

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Review: data and analysis, March to October 2020

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# Impact on mental health

This section includes analysis on how our society's mental health has been affected, particularly well-being, loneliness, depression and anxiety

## Levels of anxiety declined after the start of lockdown; this stabilised in June and July and may have begun to increase again since late September

- Levels of happiness and anxiety, which tend to reflect more immediate or acute feelings, saw the greatest change as lockdown was introduced compared to pre-pandemic levels (February 2020).
- These measures stabilised in June and July 2020, returning closer to pre-lockdown levels (February 2020). as restrictions started to ease across the UK. More recently, through September and October 2020, levels of anxiety have started to increase and levels of happiness started to decrease again, as more of Great Britain faces more restrictions through local lockdowns, firebreaks, and COVID-19 alert levels.
- The other two measures of life satisfaction or feeling things you do in life are worthwhile, which tend to reflect a longer term view on life, have stayed closer to pre-lockdown levels (February 2020), however the measure of life satisfaction has started to decrease through October and September 2020, reaching its lowest level between 14 and 18 October 2020.

# Mean scores for personal well-being ratings

Great Britain, February<sup>1</sup> to October 2020

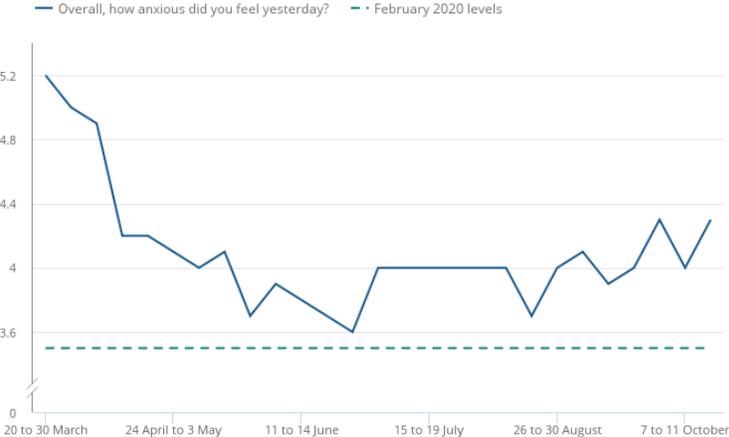
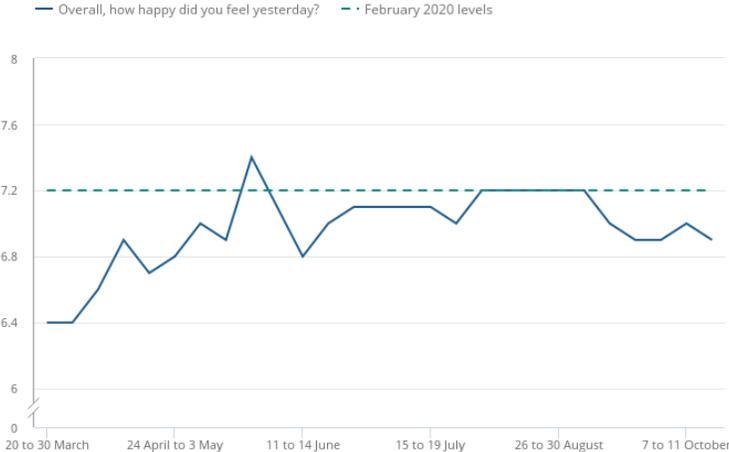
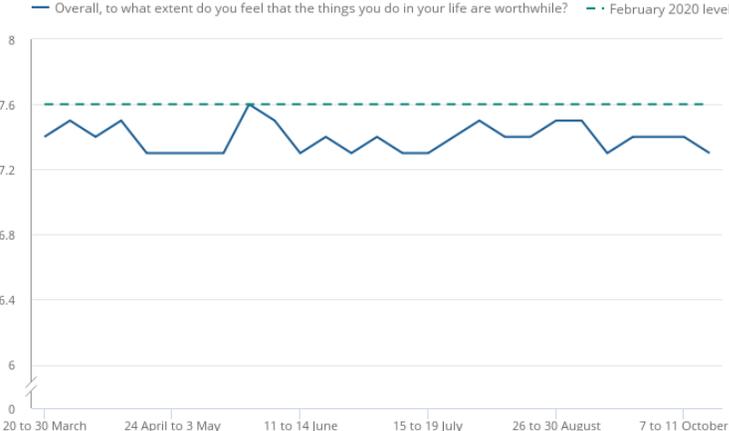
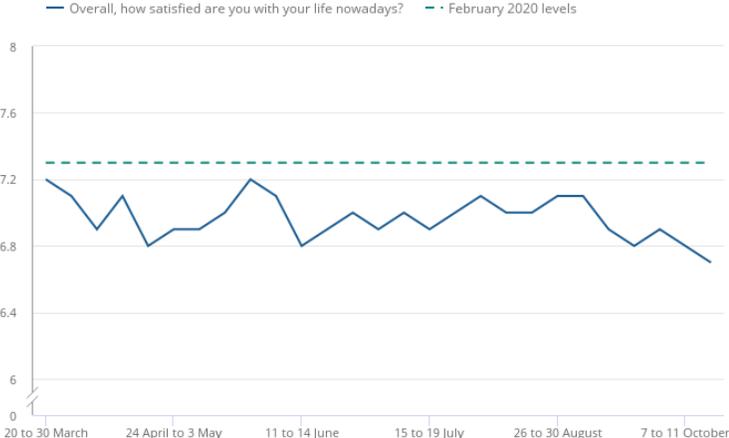
<sup>1</sup>Well-being levels are presented for February 2020 as a dashed line providing a reference point to pre-COVID-19 levels. These data are from the monthly Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), which differs in sampling and methodological approaches used in the weekly OPN, which was introduced from 20 March 2020.

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?”.

Each of these questions is answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”.

Source: [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, ONS](#)

Lead analyst: [Andrea Lacey](#)



## In April, half of adults said their well-being was affected by the pandemic

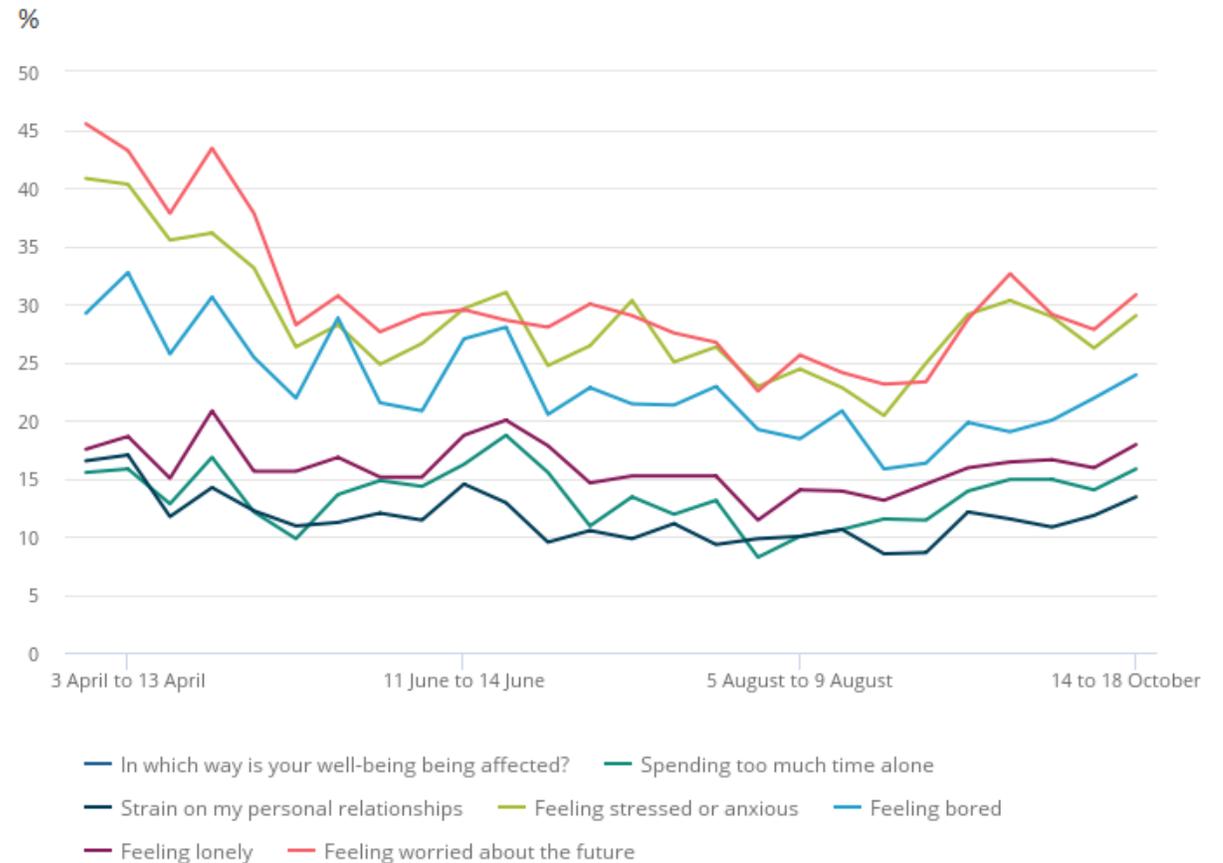
- By mid-April, many had been confined to their homes, except for essential shopping and exercise, for several weeks. Around 45% of adults said they were worried about the future, and this remained the factor that most people said was impacting their well-being; other common reasons were boredom, feeling stressed or anxious, or feeling lonely.
- However, throughout April, more than three-quarters of adults said that staying in touch with family and friends remotely helped them to cope. While many struggled, some people saw improvements to their well-being: **“My well-being is very positive as I have exercised more and am now much fitter.”**
- Others reported an increased sense of community spirit, with 80% of adults saying they thought people were doing more to help others since the outbreak. This helped some with feeling less isolated: **“The village has organised volunteers who will help if needed.”**
- As the pandemic progressed, loneliness peaked in mid-June, with a fifth of adults saying they felt lonely between 18 and 21 June 2020.
- For others, the problem was spending too much time with others in their household; by June, the proportion of adults reporting a strain on their personal relationships was at its highest at 15%: **“I have absolutely no me time and it feels like wall to wall family time.”**

# Main reasons for well-being being affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Great Britain, March to October 2020

Source: [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, ONS](#)

Lead analyst: [Andrea Lacey](#)

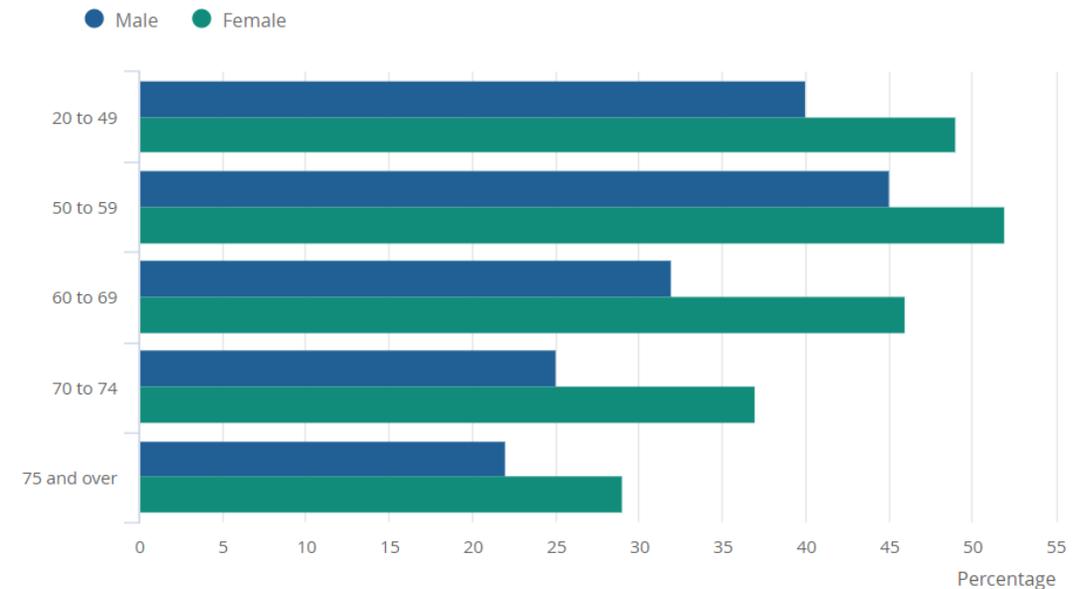


## **Of those that were shielding, the majority of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people stated their mental health had not been affected and around a third reported it had got worse since being advised to shield**

- An estimated 785,000 (35%) of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people reported a worsening in their mental health or well-being since receiving shielding guidance.
- CEV females were more likely to report a worsening in their mental health or well-being than CEV males, regardless of age.
- Guidance for shielding changed on 6 July 2020 to include forming a support bubble; between 9 and 16 July 2020, of the CEV people who received at least one visitor who was not providing care, 36% only had visitors from within their support bubble.
- In mid-July, 6% of CEV people who normally worked were planning not to return to work in the next four months.

# Clinically extremely vulnerable females were more likely to report a worsening in their mental health, regardless of age, than clinically extremely vulnerable males

Percentage of clinically extremely vulnerable people who reported a worsening in their mental health, by gender and age group, England, 9 to 18 June 2020



Source: [Coronavirus and shielding of clinically extremely vulnerable people in England: 9 June to 18 June 2020](#)

Lead analyst: [Tim Gibbs](#)

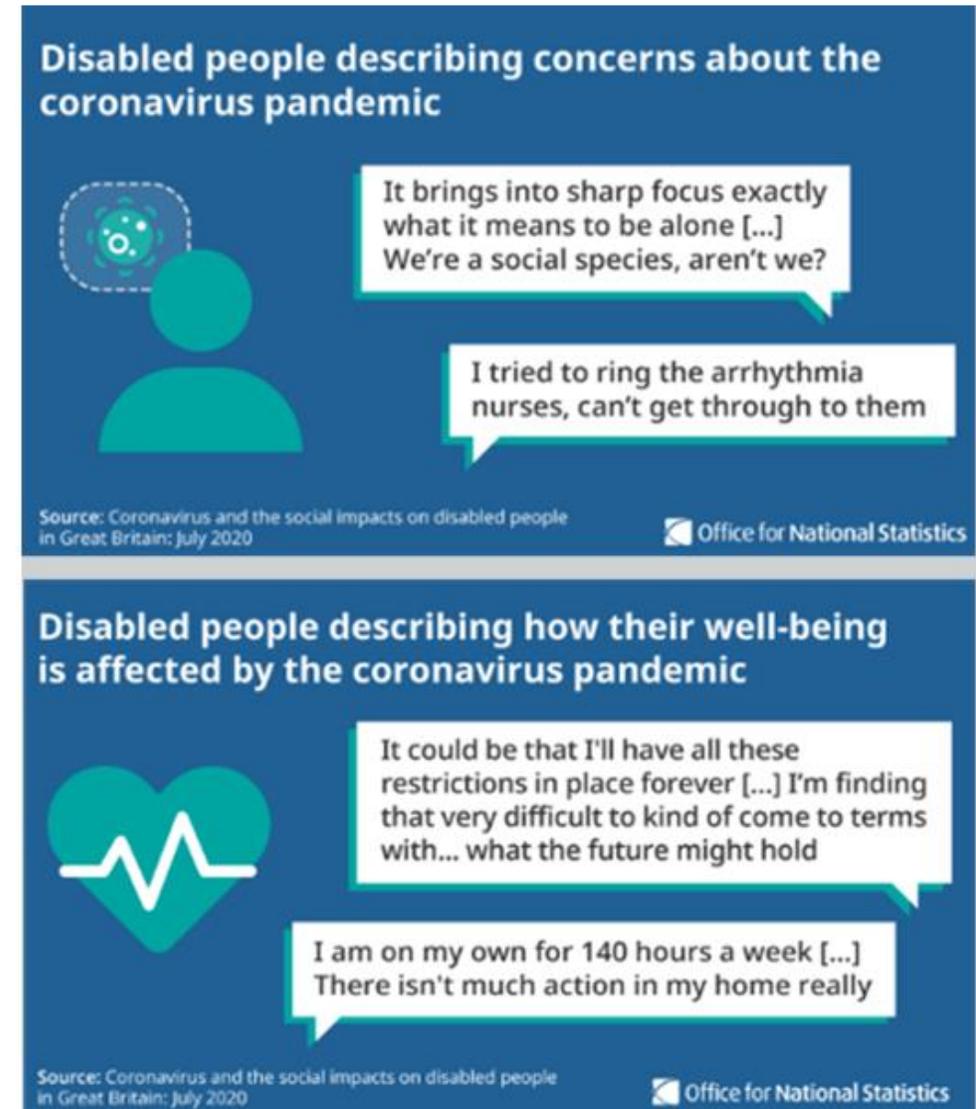
## Disabled people were concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on their well-being

- In July 2020, as lockdown restrictions began to ease, around three-quarters of disabled people (75%) reported they were “very worried” or “somewhat worried” about the effect that COVID-19 was having on their life (66% for non-disabled people).
- A quarter of disabled people were most concerned about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their well-being (24%); next most frequently, 13% of disabled people reported being most concerned about access to health care and treatment (13% and 3% for non-disabled people).
- Disabled people continued to experience poorer well-being ratings than before the pandemic started; in July, 45% of disabled people reported high anxiety, compared with 29% of non-disabled people.

# Disabled people were concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on their well-being in July 2020

Source: [Coronavirus and the social impacts on disabled people in Great Britain: July 2020](#)

Lead analysts: [David Ainslie](#) and [Josephine Foubert](#)



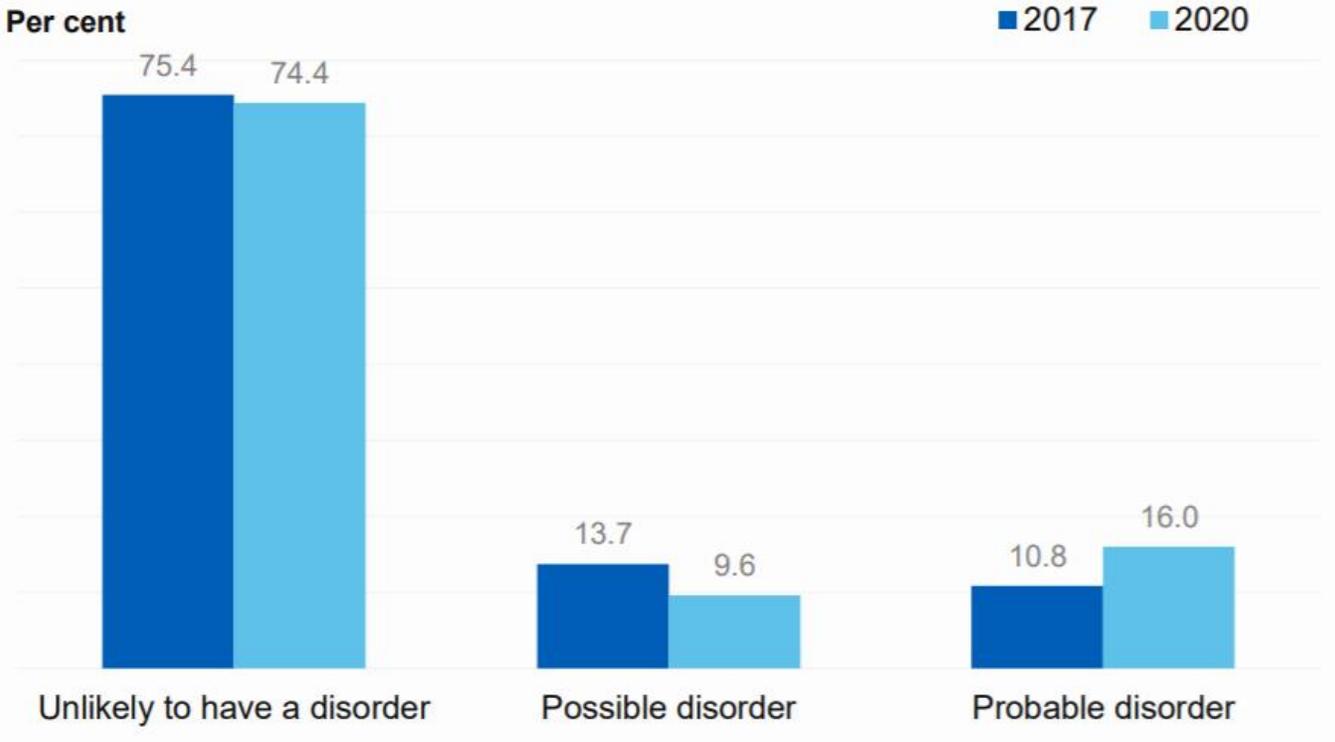
## **The proportion of children experiencing a probable mental disorder has increased over the past three years, from one in nine in 2017 to one in six in July this year.**

Since March 2020, children and young people have experienced major changes in their lives. NHS Digital, in collaboration with the ONS, the National Centre for Social Research, the University of Cambridge and the University of Exeter took a look at the mental health of children and young people in England in July 2020 and how this has changed since 2017.

- In 2020, one in six (16.0%) children aged 5 to 16 years were identified as having a probable mental disorder, increasing from one in nine (10.8%) in 2017; the increase was evident in both boys and girls.
- The likelihood of a probable mental disorder increased with age with a noticeable difference in gender for the older age group (17 to 22 years); 27.2% of young women and 13.3% of young men were identified as having a probable mental disorder in 2020.
- Children and young people with a probable mental disorder were more likely to say that lockdown had made their life worse (54.1% of 11- to 16-year-olds and 59.0% of 17- to 22-year-olds) than those unlikely to have a mental disorder (39.2% and 37.3% respectively).

# Percentage of children with an unlikely, possible and probable mental disorder, 2017 and 2020

Base: 5- to 16-year-olds in England



Source: NHS Digital, The Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020

Lead analysts: [Tim Vizard](#), [Jodie Davis](#), [Tracy Williams](#) and [Charlotte Leach](#)

## **The factors most strongly associated with high anxiety during lockdown included loneliness, marital status, sex, disability, whether someone feels safe at home or not, and work being affected by the pandemic**

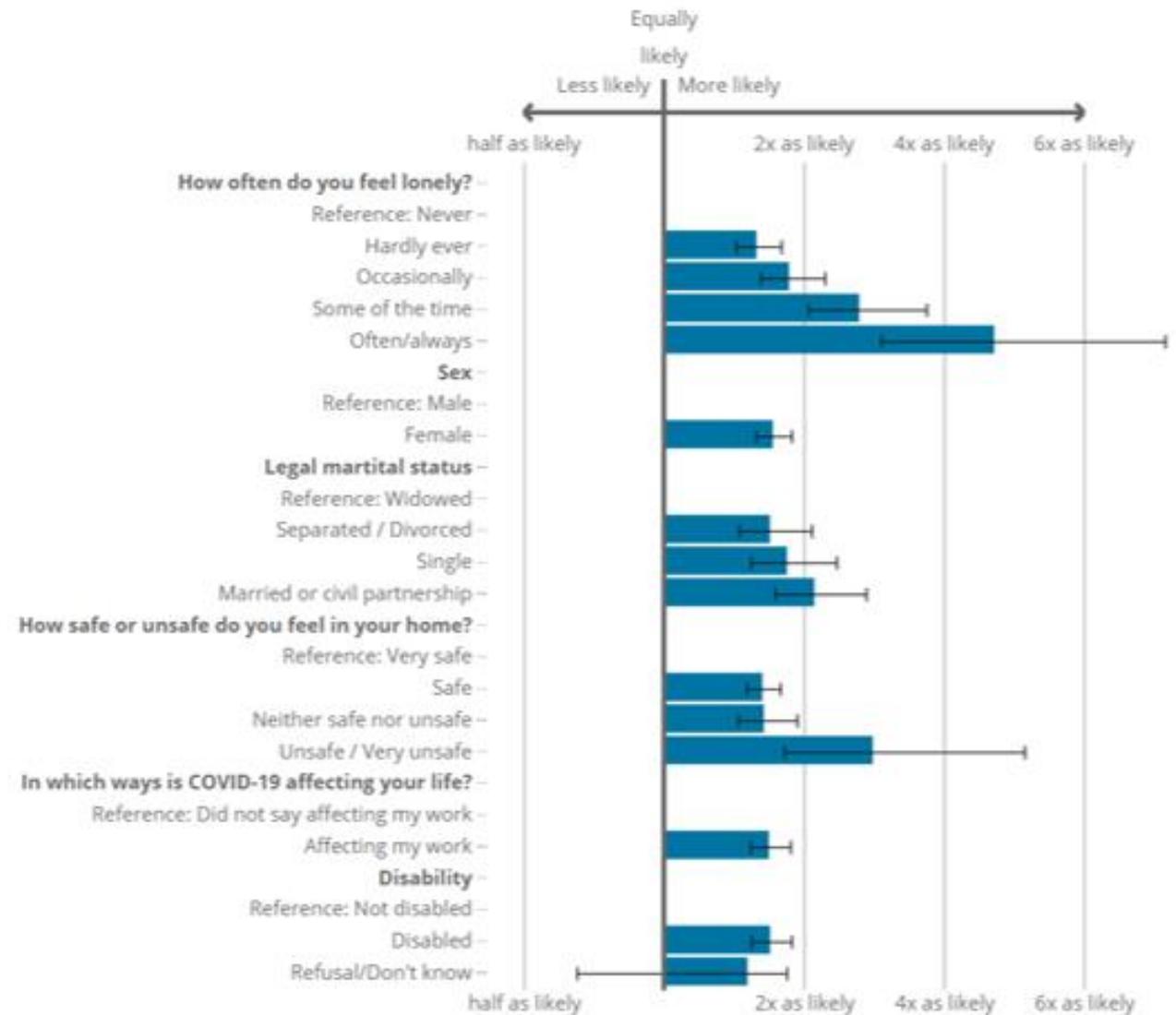
- Feeling lonely was the factor most strongly associated with reporting high anxiety – people who “often or always” felt lonely were almost five times more likely to report high anxiety than those who “never” felt lonely.
- The percentage who reported high levels of anxiety significantly increased for people who are married or in a civil partnership during lockdown to 39%, up from 19% in the last quarter of 2019; prior to the pandemic, the percentage reporting high anxiety was lowest for people who are married or in a civil partnership compared with all other marital status groups.
- Those who are married or in a civil partnership are more likely to be balancing homeschooling alongside other commitments, with one in four people homeschooling during the pandemic, compared with approximately 1 in 10 people who are single, separated or divorced.
- Those aged 75 years and over were almost twice as likely as those aged 16 to 24 years to report high anxiety during lockdown; analysis of data prior to lockdown suggests anxiety tended to be lowest among those aged from their mid to late 60s, remaining relatively stable in later years.

# Odds ratios of factors affecting high anxiety

Great Britain, 3 April to 10 May 2020

Source: [Coronavirus and anxiety, Great Britain: 3 April 2020 to 10 May 2020](#)

Lead analyst: [Lucy Tinkler](#)

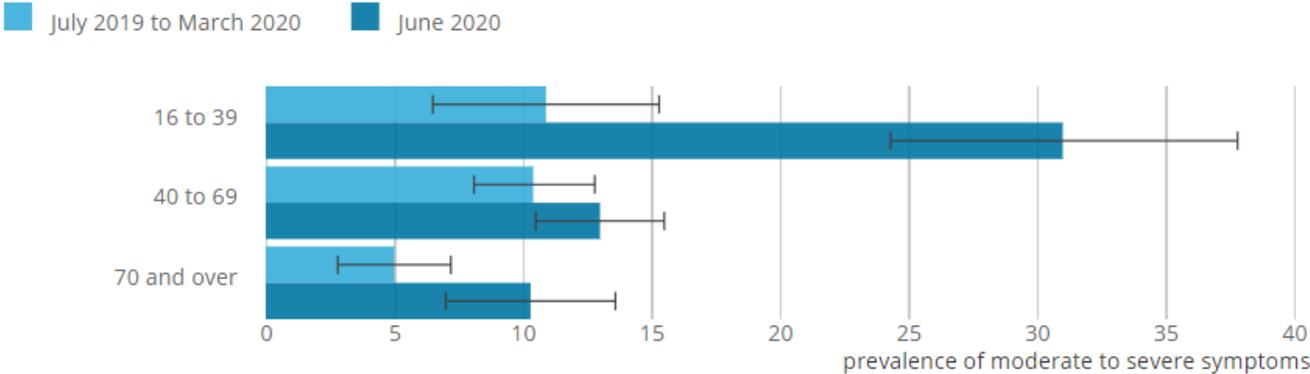


## **Almost one in five adults were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic; almost double the proportion before the pandemic**

- Depression is among the most common types of mental disorders experienced by adults in Great Britain; it can affect people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms. Ranging from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness to losing interest in the things they used to enjoy and feeling very tearful.
- Almost one in five adults (19.2%) were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic in June 2020; this had almost doubled from around 1 in 10 adults (9.7%) before the pandemic (July 2019 to March 2020).
- One in eight adults (12.9%) developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic, while a further 6.2% of the population continued to experience this level of depressive symptoms; around 3.5% of these saw an improvement over this period.
- Adults who were aged 16 to 39 years old, female, unable to afford an unexpected expense, or disabled were the most likely to experience some form of depression during the pandemic.

# Younger adults were more likely than other adults to have some form of depression in June 2020

Great Britain, July 2019 to June 2020



Source: [Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain: June 2020](#)

Lead analysts: [Tim Vizard](#), [Jodie Davis](#), [Emmie White](#) and [Bella Beynon](#)

## **When assessing loneliness during the pandemic to date (20 March to 18 October 2020), there had been no significant change in the proportion of adults aged 16 years and over reporting chronic loneliness**

The coronavirus pandemic has had the potential to greatly impact people's well-being, including reported loneliness. This has been especially true during lockdown, as people's relationships and daily norms were directly impacted.

We looked at two measures of loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic. These were:

- "Chronic loneliness" – this measures the percentage of those who feel lonely "often or always" and;
- "Lockdown loneliness" – this measures the percentage of those who said their well-being had been affected through having felt lonely in the last seven days; this question was only asked to respondents who had already reported that their well-being had been affected in the past seven days and that they were "very" or "somewhat worried" about the effect of the coronavirus on their life.

Since we began collecting data on loneliness during the pandemic, there has been no week-on-week increase in those reporting "often or always" lonely in the Great British population. However, in the [week 14 to 18 October](#) we may have signs that those reporting "often or always" lonely is beginning to increase, although it is too soon to say whether this is the start of a trend.

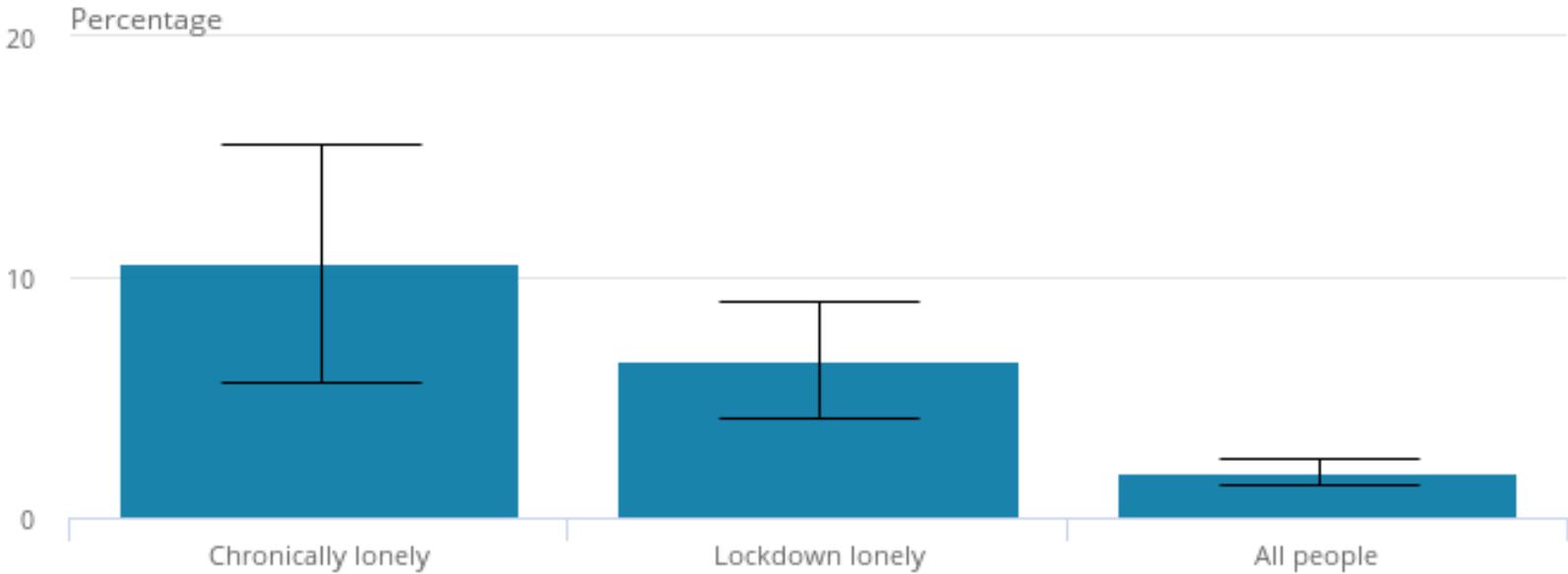
## **5.0% of people in Great Britain (2.6 million adults) reported that they felt lonely “often” or “always” between 3 April and 3 May 2020, about the same proportion as pre-lockdown**

During the lockdown, between 3 April to 3 May 2020, we looked at the [characteristics of those reporting “lockdown” and “chronic” loneliness](#) and inequalities emerged. We found:

- 5.0% of people in Great Britain (2.6 million adults) reported “chronic loneliness”, about the same proportion as pre-lockdown.
- 30.9% (7.4 million adults) reported their well-being had been affected by “lockdown loneliness”.
- working-age adults living alone were more likely to report both “chronic” and “lockdown” loneliness than the average adult; this was also the case for those in “bad” or “very bad” health, in rented accommodation, or who were either single, divorced, separated, or a former or separated civil partner.
- those “chronically lonely” were no more likely than the Great Britain average to use a particular activity to help them cope, but they were less likely to use spending time with other household members, keeping up with family and friends, cooking, exercising, gardening and working.

# Both the chronically lonely and the lockdown lonely groups are more likely to be struggling to find things that help them cope with lockdown

Percentage of adults saying that they are struggling to find things that help while staying at home, Great Britain, 3 April to 3 May 2020



Source: [Coronavirus and loneliness, Great Britain: 3 April to 3 May 2020](#)

Lead analysts: [Eleanor Rees](#) and [Rebecca Large](#)