

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021

[Download the data](#)

Compliance with most measures remained high over Christmas and New Year, with 90% (89% the week before) reporting always or often handwashing after returning home, 97% (97% the week before) using a face covering and 89% (88% the week before) avoiding physical contact when outside their home. Over Christmas and New Year, 88% (86% the week before) of adults reported always or often maintaining social distance when meeting up with other people outside their support bubble.

For preventative measures such as handwashing and social distancing, similar percentages were reported for adults in Tiers 3 (very high) and 4 (stay at home) in England. Slightly lower percentages of adults in Tier 4 (stay at home) reported avoiding contact with others outside home and face coverings, however this difference was not statistically significant:

- handwashing (Tier 4 = 90%, Tier 3 = 89%)
- face coverings (Tier 4 = 95%, Tier 3 = 98%).
- avoiding contact with others (Tier 4 = 86%, Tier 3 = 89%)

There were some differences in indicators relating to leaving home over Christmas and New Year; a lower proportion of working adults reported travelling to work (exclusively and in combination with working from home) over Christmas and New Year (44%), compared with the week before (57%).

A higher proportion of adults reported having either stayed at home or only left for work, exercise, essential shopping or medical needs in the past 7 days over Christmas and New Year (41%) compared with the week before (32%).

Around half (51%) of adults in Tier 4 (stay at home) reported that they stayed home or only left for essential reasons (work, exercise, essential shopping or medical needs), a higher percentage compared with 39% of adults in Tier 3 (very high).

Over Christmas and New Year, a lower percentage of adults (14%) reported meeting up with others in a public place in Tier 4 (stay at home) compared with Tier 3 (very high) (18%) and Tier 2 (high) (19%). However, similar proportions were meeting in a personal space (14% in Tier 4 (stay at home), and 13% in Tiers 3 (very high) and 2 (high)).

4 . Personal well-being

Over Christmas and New Year in Great Britain, average personal well-being scores for life satisfaction (6.7) remained the same as the week before, while happiness (6.9) increased slightly compared with the week before, and there was a slight decrease in feeling that things done in life are worthwhile (7.2) and the anxiety score (4).

Figure 1: Personal well-being scores remained relatively stable compared with last week

Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2021

Notes

1. Questions: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?", "Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?", "Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?" and "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".
2. This question is answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
3. Base: all adults

[Download the data](#)

5 . Perceptions of the future

Over Christmas and New Year, a quarter of adults (25%) felt that life will return to normal in six months or less, compared with 22% the week before.

One in five (20%) adults felt that it will take more than a year for life to return to normal, compared with 23% the week before.

Figure 2: This week, a quarter of adults reported they felt that life will return to normal in six months or less

Great Britain, March 2020 to January 2021

Notes

1. Question: "How long do you think it will be before your life returns to normal?".
2. Base population for percentage: all adults.
3. This figure only includes those who reported that life will return to normal in six months or less, or more than a year. Other reported time periods are included in the datasets.

[Download the data](#)

6 . Attitudes to vaccines and mass testing

Following the first coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine being given in the UK on Tuesday 8 December, COVID-19 vaccination is now being provided in hospitals and general practice (GP) surgeries to those most at risk. For links to more information please see the [Glossary](#).

There has been a gradual increase in the percentage of adults that reported they would be either very likely or fairly likely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered. Over Christmas and New Year more than 8 in 10 (85%) adults reported they would be either very likely or fairly likely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered; a slight increase from the week before (82% over the period 16 to 20 December 2020), and an increase from 78% over the period 10 to 13 December 2020.

Over Christmas and New Year, a further 7% of adults reported that they are very or fairly unlikely to have the COVID-19 vaccine if offered. Among those, the most commonly reported reasons why not were: feeling worried about the side effects (51%), feeling worried about the long-term effects on their health (51%), and wanting to wait to see how well the vaccine works (47%). These are similar reasons reported compared with the previous two data collection periods (10 to 13 December and 16 to 20 December).

Attitudes to mass testing

In selected areas, the UK governments are offering tests for the coronavirus (COVID-19) to everyone living or working in the area, whether they have symptoms or not; this is sometimes referred to "mass testing" or "community testing".

Over Christmas and New Year around 8 in 10 (81%) adults in Great Britain reported they strongly supported or tended to support mass testing for COVID-19, a similar percentage to the week before (80% over the period 16 to 20 December).

If mass testing were available in their area, around 7 in 10 (71%) of adults said they would be very likely or fairly likely to get a test for COVID-19 even if they had no symptoms; as similar percentage to the week before (72% over the period 16 to 20 December).

7 . Christmas activities

On 19 December the UK government announced specific rules for the Christmas period. In some parts of the UK, people were able to form an exclusive Christmas bubble on 25 December.

The rules were similar, but not identical, across [England](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#). For more information please see the [Glossary](#).

This week we compare responses on Christmas plans with the actual activities over the Christmas period (25 December to 3 January). For further information on the sub-sample used in this analysis see the Measuring the data section.

Christmas bubbles and social activities

Over the Christmas period, 44% of adults reported that they had formed an exclusive Christmas bubble on 25 December. This was a slightly lower percentage compared with half of adults (50%) who reported over the period 10 to 13 December that they were planning to form a Christmas bubble.

Over the Christmas period, more than half (55%) of adults reported that they had stayed at home with their household. This was the same percentage compared with those who planned to do so in the survey periods 10 to 13 December, and 16 to 20 December.

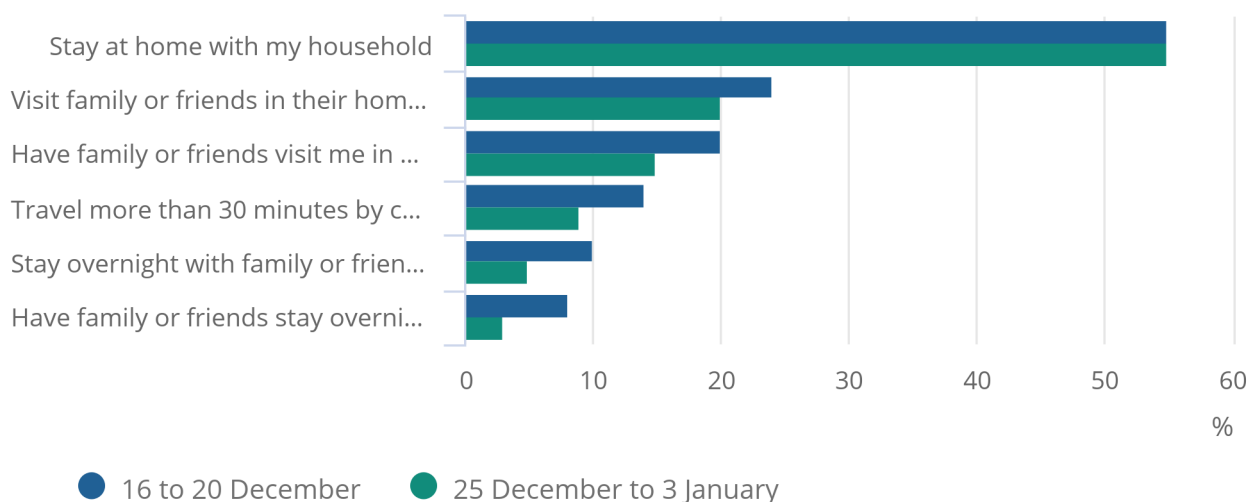
Over the Christmas period, the proportion of adults meeting up with family and friends was lower than the expectations of adults earlier in December.

Figure 4: Over the Christmas period, a lower percentage carried out social activities, compared to previous plans

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021

Figure 4: Over the Christmas period, a lower percentage carried out social activities, compared to previous plans

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "Over the Christmas period, which of the following travel or social activities did you carry out?"
2. Base population for percentage: 16 to 20 December 2020 - all adults; 25 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 – adults who responded the survey over this period.
3. Respondents asked to select all that apply.
4. Additional response options are included in the [accompanying datasets](#).

Government rules

Over the Christmas period, 18% of adults reported that they found it very difficult or difficult to follow the government rules. Of those, nearly half (48%) reported that the reason was they had already made plans before the rules for Christmas changed.

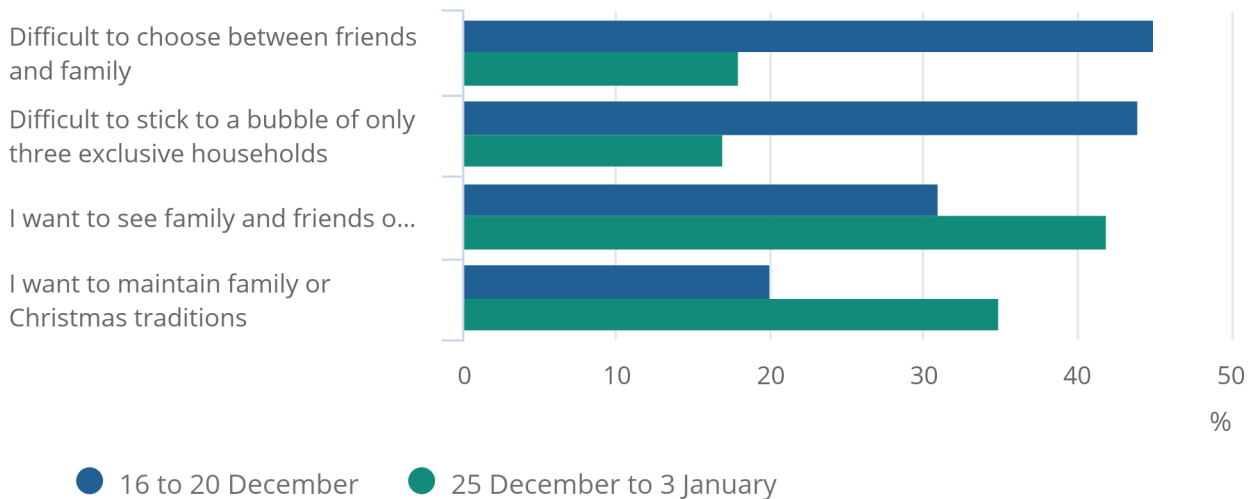
When comparing responses among those who reported finding it difficult to follow the government rules before the government's announcements to responses over the Christmas period, there was a change in the difficulties reported. Over the Christmas period, a higher percentage reported difficulties in following the rules because they wanted to see family or friends on dates other than the 25 December (42%), and wanting to maintain family or Christmas traditions (35%). Over the period 16 to 20 December, a higher percentage reported difficulties in following the rules because it was difficult to choose between friends and family (47%) and to stick to a bubble of only three exclusive households (47%).

Figure 5: There was a change in difficulties reported in following government rules when comparing responses over the Christmas period to earlier in December

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021

Figure 5: There was a change in difficulties reported in following government rules when comparing responses over the Christmas period to earlier in December

Great Britain, 16 December 2020 to 3 January 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

Notes:

1. Question: "For what reasons was it/do you think it will be difficult to follow the government rules over the Christmas period?"
2. Base population for percentage: 16 to 20 December 2020 - those who think they will find it difficult or very difficult to follow the government rules over the Christmas Period; 25 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 – adults who responded the survey over this period and those who will find it difficult or very difficult to follow the government rules over the Christmas Period.
3. Responses for the category: "I wanted to see family and friends on dates other than 25 December" was asked to those who responded over the period 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021; and "I wanted to see family and friends on dates other than between 23 and 27 December 2020" was asked to those who responded over the period 10 to 13 December, and 16 to 20 December.
4. Respondents asked to select all that apply.
5. Additional response options are included in the [accompanying datasets](#).

8 . Social impacts on Great Britain data

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

Dataset | Released 18 December 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.

9 . Glossary

Christmas bubble

At the time of the surveys collected over the period 10 to 13 December 2020 and 16 to 20 December 2020, the governments of the UK had initially announced changes to social contact restrictions to allow people to be with their friends and family over Christmas period 23 to 27 December.

On 19 December 2020 the UK government announced specific rules for the Christmas period. These rules meant adults in England in Tier 4 could not form a Christmas bubble on 25 December. Adults in other parts of England and other parts of the UK could form a Christmas bubble on 25 December, with different rules in England, Scotland and Wales.

The rules were similar, but not identical, across [England](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

Tiers

As the tier system was amended and then expanded during the survey collection period for this analysis, we have opted not to use the self-defined tier information provided by respondents. In its place we have derived tier based on the local authority that the respondent lives in. For this analysis, tier breakdowns refer to the situation as at 01:00am on Wednesday 16 December 2020 and as such only reports results for tiers in existence at the time, 1 to 3.

The tier system in effect from Sunday 20 December 2020 is categorised as follows

Tier 1

Tier 1 is the "medium" alert level and consists of a series of measures including not socialising in groups larger than six (indoors and outdoors), also known as the "rule of six".

Tier 2

Tier 2 is the "high" alert level, for areas with a higher level of infections where some additional restrictions are in place, particularly limiting socialising with anybody outside your household or support bubble in any indoor setting. Hospitality venues in this tier face further restriction - pubs and bars must close unless operating as restaurants and can only serve alcohol with substantial meals.

Tier 3

Tier 3 is the "very high" alert level, for areas with a very high level of infections and where tighter restrictions are in place. These extend restrictions further around mixing with different households indoors and outdoors. Hospitality venues such as pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants must close except for takeaway and delivery services.

Tier 4

Tier 4 is the "stay at home" alert level, for areas with the highest level of infections and where the tightest restrictions are in place. These restrictions mean you should not leave your home or garden except where you have a "reasonable excuse".

Personal well-being

Personal well-being measures ask people to evaluate, on a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied they are with their life overall, whether they feel the things they do in life are worthwhile, and happiness and anxiety yesterday.

Vaccination for COVID-19

Following the first COVID-19 vaccine being given in the UK on Tuesday 8 December, the COVID-19 vaccination is now being provided in hospitals and general practice (GP) surgeries across the UK to those most at risk. At the moment, this includes people aged 80 years or over who already have an upcoming hospital appointment, people who work in care homes, and health care workers at high risk. [National Health Service \(NHS\) guidance on the COVID-19 vaccine](#) is available.

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

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 the latest wave, 6,030 individuals were sampled, with a response rate of 62% (or 3,756 individuals) for the survey conducted from 22 December 2020 to 3 January 2021.

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.

The sample size for the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) survey over Christmas and New Year is increased compared with previous weeks due to allowing for a longer data collection period over Christmas and New Year to help improve response.

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 6,030 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 people were given higher selection probability than other people because of under-representation in the sample available for the survey. The survey also includes a boosted sample for England to allow more detailed analysis at a regional level, which are available in the datasets.

Weighting

The responding sample in the week 22 December to 3 January contained 3,756 individuals (62% 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 December 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.

Christmas activities analysis

The sample sizes across the data collection period were:

- 1,435 took part before Christmas (23 to 24 December 2020)
- 75 took part on Christmas day (25 December 2020)
- 2,246 took part after Christmas (26 December to 3 January 2021)

Analysis of Christmas activities were based on a sub-sample of 2,321 respondents over the Christmas period (25 December 2020 to 3 January 2021). This sub-sample was weighted using the weights for the full sample (before and after Christmas). Although there is always a potential for bias when producing estimates, statistical testing suggests the sub-sample provides a representative sample of the population of adults in Great Britain.

This sub-sample follows a similar distribution to the full sample, based on the distributions of the following factors: sex, age, tenure, highest qualification and employment status. However, it should be noted that the distribution across regions for this sub-sample is not representative, and this may have an impact on the estimates provided.

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:

- analysis of estimates in Wales and Scotland are based on low sample sizes, and therefore caution should be used with these estimates
- 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

12 . 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 25 December 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 6 January 2021

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: September 2020](#)

Article | Released 11 November 2020

The social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on disabled people in Great Britain based on indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN). 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.

