

# NISRA CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OPINION SURVEY

## KEY FINDINGS FROM PHASES 1 TO 12

### Introduction

On 20 April 2020, NISRA launched a new Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey designed to measure how the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting peoples' lives and behaviour in Northern Ireland. The NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey questionnaire was based on a similar survey that was being conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in Great Britain which can be found at this link: [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain Statistical bulletins](#)

This report provides a summary of the key findings following the completion of Phase 12 of the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion survey. In total, interviews have been carried out with 14,984 members of the public in the period 21 April 2020 to 30 June 2021. This report focuses mainly on the attitudes, behaviours and circumstances of people interviewed in the most recent period between April 2021 and June 2021.

Additional findings are now included in this report on people who have not received a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination, diagnosis of Coronavirus (COVID-19) (with or without an official positive test result), effects of Long COVID, attitudes towards the easing of restrictions and slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and lifestyle changes as a result of the pandemic. Further analysis is also provided by month of interview to show changes, where significant differences were found.

Further results from the survey will be published periodically as more data becomes available when fieldwork periods close.

All figures published in these Key Findings are weighted estimates. More information on the weighting applied to these results can be found in the Technical Report which accompanies this report.

Due to rounding, the percentages in the charts may not always add up to 100%. Where two or more categories are combined together the sum of the combined proportions may not equal the sum of the individual proportions in the charts or tables due to rounding. Any differences reported in this publication are statistically significant at the 95% Confidence Level.

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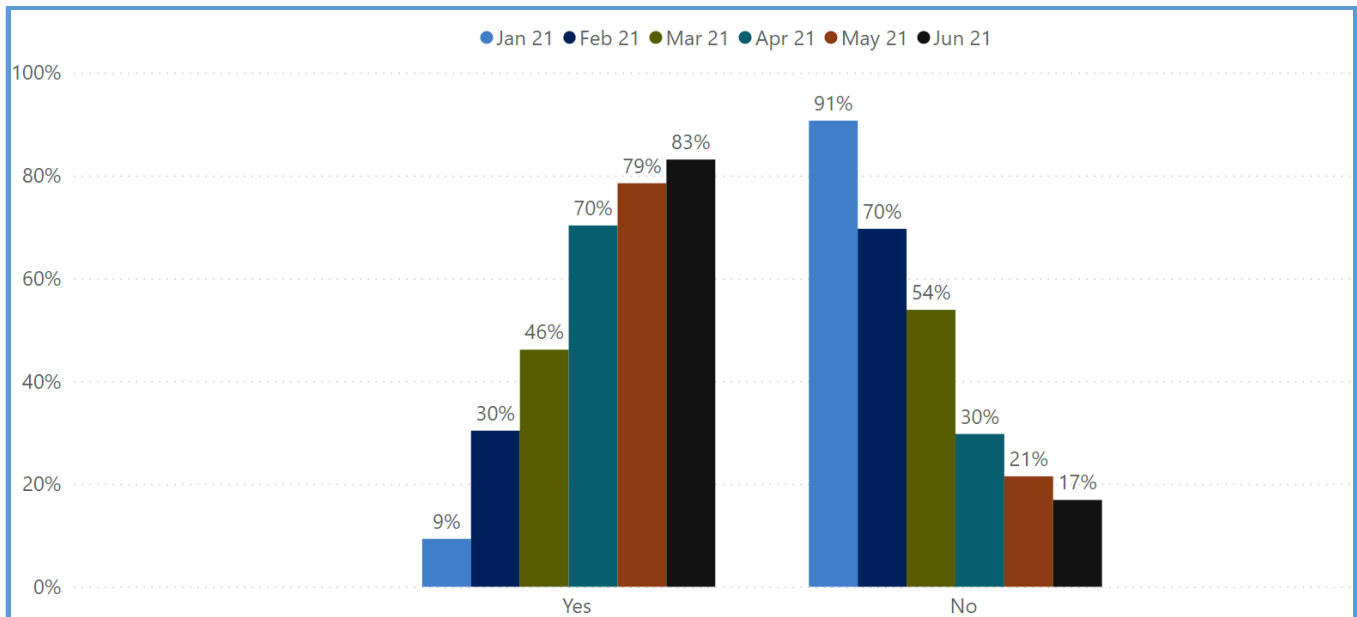
## Key Findings

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations

In December 2020, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) mass vaccination programme began in Northern Ireland. The data presented below are self-reported findings and should not be interpreted as official rates for the uptake of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination in Northern Ireland. Official figures on vaccination rates can be found at the following link: [Vaccinations in Northern Ireland | Coronavirus in the UK \(data.gov.uk\)](https://www.data.gov.uk/vaccinations-in-northern-ireland)

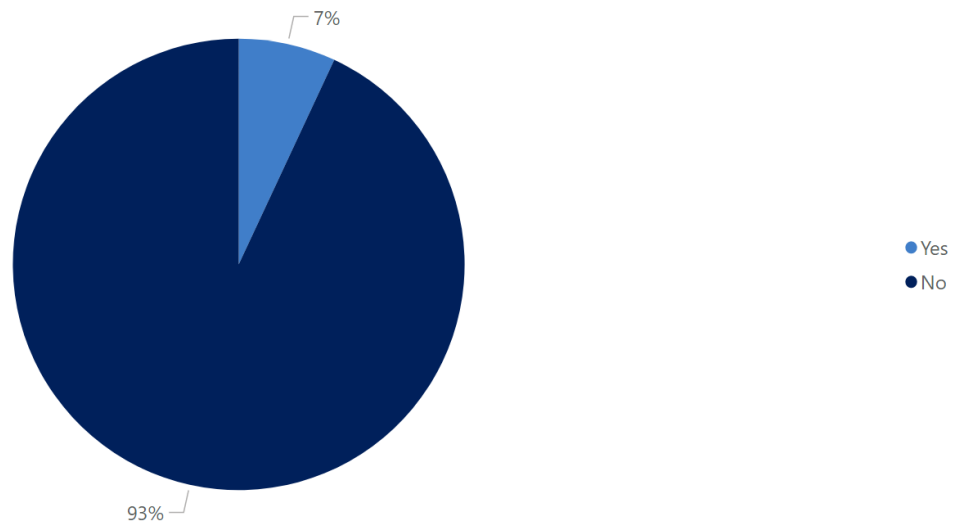
The data shows increasing vaccine uptake month on month with 83% of people interviewed in June 2021 reporting that they had received a vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Proportion of people who had received a vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19) by month of interview**



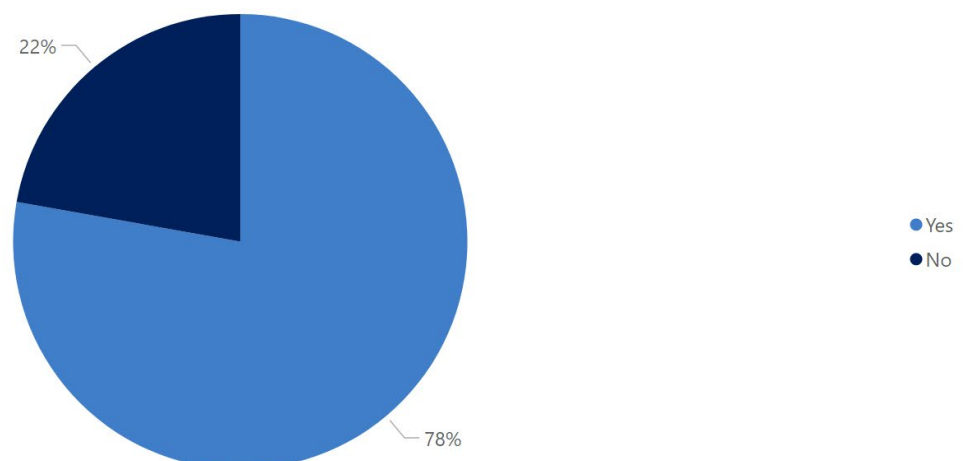
During the period April 2021 – June 2021, those people who had been vaccinated were asked if they had experienced any difficulties when going to get their vaccine. The vast majority of these people (93%) did not experience any difficulties (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Proportion of people who experienced difficulties going to get a vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



Just over a fifth of people (22%) aged 18 years and over interviewed in the period April 2021 to June 2021 had not received a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine at the time of interview (Figure 3). Please note that the roll-out of the vaccine programme schedule meant that many of the younger age cohorts may not have been invited to enrol for the vaccine at that point in time.

**Figure 3: Proportion of people who had received a vaccine for Coronavirus (COVID-19) by the time of interview (April – June 2021)**

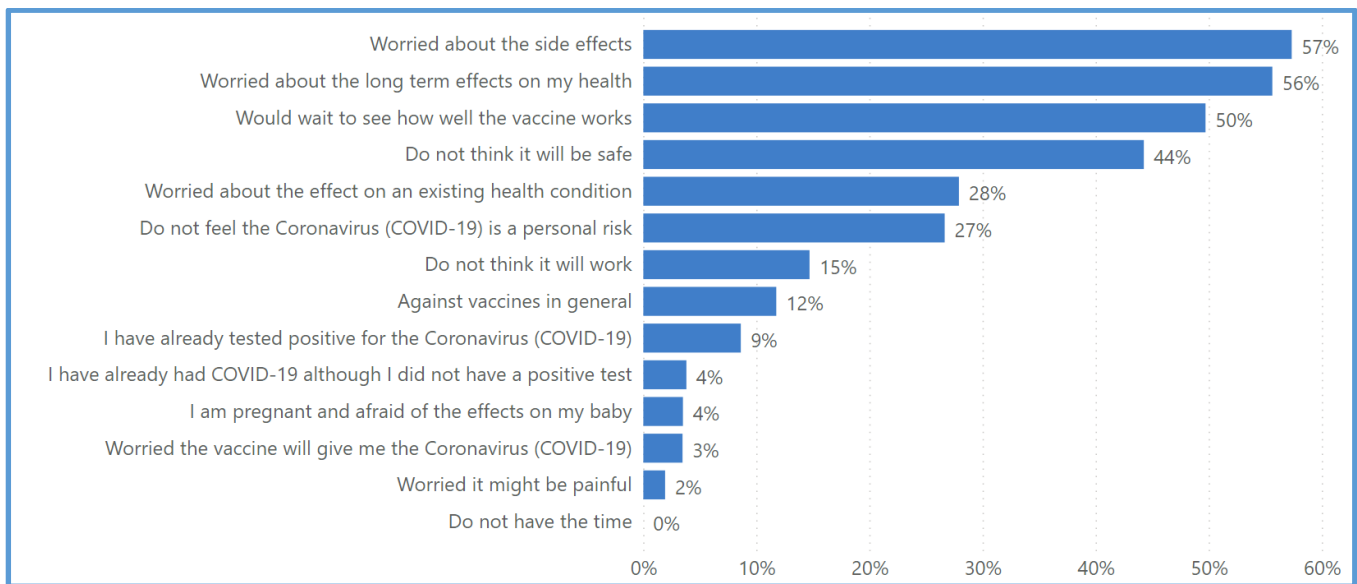


Anyone who was unvaccinated at the time of interview in April – June 2021 was asked a further question about how likely or unlikely they were to have a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine.

Slightly over three quarters of unvaccinated people (76%) indicated that they were likely to take the vaccine but 24% said that they were unlikely to do so.

The most common reasons given by those people who said that they were unlikely to have a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine were that they were worried about the side effects (57%), they had worries about the long term effects on their health (56%), they would wait to see how well the vaccine works (50%) or they did not think it will be safe (44%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4<sup>1</sup>: Reasons people are unlikely to have a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine**

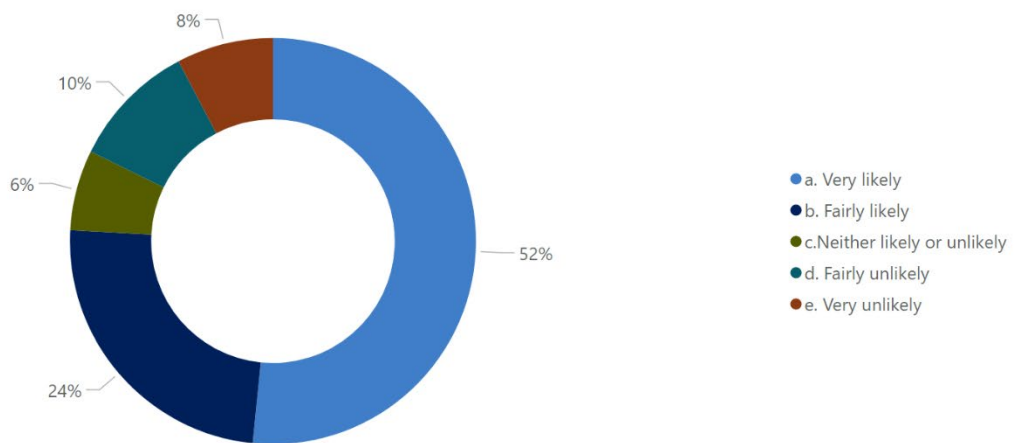


<sup>1</sup> Multiple responses allowed

Diagnosis of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

People interviewed in the period April 2021 - June 2021 were asked about their attitude towards Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing. Just over three quarters of people (76%) said that they would be likely to get a test for Coronavirus (COVID-19) if testing was offered to them, even if they did not have any symptoms (Figure 5).

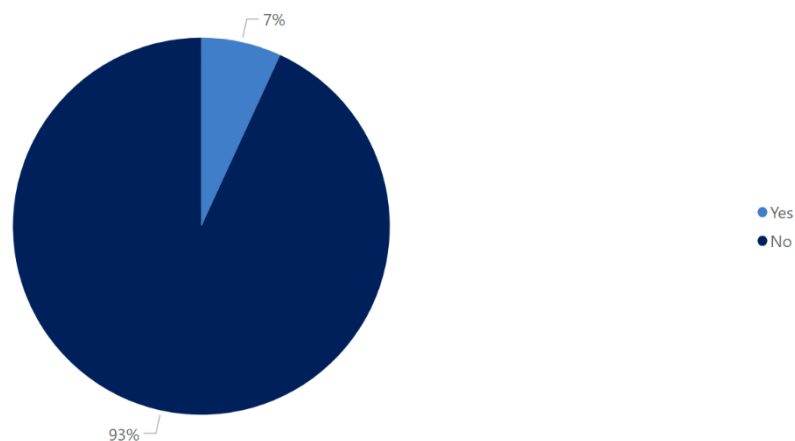
**Figure 5: Proportion of people who would be likely or unlikely to get a Coronavirus (COVID-19) test if it was offered, even if they did not have any symptoms**



People interviewed in the period April 2021 - June 2021 were asked whether or not they had tested positive for COVID-19.

Approximately, one in fourteen people (7%) reported that they had tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Figure 6).

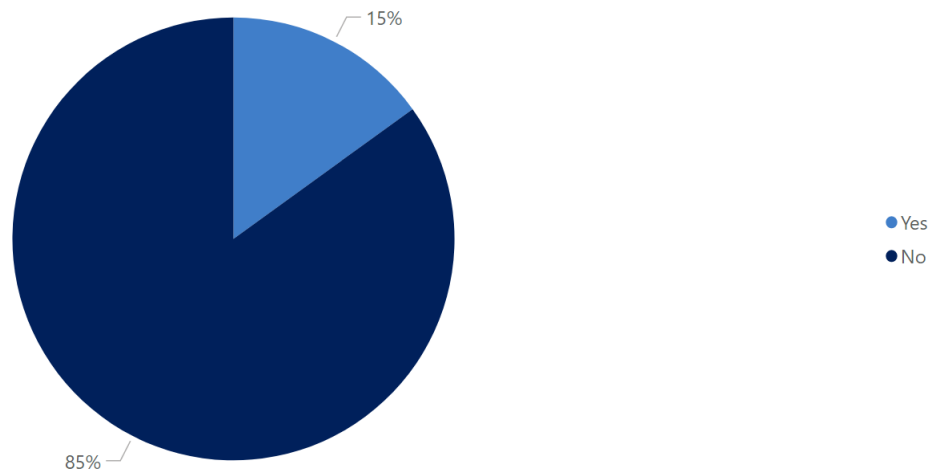
**Figure 6: Proportion of people who reported that they had tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



Those people who had not tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) were asked a further question about whether or not they thought they may have had Coronavirus (COVID-19) at any point.

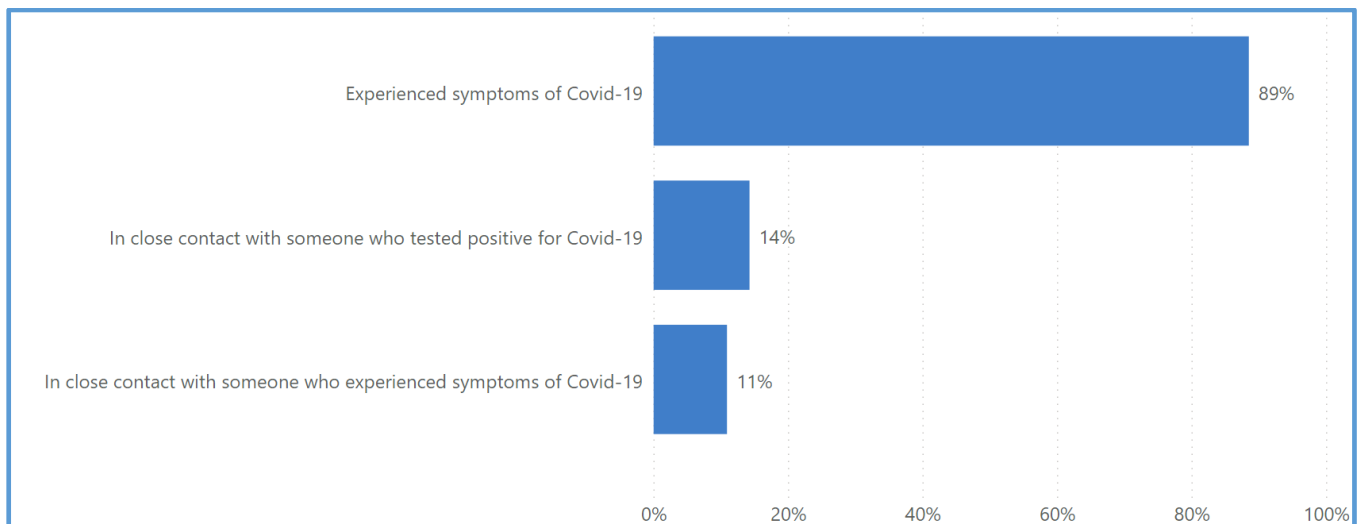
Almost one in seven of these people (15%) thought that they may have had Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Proportion of people who had not received a positive test result but thought they may have had Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



Most of the people (89%) who thought that they may have had Coronavirus (COVID-19) said that their main reason for believing so was because they had experienced symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Figure 8).

**Figure 8<sup>1</sup>: Reasons people reported why they thought that they have had Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



<sup>1</sup> Multiple responses allowed

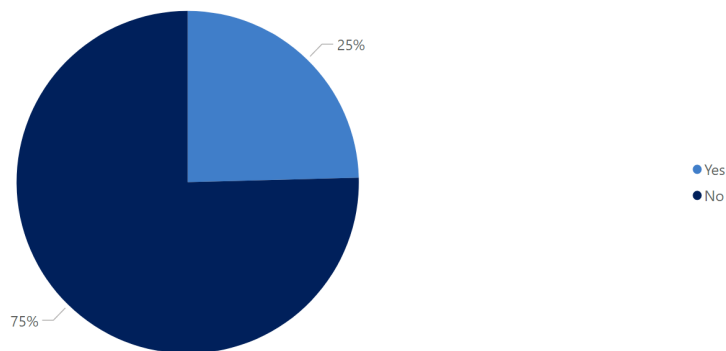
## Long Term Effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Long COVID)

Long COVID is a term used to describe the effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) that can last weeks or months after the infection is gone.

Those people interviewed in April 2021 – June 2021 who had either tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) or who thought that they may have had Coronavirus (COVID-19) were asked a further question about whether or not they had experienced Long COVID.

A quarter of these people (25%) said that they had experienced Long COVID (Figure 9).

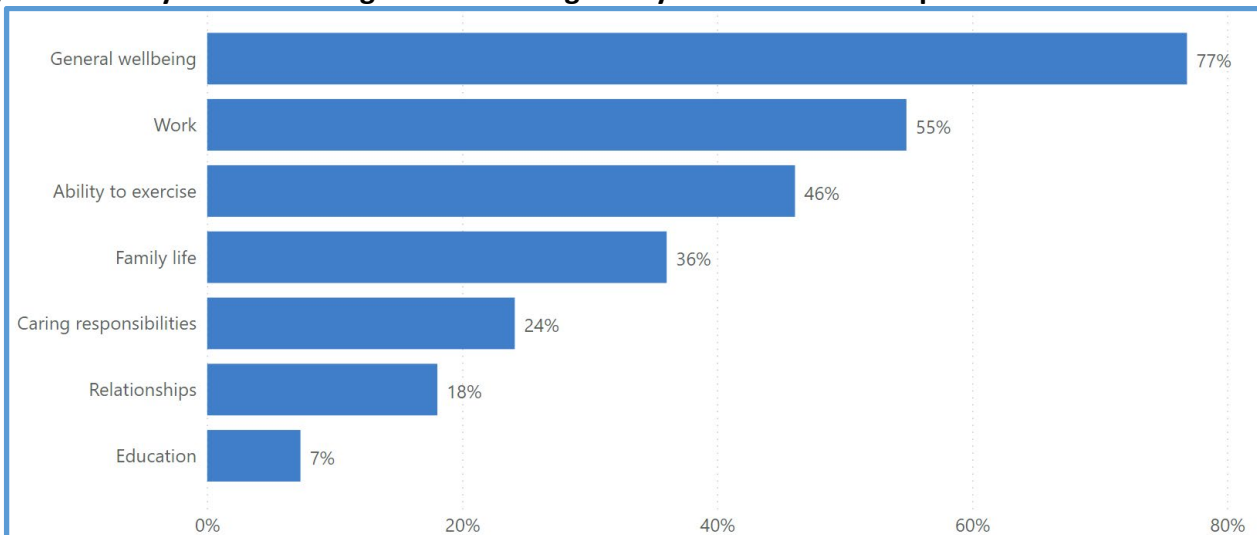
**Figure 9: Proportion of people who after testing positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19) or thought that they have had Coronavirus (COVID-19), reported experiencing Long COVID**



Those people who had experienced Long COVID were asked a further question about whether or not it had negatively affected certain aspects of their life.

Slightly more than three quarters of these people (77%) said that Long COVID had negatively affected their general wellbeing. Some 55% said it had negatively affected their work and just under half (46%) reported that their ability to exercise was also negatively affected by Long COVID.

**Figure 10<sup>1</sup>: Ways in which Long COVID has negatively affected certain aspects of life**



<sup>1</sup> Multiple responses allowed



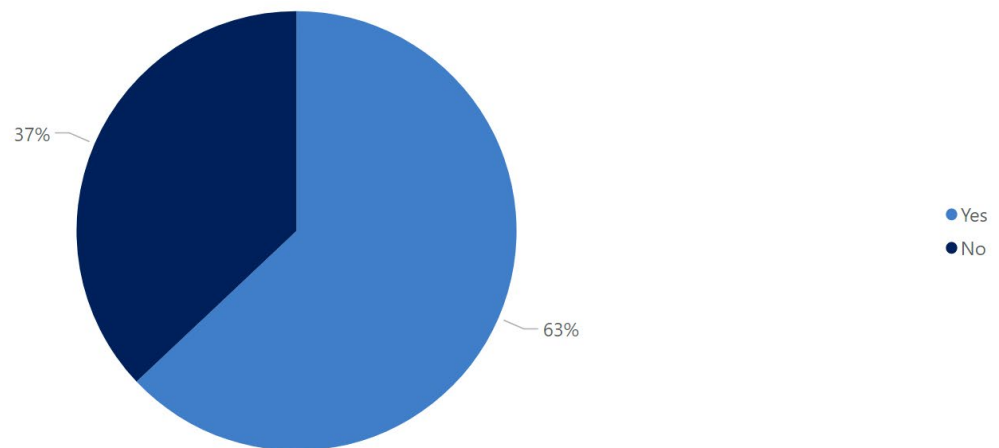
Information and Advice

**Easing of stay-at-home measures**

People who were interviewed in the period April 2021 – June 2021 were asked some questions about the easing of restrictions and whether or not they supported the easing of stay-at-home measures.

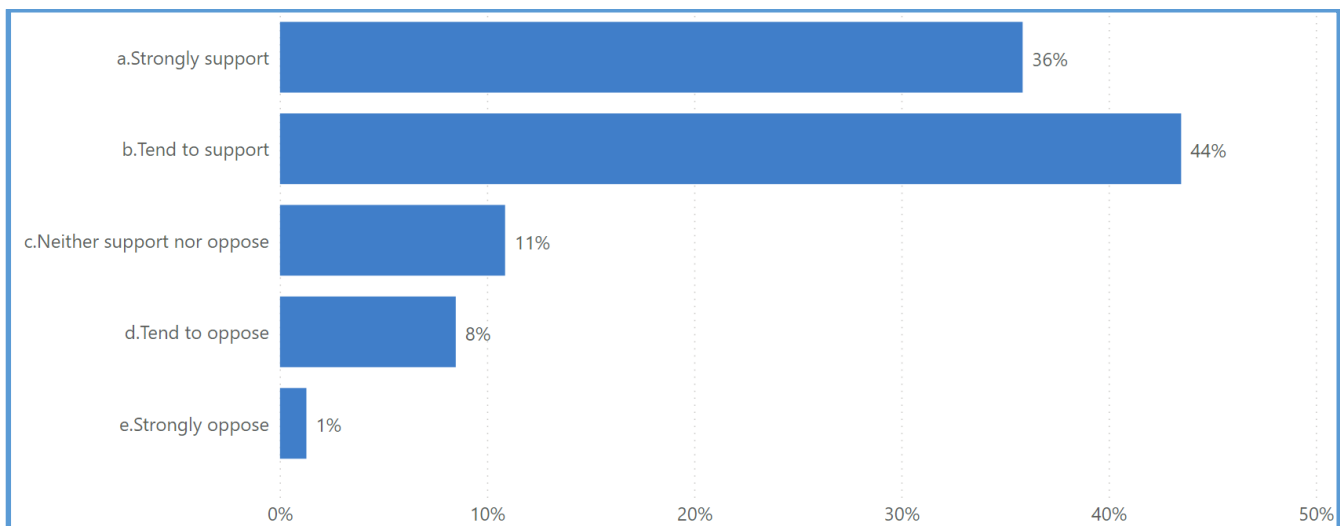
Just over six in ten people (63%) said that they had enough information about government plans for easing restrictions due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, whilst 37% did not (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Enough information of government plans for easing restrictions due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak**



During the months of April 2021 – June 2021, eight out of ten people (80%) said that they supported the easing of stay-at-home measures put in place in Northern Ireland, whilst approximately one in ten people (9%) did not (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Proportion of people who supported or opposed the easing of stay-at-home measures put in place in Northern Ireland**

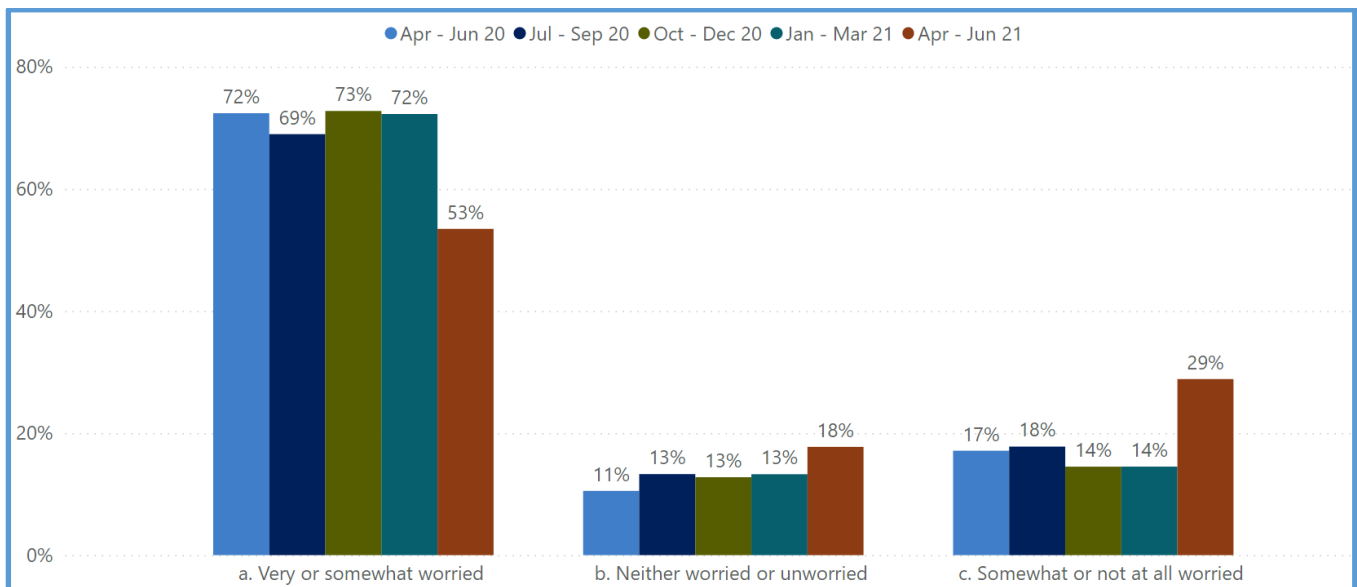


## Concerns about the Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The survey found that levels of worry among people regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) have decreased considerably in the last three months.

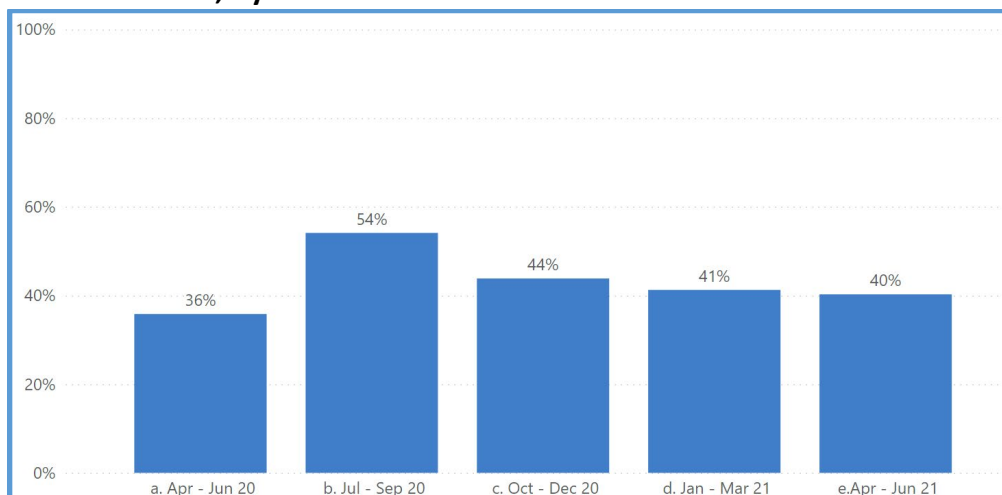
Just over half of people (53%) interviewed in the period April 2021 - June 2021 said that they were worried about the effect the Coronavirus (COVID-19) was having on their lives. This was significantly lower compared to any time in the period April 2020 – March 2021 (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Levels of worry about the effect Coronavirus (COVID-19) was having on their life, by month of interview**



Some 40% of people interviewed in the period April - June 2021 said that it would be more than a year before their life would return to normal and this has been a consistent finding throughout 2021 to date (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Proportion of people who stated it would be more than a year before their life would return to normal, by month of interview**

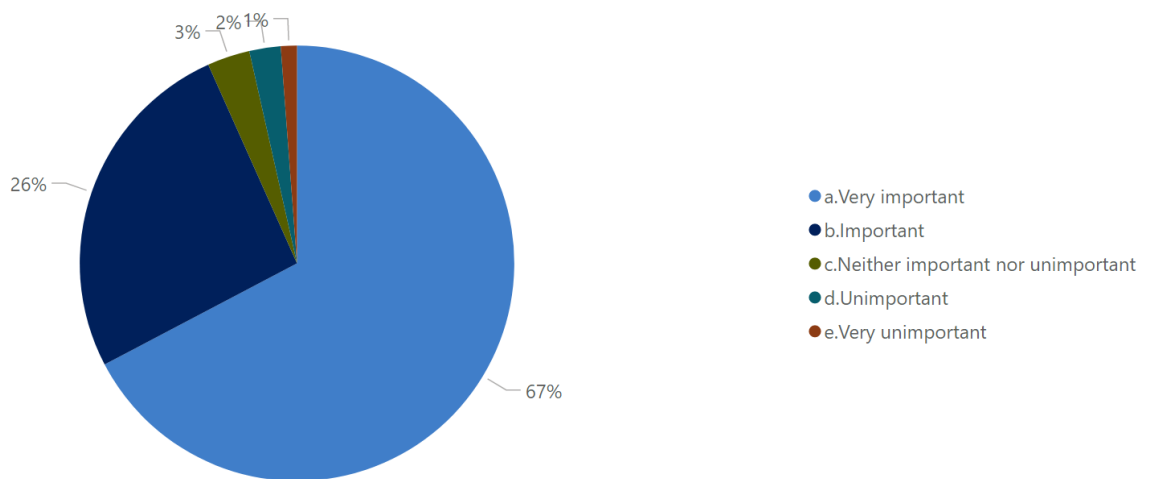


Slowing the Spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

During the months of May 2021 – June 2021, people were asked some questions about preventative measures designed to slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the importance that they placed on them.

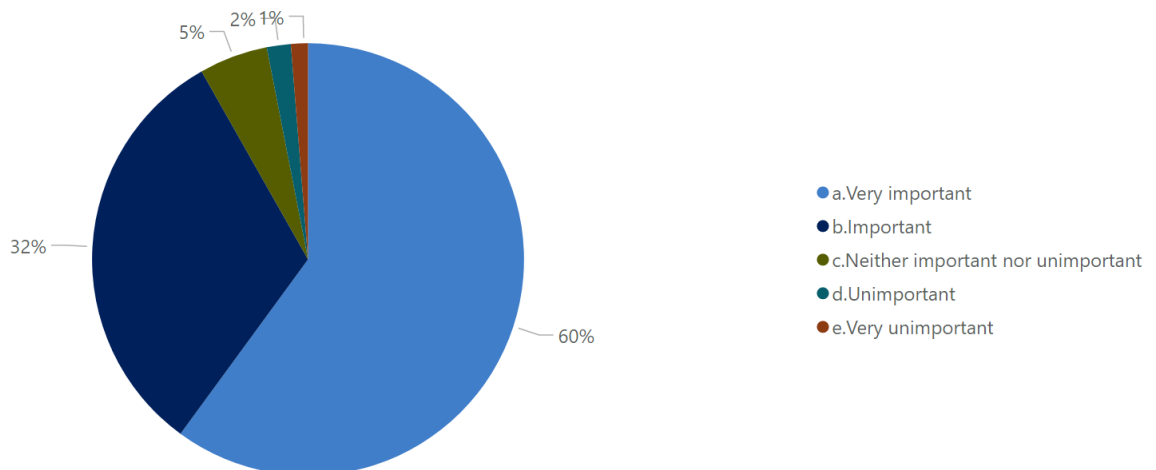
The vast majority of people (93%) felt social distancing was important in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), whilst 4% thought it was not (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Proportion of people who thought social distancing was important or unimportant in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



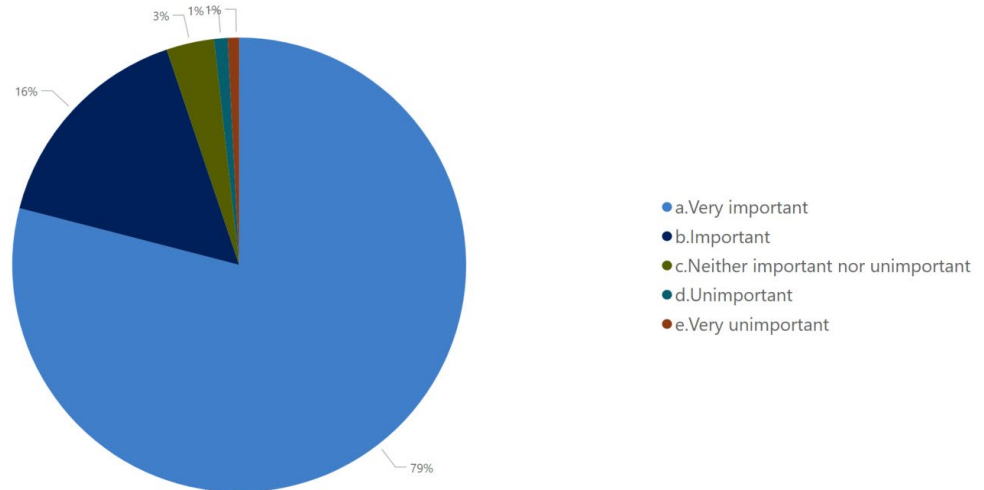
Similarly, most people (92%) said that ventilation was important in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), whilst 3% thought that it was not (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Proportion of people who thought ventilation was important or unimportant in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



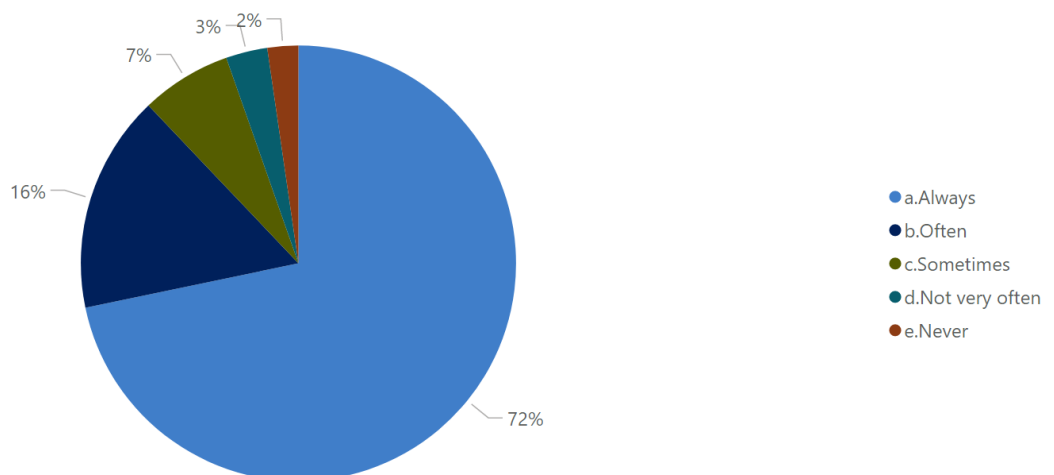
Practically all people (95%) thought hand washing was important in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), whilst 2% thought that it was not (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Proportion of people who thought hand washing was important or unimportant in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



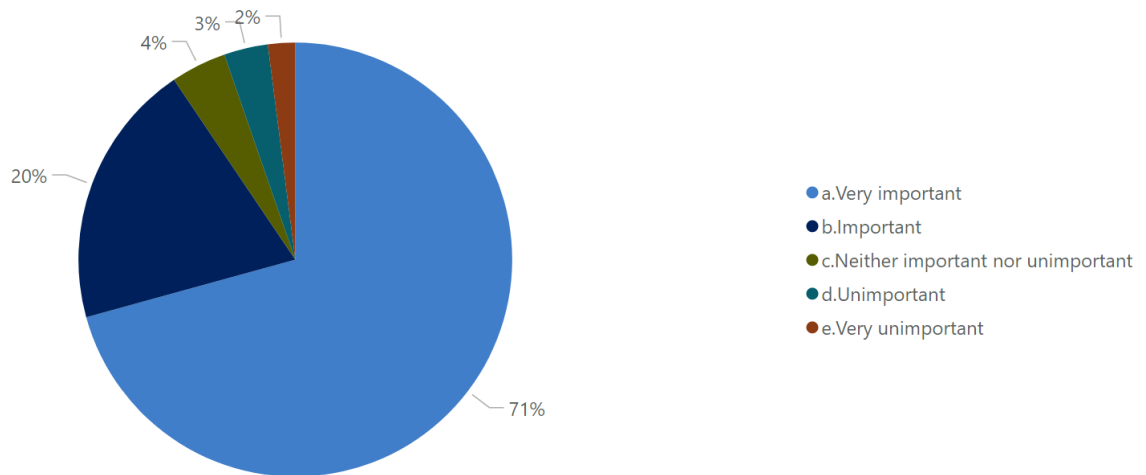
In the seven days prior to interview, almost nine in ten people (88%) had always or often washed their hands with soap and water straight after returning home from a public place, whilst 5% had done so not very often or never. (Figure 18).

**Figure 18: Frequency of people washing their hands with soap and water straight away after returning home from a public place, in the seven days prior to interview**



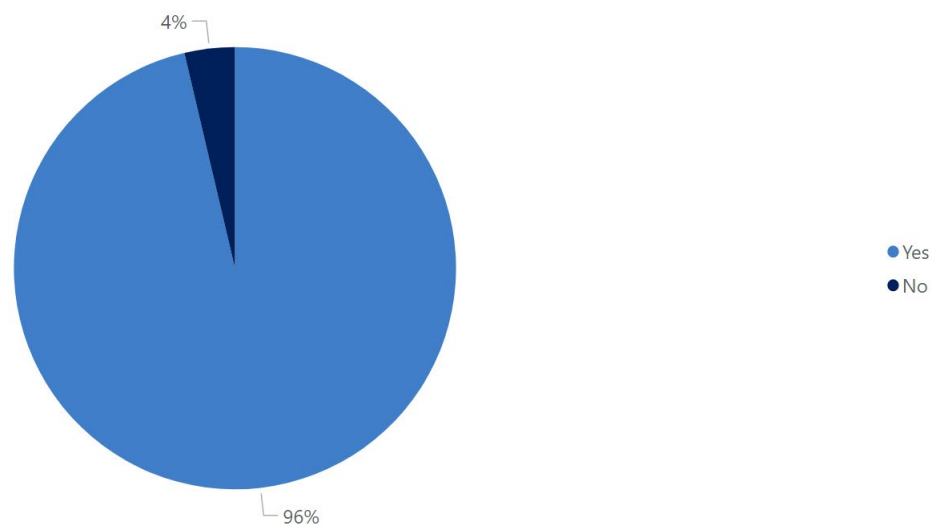
The vast majority of people (91%) also thought that wearing a face covering was important in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), whilst 5% thought that it was not (Figure 19).

**Figure 19: Proportion of people who thought wearing a face covering was important or unimportant in slowing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**



In the seven days prior to interview, the vast majority of people (96%) reported that they had worn a face covering when outside their home to help slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), whilst 4% had not (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Proportion of people who had used a face covering outside the home, in the seven days prior to interview**



## Mental Health GHQ-12

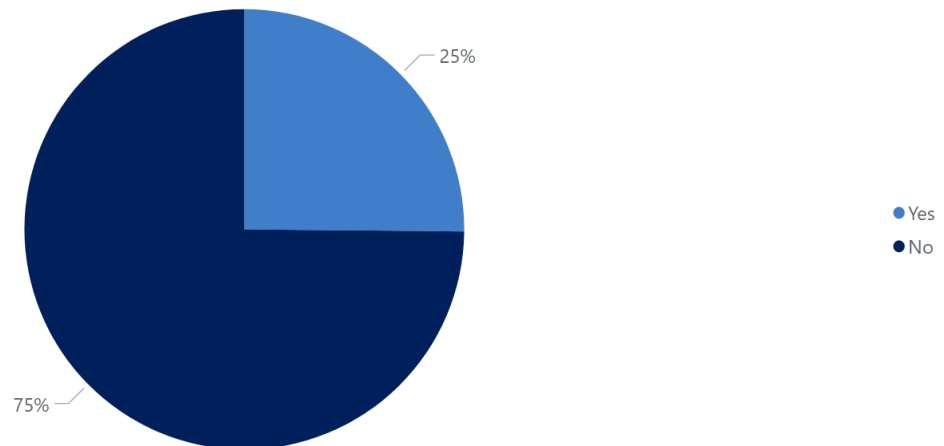
People interviewed during the months of January 2021 – June 2021 completed the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)<sup>1</sup>.

The GHQ is a screening tool designed to detect the possibility of psychiatric morbidity in the general population. The questionnaire used contains 12 questions about recent general levels of happiness, depression, anxiety and sleep disturbance. An overall score of between zero and twelve is constructed, with a score of 4 or more being classified as a respondent with a possible psychiatric disorder, and referred to as a 'high GHQ-12 score'.

### High GHQ-12 scores

Overall, in the period January – June 2021, some 25% of people had a high GHQ-12 score, which could indicate a possible mental health problem (Figure 21). This was significantly higher than the most recent figure published from the Health Survey Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup> for 2019-20 which found that 19% of people in Northern Ireland had a high GHQ-12 score.

**Figure 21: Proportion of people with a high GHQ-12 score**

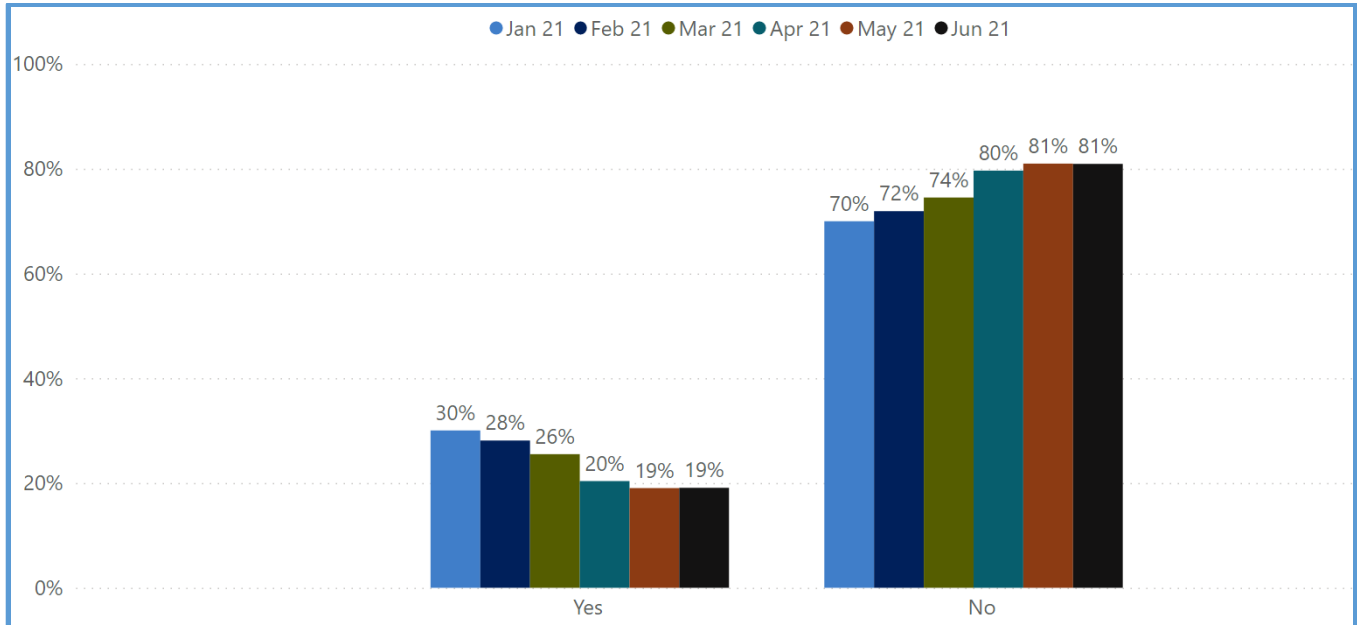


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<sup>2</sup> Users should be aware that the GHQ-12 questionnaire was completed by self-completion in the 2019-20 Health Survey Northern Ireland, whereas the GHQ-12 questionnaire was administered over the telephone in the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey. It is not known what effect, if any, the change in data collection mode has on GHQ-12 outcomes and, therefore, caution should be applied when making comparisons between the two sets of results.

However, the proportion of people who had a high GHQ-12 score, has decreased significantly from a high of 30% in January 2021 to 19% in May and June 2021 (Figure 22).

**Figure 22: Proportion of people with a high GHQ-12 score, by month of interview**



## Lifestyle Changes

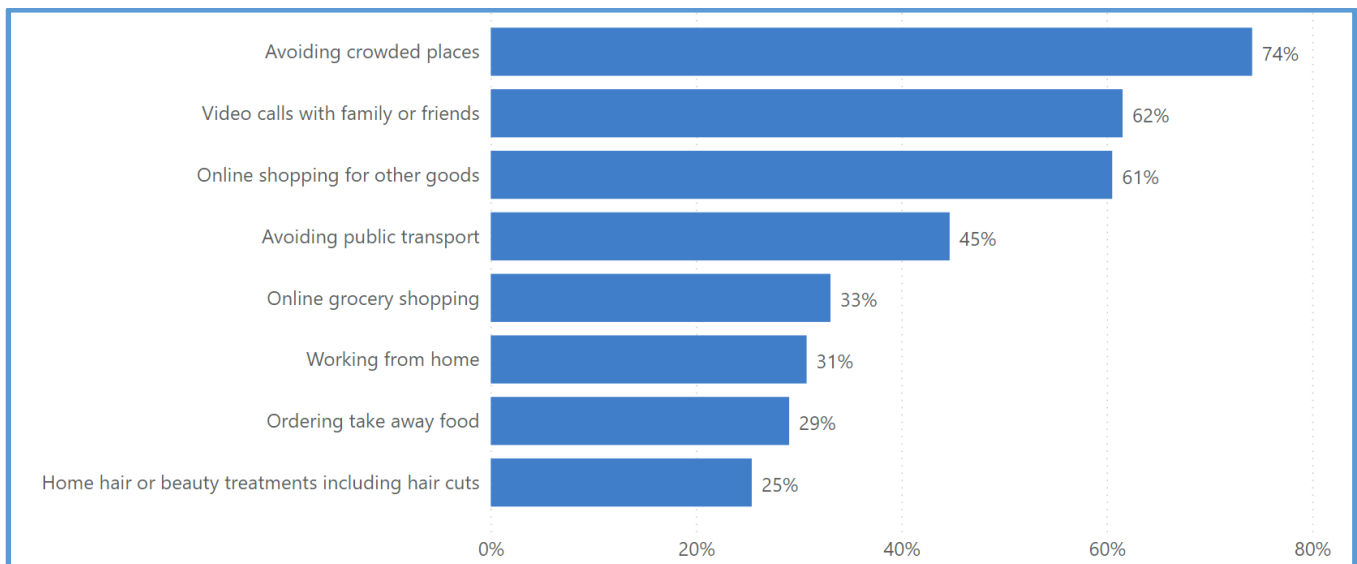
During the months of April 2021 – June 2021, people were asked about which actions or activities they had been doing more of since the start of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and which of those they think that they will keep doing more often after the end of the pandemic.

### Since the start of the pandemic

Figure 23 ranks these actions or activities since the start of the pandemic from highest to lowest based on the proportion of people stating each response. The top three highest ranking actions or activities were:

- Avoiding crowded places (74%)
- Video calls with family or friends (62%)
- Online shopping for other goods (61%)

**Figure 23<sup>1</sup>: Actions or activities people have been doing more of since the start of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**



<sup>1</sup>Multiple responses allowed

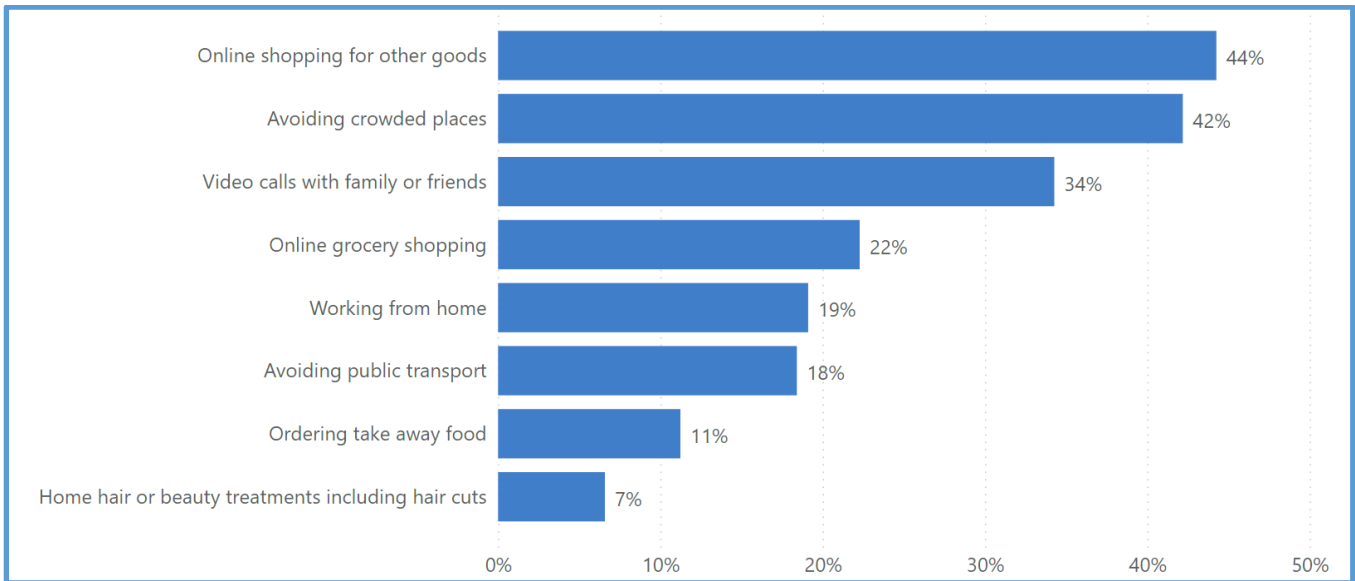
### After the end of the pandemic

Figure 24 ranks the actions or activities that people think they will keep doing more often after the end of the pandemic from highest to lowest based on the proportion of people stating each response. The top three highest ranking actions or activities reported were:

- Online shopping for other goods (44%)
- Avoiding crowded places (42%)
- Video calls with family or friends (34%)



**Figure 24<sup>1</sup>: Actions or activities people think they will keep doing more often after the end of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**



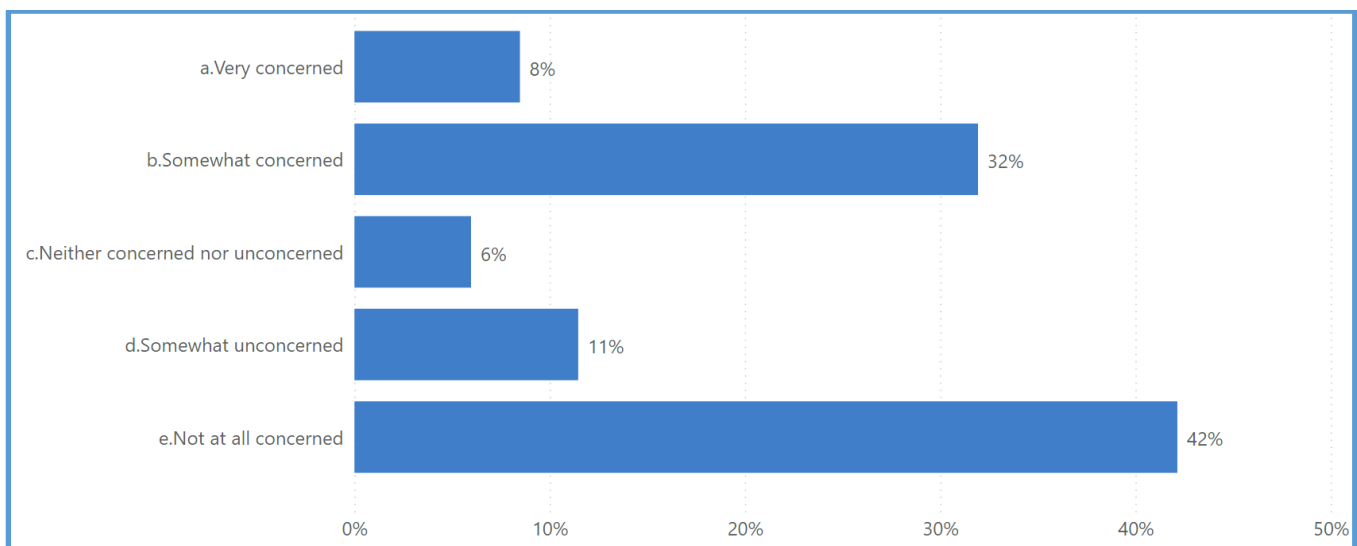
<sup>1</sup>Multiple responses allowed

### Concerns about Children or Young people attending School in the pandemic

After the Easter Break in April 2021 most pupils returned to their school settings. Following this, people with school-aged children in their household were asked how concerned or unconcerned they were about them being back in school.

Two fifths of these people (40%) said that they were concerned about the children or young people in their household being back in school, whilst just over half (54%) were unconcerned (Figure 25).

**Figure 25: Proportion of people who were concerned or unconcerned about the child or young people in their household being back in school**

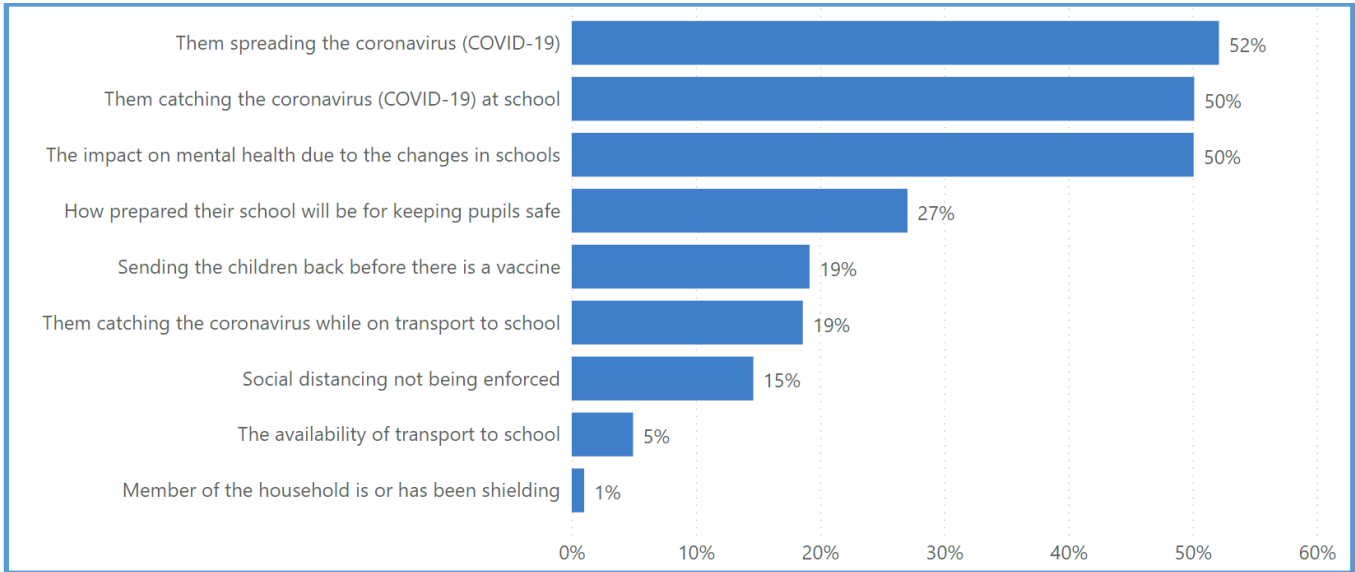


Those people who said that they were concerned about the children or young people in their household being back in school were asked a further question about what those concerns were.

Figure 26 ranks these concerns from highest to lowest based on the proportion of people stating each response. The top three highest ranking concerns were:

- I am concerned about them spreading the Coronavirus (COVID-19) at school (52%).
- I am concerned about them catching the Coronavirus (COVID-19) (50%).
- I am concerned about the impact on mental health and well-being due to the changes in schools because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) (50%).

**Figure 26<sup>1</sup>: Reasons people were concerned about the children or young people in their households being back in school**



<sup>1</sup>Multiple responses allowed

## Personal Wellbeing Indicators

This section contains estimates of reported 'life satisfaction', feeling that things done in life are 'worthwhile', 'happiness' and 'anxiety' for those people interviewed in the reporting period.

Personal wellbeing statistics are reported on in two different ways; (i) the average (mean) rating and (ii) the proportion of respondents scoring within each of the thresholds.

People are asked to respond to each question on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". This means that a **higher score** indicates **better wellbeing** in relation to 'life satisfaction', 'worthwhile' and 'happiness', and a **lower score** indicates **better wellbeing** for 'anxiety'.

### (i) Average (mean) Wellbeing ratings

The average (mean) wellbeing ratings across the four measures of personal wellbeing for people interviewed in April-June 2021 were:

- 7.61 out of 10 for 'life satisfaction'
- 7.93 out of 10 for **feeling that what you do in life is 'worthwhile'**
- 7.60 out of 10 for 'happiness' yesterday
- 3.05 out of 10 for 'anxiety' yesterday

The average (mean) wellbeing ratings of people interviewed in the period April - June 2021 for 'life satisfaction' and 'happiness' were significantly higher than that reported for the period April 2020 – March 2021, signifying better wellbeing in these measures (Table 1).

Anxiety levels in the same period (April - June 2021) were also significantly lower than that reported in the previous 12 month period (April 2020 – March 2021), which is indicative of better wellbeing in this measure (Table 1).

The average (mean) wellbeing ratings for 'worthwhile', 'happiness' and 'anxiety' were similar to those previously reported by NISRA in 2019/20<sup>3</sup> (pre COVID-19 Pandemic). However, levels of 'life satisfaction' remain significantly lower than that reported by NISRA in 2019/20 (Table 1).

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<sup>3</sup>NISRA report on Personal Wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2019/20 <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/personal-wellbeing-northern-ireland-201920>

**Table 1: Comparing Personal Wellbeing averages with the latest NISRA data\*\***

Average (mean)	Life Satisfaction	Worthwhile	Happiness	Anxiety
April – June 21	7.61*#	7.93	7.60*	3.05*
April 20 – March 21	7.36*	7.84	7.43*	3.37*
Personal Wellbeing in NI 19/20	7.86#	8.05	7.68	3.00

\*A significant difference has been observed between Apr –Jun 21 and Apr 20 –Mar 21

#A significant difference has been observed between Apr –Jun 21 and Personal Wellbeing in NI 19/20

\*\*Apr 20 – Mar 21 data has not been compared with 19/20 data in this table, however all differences are significant.

**(ii) The proportion of respondents scoring within each of the Personal Wellbeing thresholds between April and June 2021**

**Labelling of Thresholds**

**Life satisfaction, Worthwhile and Happiness scores**

**Anxiety scores\***

Response on an 11 point Scale	Label	Response on an 11 point Scale	Label
0 to 4	Low	0 to 1	Very low
5 to 6	Medium	2 to 3	Low
7 to 8	High	4 to 5	Medium
9 to 10	Very high	6 to 10	High

\* A lower score indicates better wellbeing for anxiety.

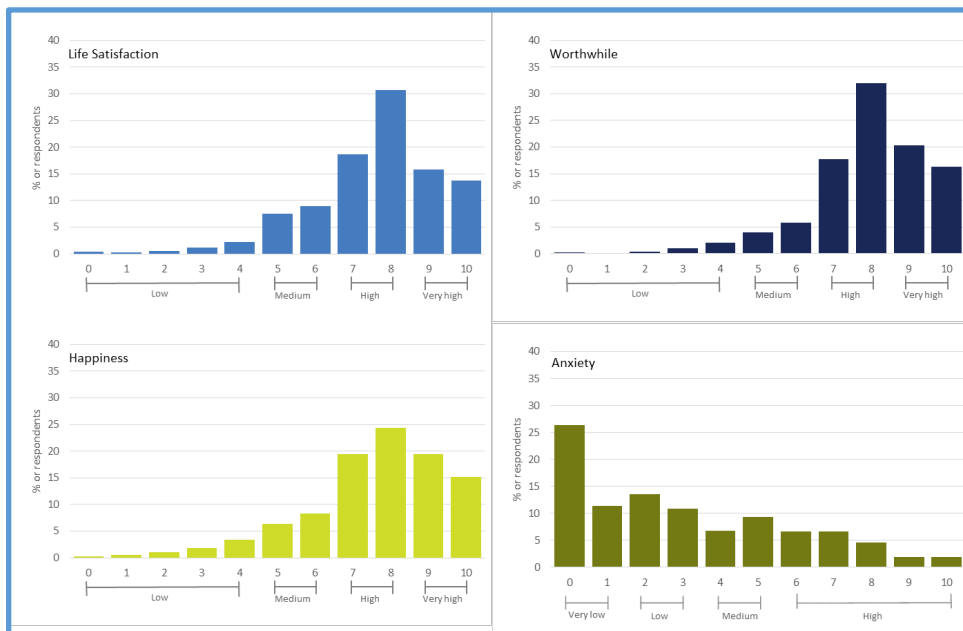
The proportion of people interviewed in April-June 2021 reporting 'Very high' (score of 9 or 10) levels of personal wellbeing, indicating better personal wellbeing was:

- 30% for 'life satisfaction'
- 37% for feeling that what you do in life is 'worthwhile'
- 35% for 'happiness'.

In terms of 'anxiety', where a lower score indicates better personal wellbeing, 38% of people reported a 'Very low' score (0 or 1).

Figure 27 shows the distribution of scores for each personal wellbeing measure. All four personal wellbeing measures are skewed towards the positive end of the scale (note that a lower score in the anxiety scale represents better personal wellbeing).

**Figure 27: Proportion of respondents scoring 0 to 10 on each of the personal wellbeing scales**



For the period April - June 2021, the proportion of people reporting ‘Very high’ personal wellbeing for ‘life satisfaction’, and ‘happiness’ were significantly higher than those reported for the period April 2020 – March 2021, which indicates better wellbeing in these measures. (Table 2).

For the same time period (April - June 2021), the proportion of people reporting ‘Very low’ personal wellbeing for ‘anxiety’ (ie. those who reported a very low score of 0 or 1) was significantly higher than the previous 12 month period (April 2020 – March 2021), also signifying better wellbeing for this measure. (Table 2)

The proportion of people reporting ‘Very high’ personal wellbeing for ‘life satisfaction’, ‘worthwhile’ and ‘happiness’ for April - June 2021 were still significantly lower than those reported by NISRA in 2019/20 (pre COVID-19 Pandemic) which is indicative of poorer wellbeing in these measures. (Table 2).

**Table 2: Comparing the proportion of people reporting better personal wellbeing with previous NISRA data**

Proportion of people reporting better wellbeing scores	Very high (score of 9 or 10)			Very low Score (0 or 1)
	Life Satisfaction	Worthwhile	Happiness	Anxiety <sup>#</sup>
April – June 21	30%* <sup>#</sup>	37% <sup>#</sup>	35%* <sup>#</sup>	38%* <sup>#</sup>
April 20-March 2021	25%* <sup>#</sup>	34% <sup>#</sup>	30%* <sup>#</sup>	32%* <sup>#</sup>
Personal Wellbeing in NI 19/20	36% <sup>#</sup>	41% <sup>#</sup>	39% <sup>#</sup>	41% <sup>#</sup>

\*A significant difference has been observed between Apr–Jun 21 and Apr 20–Mar 21

<sup>#</sup>A significant difference has been observed between Apr–Jun 21 and Personal Wellbeing in NI 19/20

\*\*Apr 20 – Mar 21 data has not been compared with 19/20 data in this table, however all differences are significant.

## Loneliness

This measure asks people the question, ‘How often do you feel lonely?’ with the following 5 response options: ‘often/always’, ‘some of the time’, ‘occasionally’, ‘hardly ever’ and ‘never’. This question therefore measures the frequency with which people report feeling lonely, but not the level of loneliness they experience.

Some 7% of people interviewed in the period April to June 2021 reported feeling lonely ‘often/always’. This is similar to the figure reported by NISRA in 2019/20<sup>4</sup> (5%) and to results from this survey covering the period April 2020 – March 2021 (6%).

The proportion of people reporting ‘never’ feeling lonely in April - June 2021 (24%) was significantly lower than the figure reported by NISRA in 2019/20 (30%) (Table 3).

**Table 3: Frequency of loneliness in people aged 16+**

	Often/always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
April – June 21	7%	14%	18%	36%	24%*
April 20-March 2021	6%	15%*	18%	35%	26%
Personal Wellbeing in NI 19/20	5%	12%*	19%	33%	30%*

\*A significant difference has been observed

\*\*Apr 20 – Mar 21 data has not been compared with 19/20 data in this table, however significant differences were observed in the ‘some of the time’ and Never categories for when comparing these time periods.

Some 39% of people reported feeling ‘more often lonely’ (condensed category<sup>5</sup>) in the period April - June 2021. This figure is not significantly different from the pre-pandemic figure reported by NISRA in 2019/20 (37%) or the figure of 39% reported from this survey covering the period April 2020 - March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> NISRA report on Loneliness in Northern Ireland 2019/20 - <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/loneliness-northern-ireland-201920>

<sup>5</sup> For condensed categories responses ‘often/always’, ‘some of the time’ and ‘occasionally’ were grouped into a single category called ‘more often lonely’ and responses ‘hardly ever’ and ‘never’ were grouped into the category ‘hardly ever lonely’.

## [Further Information](#)

NISRA would like to thank the survey interviewers and members of public who collected and provided the data for this report.

## [Results and Tables](#)

Each chart in the report is also supported by an excel spreadsheet which provides confidence intervals for each estimate. Additional tables for other variables asked in Phases 1-12 have also been published in this release, where validated data is of a sufficient quality to release. A visual representation of these findings can also be found at the following webpage:

[NISRA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Opinion Survey Visualizations](#)

## [Technical Report](#)

The technical report includes further details on the sampling method, data collection mode, respondent selection, fieldwork, weighting, sampling error, confidence intervals, significant differences and strengths and limitations of the survey:

[NISRA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Opinion Survey Technical Report](#)

## [Previous Publications](#)

Previous publications of the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey Key Findings are available at: [NISRA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Opinion Survey Previous Results | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

## [Related Links to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Statistics](#)

The latest data and analysis on Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Northern Ireland and its effects on the economy and society can be found at the following link:

[NI summary statistics - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) statistics](#)

## [Further Research](#)

NISRA is currently working with research partners on the Northern Ireland Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey. The household study helps provide a better understanding of the Coronavirus and helps the Government work out how to manage the pandemic better moving forward. The latest findings for Northern Ireland from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey can be found at:

[NI Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey](#)



Further results from the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey will be published periodically as more data becomes available when fieldwork periods close.

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