

# How are we doing in Wales?

## Public Engagement Survey on Health and Wellbeing during Coronavirus Measures

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Trends in health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic  
April 2020 to March 2022

Between April 2020 and March 2022, Public Health Wales conducted a public engagement telephone survey to track how coronavirus and related control measures were affecting the public's health and wellbeing.

Around 27,000 Welsh residents aged 18 years and over participated in the survey during the pandemic, with around 600-1000 residents participating in each survey round.\*

The survey included a range of core questions asked each survey round with other questions changing to address emerging issues. This report presents trends in responses to a selection of core questions over the two year period, including: worry about coronavirus; mental and physical health; worry about finances; and perceptions of the national response. It examines differences in responses by deprivation, gender and age.

Analyses use generalised linear models. Trends data are weighted to national population demographics by deprivation, gender and age. Demographic differences are unweighted and presented as sample-adjusted proportions (estimated marginal means).

We thank the people of Wales for giving us their valuable time to support this work.



\*Full reports from each survey round are available at: <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/covid-19/public-engagement-survey/>.

Around 27,000 Welsh residents participated in the national public engagement survey between April 2020 and March 2022.

- Worry about catching coronavirus peaked around December 2020/January 2021 (during the second national lockdown), then fell substantially; coinciding with the rollout of the vaccination programme. It remained relatively low throughout the remainder of the pandemic.
- December 2020/January 2021 also saw the highest levels of poor mental health, with peaks in loneliness, social isolation, anxiety and worry about mental health and wellbeing over this period, and a reduction in happiness.
- Residents from more deprived communities, females and younger adults have been more likely to report all markers of poor mental health during the pandemic, as well as poor physical health.
- Financial concerns were elevated in winter 2020/21. However, trends also show a steady increase in financial concern starting in summer 2021 and continuing through to the last survey in March 2022.
- Residents from more deprived communities and younger adults are more likely to have reported worrying about their finances.
- Confidence in the NHS\* was high throughout most of the pandemic. However, it dipped in winter 2020/21 then reduced again from summer 2021. It remained lower in 2022 than during most of the pandemic.
- Throughout the pandemic, most people have agreed that Welsh Government has responded to the pandemic well, with a dip in Winter 2021.

\*Participants were asked whether or not they agreed that the NHS would be able to adequately care for them if they were to fall seriously ill with coronavirus.

# Worry about catching coronavirus

- Worry about catching coronavirus peaked in winter 2021/22 before falling substantially, coinciding with the vaccination programme rollout.
- Worry about catching coronavirus has been higher among residents of more deprived communities, females and individuals aged 55-74 years.

**Adjusted proportion 'very worried' about catching coronavirus\***



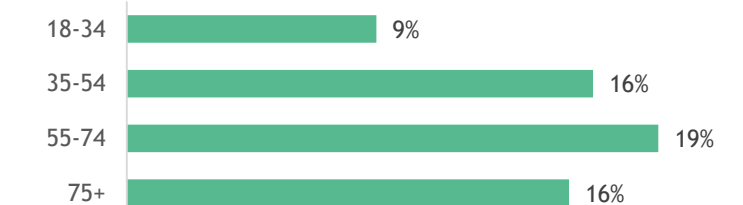
**By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)**



**By gender (P<0.001)**



**By age group (P<0.001)**



\*Participants were asked how worried they were about catching coronavirus; response options were *not at all*, *a little*, *moderately* and *very*. Up to July 2020, this question was not asked to those who said they had had coronavirus. From September 2020, it was asked to all participants.

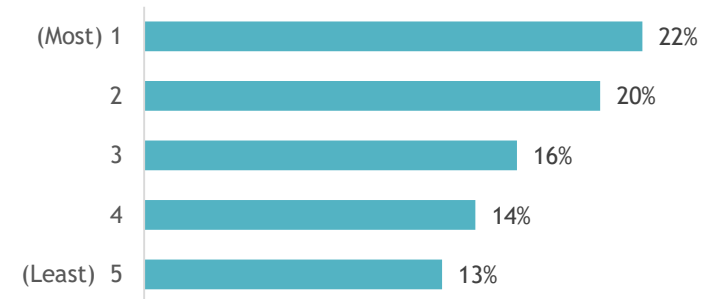
# Worry about mental health and wellbeing

- The proportion of adults worrying ‘a lot’ about their mental health and wellbeing\* ranged between 12% (Sept/Oct 2021) and 31% (Jan 2021).
- Worry about mental health and wellbeing has been greater in residents of more deprived communities, females and younger age groups.

**Adjusted proportion worrying ‘a lot’ about their mental health & wellbeing\***



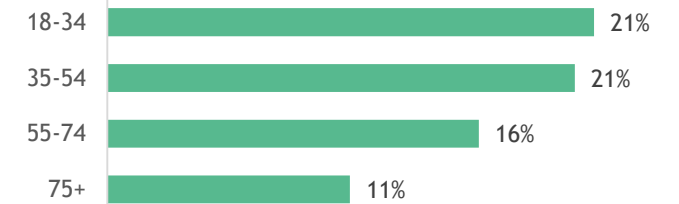
**By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)**



**By gender (P<0.001)**



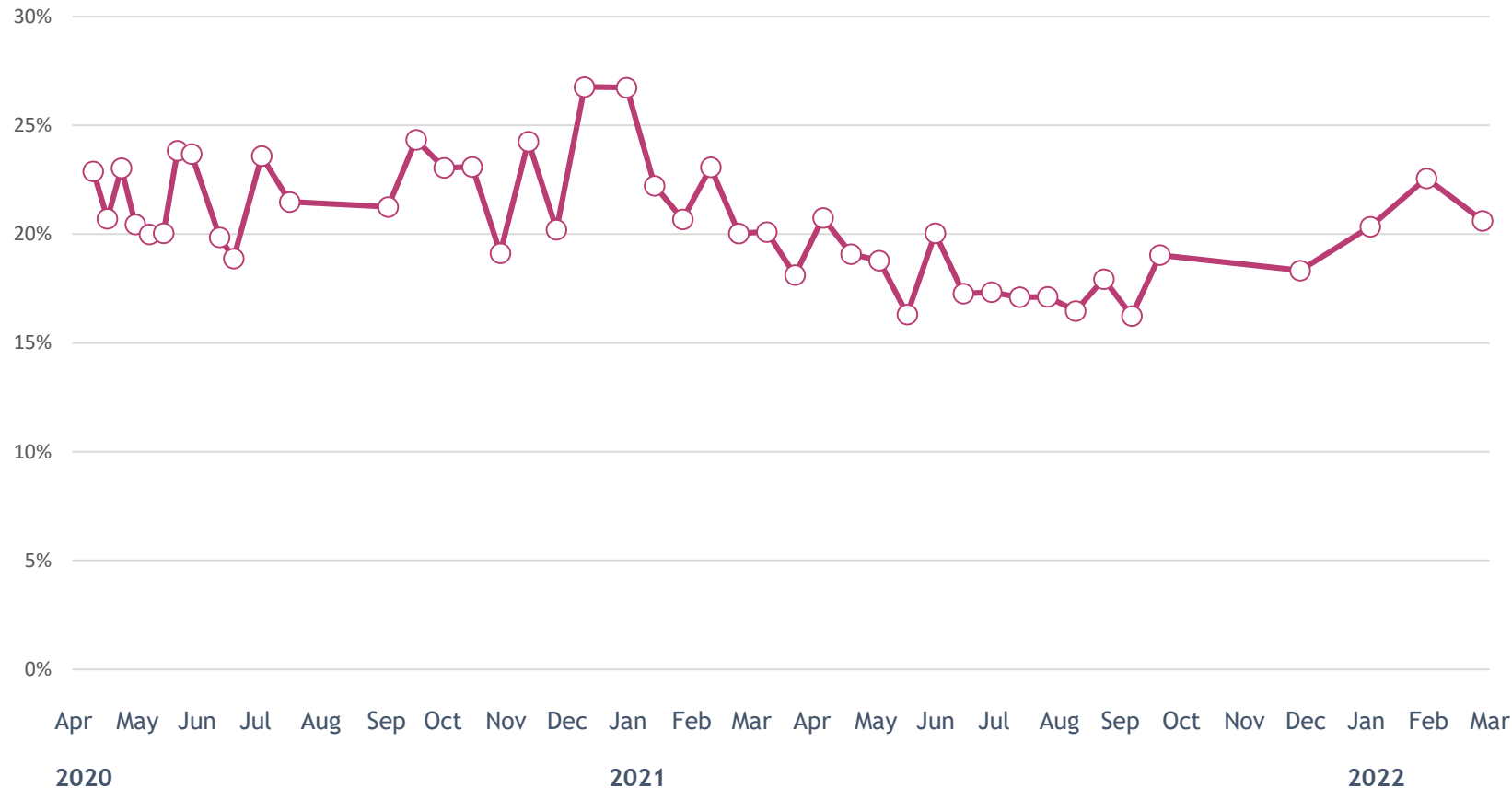
**By age group (P<0.001)**



\*Participants were asked, in the past week, how much they had been worrying about their mental health and wellbeing; response options were *not at all, a little, and a lot*.

- The proportion of adults feeling very anxious\* was highest in Winter 2020/2021 and lowest over summer 2021.
- Residents from more deprived communities, females and younger adults have been more likely to report feeling very anxious.

## Adjusted proportion feeling very anxious\*



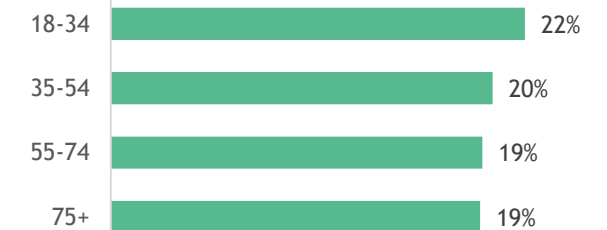
## By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



## By gender (P<0.001)



## By age group (P<0.05)



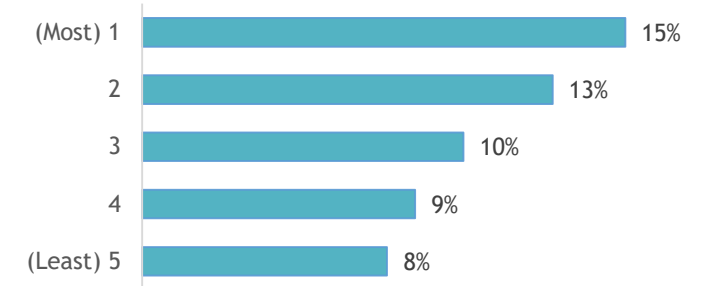
\*Participants were asked to rate how anxious they felt on the day of survey, using a scale of 0 (not at all anxious) to 10 (completely anxious). Responses of 7-10 are categorised as 'very anxious'.

- The proportion of adults ‘always’ or ‘often’ feeling lonely\* has ranged from 8% in May 2020 to 19% in early January 2021.
- Residents from more deprived communities, females and younger adults have been more likely to report feeling lonely.

## Adjusted proportion ‘always’ or ‘often’ feeling lonely\*



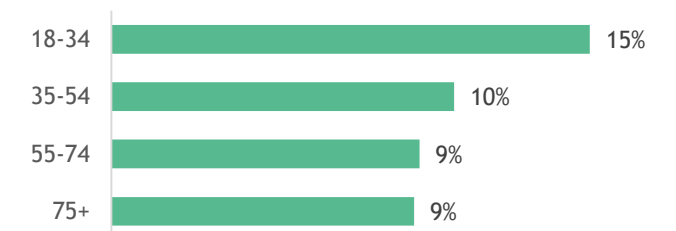
## By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



## By gender (P<0.001)



## By age group (P<0.001)



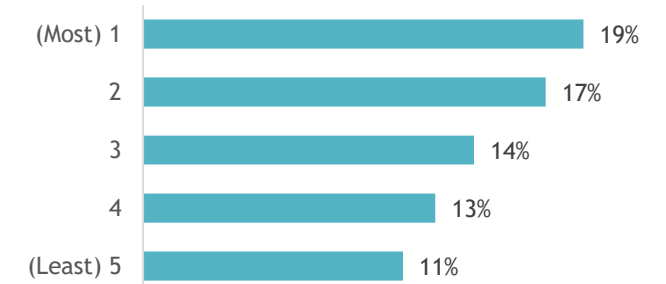
\*Participants were asked, in the last week, how often they had been feeling lonely; response options were *never*, *occasionally*, *often* and *always*.

- The proportion of adults ‘always’ or ‘often’ feeling isolated\* peaked in winter 2021, then reduced and remained relatively stable.
- Residents from more deprived communities, females and younger adults have been more likely to report feeling isolated.

## Adjusted proportion ‘always’ or ‘often’ feeling isolated\*



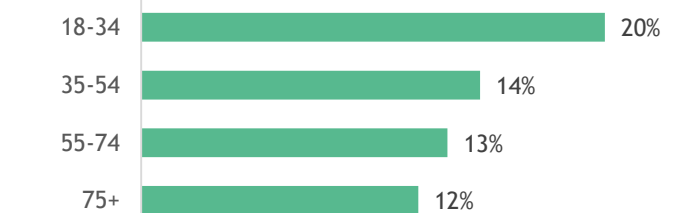
## By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



## By gender (P<0.001)



## By age group (P<0.001)



\*Participants were asked, in the last week, how often they had been feeling isolated; response options were *never*, *occasionally*, *often* and *always*.



- Levels of happiness\* reduced during winter 2021 but remained stable during winter 2022.
- Residents of less deprived communities, males and older adults have been more likely to feel happy.

## Adjusted proportion feeling happy\*



## By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



## By gender (P<0.001)



## By age group (P<0.001)



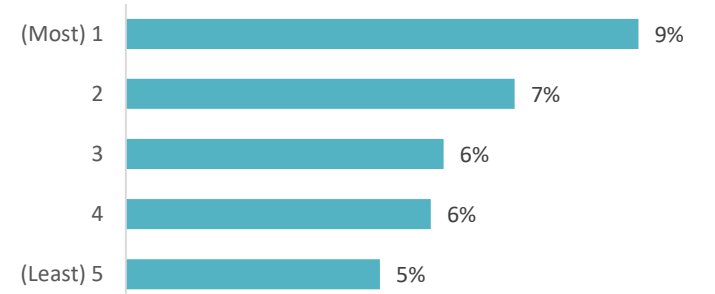
\*Participants were asked to rate how happy they felt on the day of survey, using a scale of 0 (not at all happy) to 10 (completely happy). Responses of 7-10 are categorised as 'happy'.

- The proportion of adults feeling very unhealthy\* was lowest at the start of the pandemic and peaked in early January 2021.
- Residents in more deprived quintiles, females and individuals aged 35-54 years have been more likely to feel very unhealthy.

## Adjusted proportion feeling very unhealthy\*



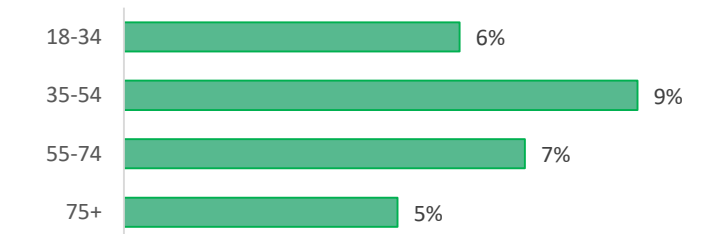
## By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



## By gender (P<0.001)



## By age group (P<0.001)



\*Participants were asked to rate how healthy they felt on the day of survey, using a scale of 0 (not at all healthy) to 10 (completely healthy). Responses of 0-3 are categorised as 'very unhealthy'.

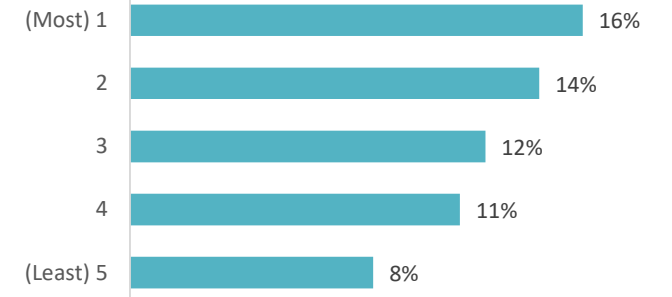
# Worry about finances

- Worrying ‘a lot’ about finances reduced from 23% in October 2020 but then increased from Summer 2021 to reach this level again in March 2022.
- Residents of the most deprived quintile, females and younger adults have been more likely worry about their finances.

Adjusted proportion worrying ‘a lot’ about their finances\*



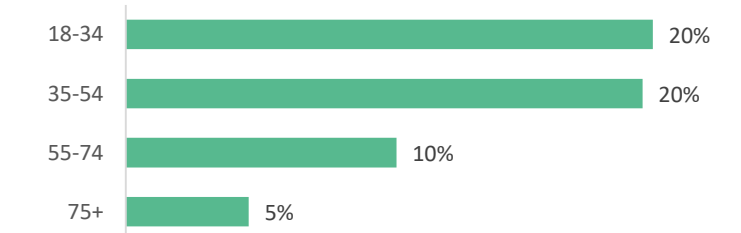
By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



By gender (P<0.05)



By age group (P<0.001)



\*Participants were asked, in the past week, how much they had been worrying about their finances; response options were *not at all*, *a little*, and *a lot*.

- Confidence in the NHS\* was high throughout most of the pandemic, although it was lower in winter 2021 and reduced again from summer 2021.
- There were small but significant differences in confidence in the NHS by gender and age group.

**Adjusted proportion agreeing they were confident the NHS would be able to adequately care for them if they became seriously ill with coronavirus\***



**By deprivation quintile (not significant)**



**By gender (P<0.001)**



**By age group (P<0.01)**



\*Participants were asked how much they agree with statement “I am confident that the NHS would be able to adequately care for me if I became seriously ill with coronavirus”. Those responding *strongly agree* and *agree* (v. *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree* or *strongly disagree*) are categorised as agreeing.

# Welsh Government's response to the pandemic

- In general most people agreed that Welsh Government responded to the pandemic well\*, with a dip to 50% in winter 2021.
- Residents of the least deprived communities, males and younger adults have been less likely to approve of the Welsh Government response.

Adjusted proportion agreeing Welsh Government has responded to the pandemic well\*



By deprivation quintile (P<0.001)



By gender (P<0.001)



By age group (P<0.001)



\*Participants were asked how much they agreed with statement "I think that Welsh Government is responding to the problems caused by coronavirus well". Those responding *strongly agree* and *agree* (v. *neither agree nor disagree*, *disagree* or *strongly disagree*) were categorised as agreeing.

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## How are you doing?

For general information on how to look after yourself, your friends and family during the coronavirus restrictions visit:  
**[phw.nhs.wales/howareyoudoing](https://phw.nhs.wales/howareyoudoing)**

