Public attitudes to Coronavirus

May summary

Public attitudes team, COVID modelling and analysis hub

June 2020

Scottish Government
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Contents

Introduction

This report includes some high level findings from recent polling work on public attitudes to the Coronavirus pandemic in Scotland. A report covering earlier survey work was published on May 8th 2020, and can be found here.

As with the previous report, it is not intended to provide comprehensive analysis of the large amount of polling information available, but rather to draw together findings on some key indicators. The report contains brief descriptions and explanations of the included measures.

The Coronavirus pandemic represents a rapidly changing situation, and the polling surveys have been developed at pace. Results should be interpreted in that context, recognising the limitations of the data sources, detailed below.

Data sources

The sources are weekly polling by Ipsos MORI and by YouGov of respondents in Scotland. Data from Ipsos MORI was initially collected as part of a multi-country survey on the Global Advisor platform, with the Scottish Government commissioning a Scotland-boost to the UK sample in this study. From May onwards, Ipsos MORI has continued to conduct weekly polling for the Scottish Government, via a separate online survey. The YouGov weekly survey also runs online and is a bespoke commission by Scottish Government. Further information about these sources can be found in Annex A.

Scottish Government receives weekly outputs from these sources, and this report contains results from 23rd April to 25th May, inclusive. Due to the evolving situation and responses to Coronavirus, some questions were not asked at all waves. The dates included in the charts denote the fieldwork dates from the wave of the survey that the data point relates to.

Throughout this report, the data source used is clearly denoted.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in the research methodologies used in this polling research. The sample sizes (see annex A for details) limit meaningful subgroup analysis and both surveys are based on non-probability research panels, which means representativeness is achieved using quotas. Furthermore, the nature of online research inherently excludes those who do not have internet access. These data sources nevertheless provide useful and timely information, as long as appropriate caveats are applied.

As each of the surveys has been conducted using a quota sample, rather than a random probability sample, statistical significance can only be used on an indicative basis. Differences over the survey waves are only highlighted if they are likely to be significant, however not all significant differences have been described.

Overall trends and key points

There are a number of trends observable across the polling data:

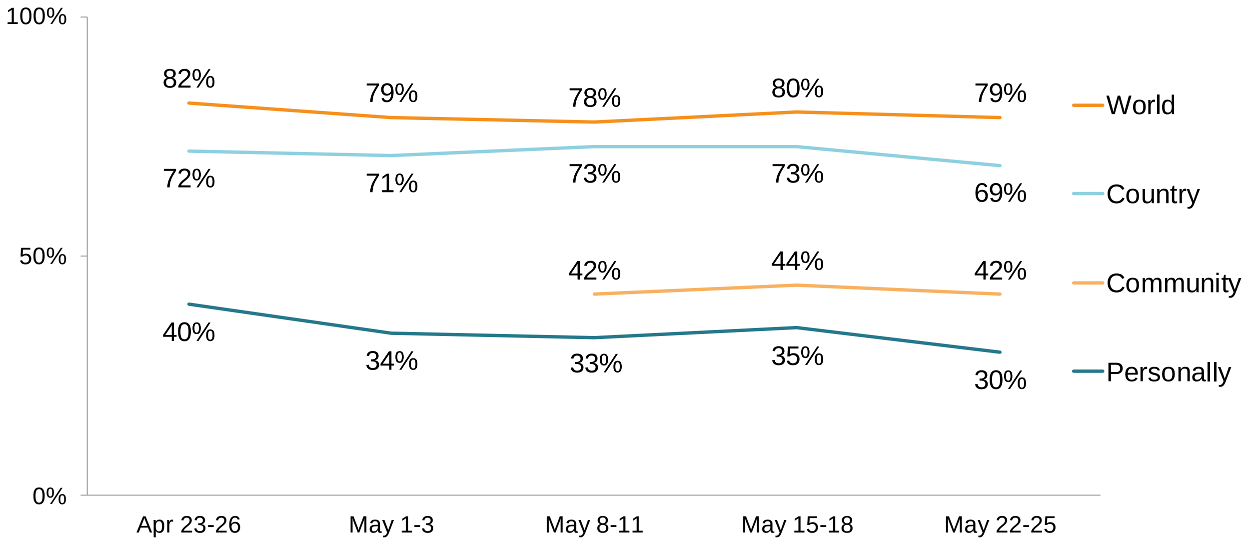
- Perceived personal threat from the virus has reduced over the month. Similarly, there has been a decline in the perceptions of the health risk of the virus.
- Across some measures, attitudes appear to have shifted towards the end of May. In particular, respondents appear to be slightly more optimistic about the future, and an increased proportion think that movement restrictions should be lifted and businesses reopened (although there is still a great deal of caution).
- Levels of anxiety remain relatively high and stable, although there has been a decrease in worry about Coronavirus specifically. There has also been a slight improvement in happiness levels.
- Claimed compliance with suppression measures was high and remained relatively stable in May, albeit with falls in some measures at the latest survey wave. A minority report wearing a face covering but this has increased since the start of May.
- The NHS and Scottish Government were consistently rated highly in terms of doing a good job to contain the virus in May.
- Around half of respondents in employment felt comfortable returning to work in the next month, whilst two thirds reported that they felt anxious about resuming normal activities.

1. Impact of Coronavirus

Threat perception

Respondents were asked what level of threat they thought Coronavirus posed to a range of dimensions of life. As shown in Figure 1, the greatest threat was perceived to be to 'the world', followed by 'threat to country' and 'threat to your community'. Personal threat was perceived to be the lowest and has fallen since the end of April.

Figure 1: Proportion who consider there to be a very high/high threat from Coronavirus



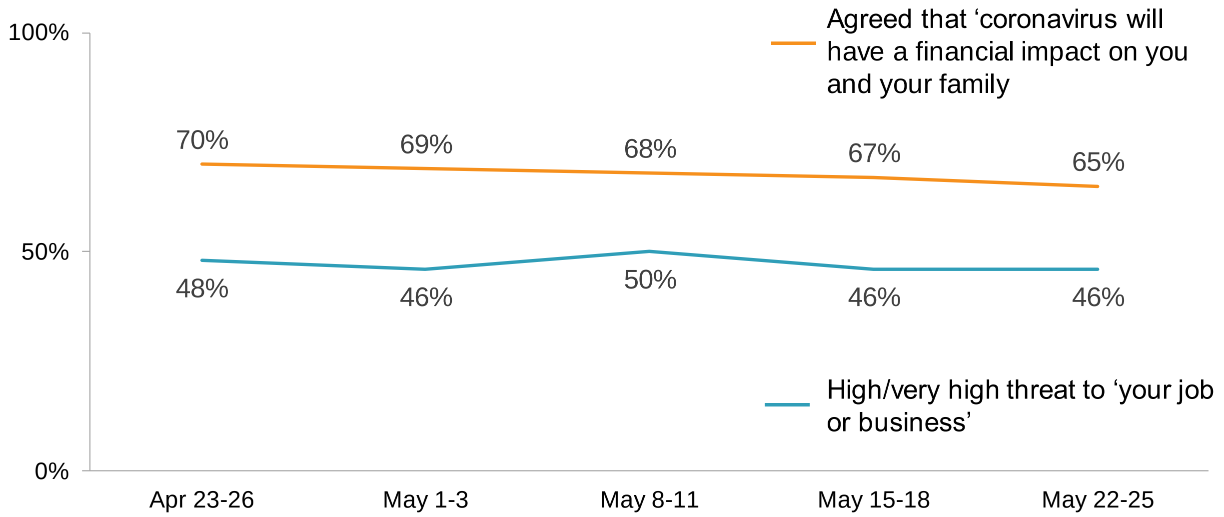
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=500-684)

Financial impact

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement about the financial impact of Coronavirus, and the perceived level of threat to their job or business. As shown in Figure 2, just under two thirds agreed that there will be financial impact on them and their family. This has fallen since the middle of April, when, as previously reported, 75% agreed there would be a financial impact[1]. Just under half of those in employment perceived a threat to their job or business, and this has remained relatively stable through the month.

[1] https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-attitudes-coronavirus-april-summary/pages/6/ Figure 2

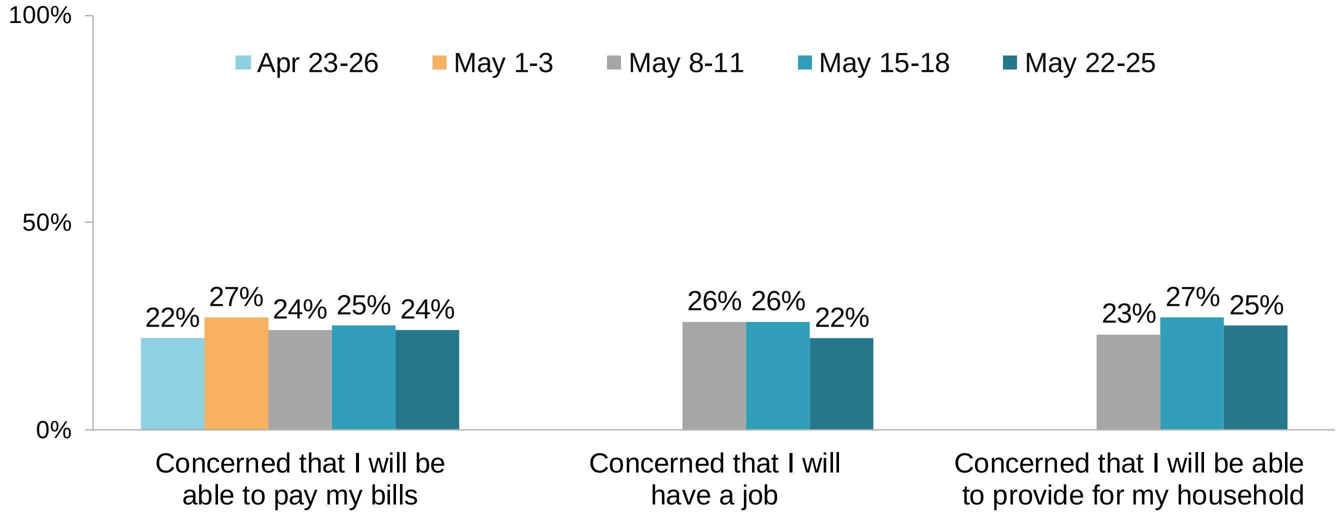
Figure 2: Proportion who agreed/agreed strongly or answered high/very high to the statements shown



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base: all respondents (n=500-684), those in employment (n= 301-444).

Respondents were also asked how concerned they were about the impact of Coronavirus on their household finances. As shown in Figure 3, around a quarter of respondents were 'extremely' or 'very' concerned about being able to pay their bills or provide for their household, while just over a fifth were concerned about having a job. These measures have remained relatively stable throughout May.

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents who were very/extremely concerned with the statements shown

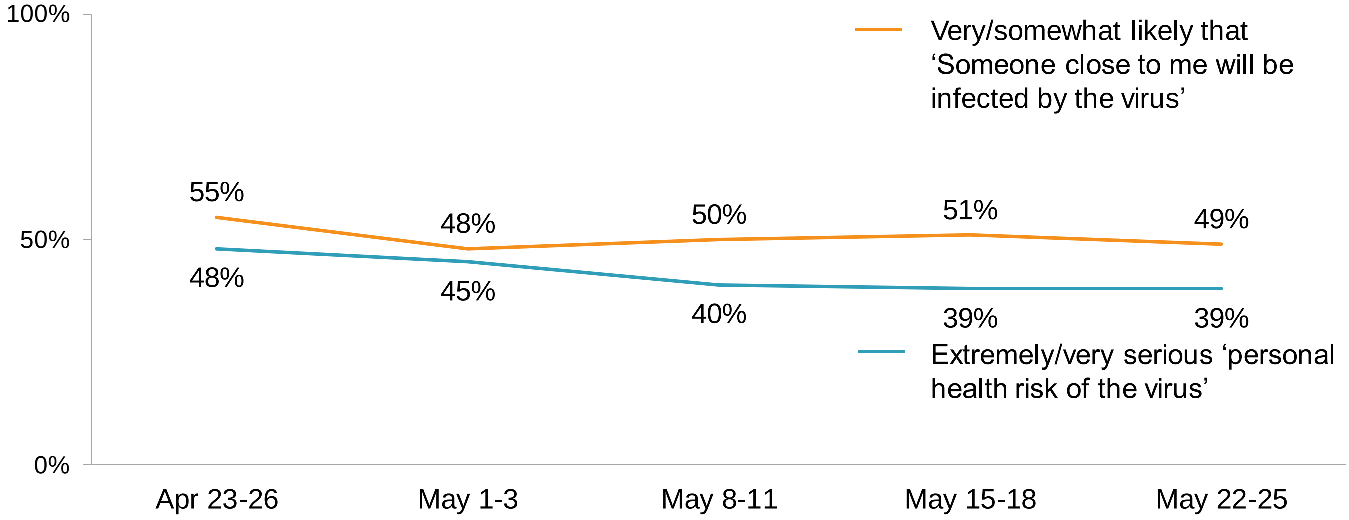


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=500-684)

Health impacts

To understand the perceived health risk of Coronavirus, respondents were asked how serious they thought catching the virus would be for their health. As shown in Figure 4, the proportion who considered it an extremely or very serious risk fell between the end of April and the end of May. Respondents were also asked whether they thought someone close to them would become infected, and around half thought this was very or somewhat likely, a slight decrease since the end of April.

Figure 4: Proportion who answered extremely/very serious risk or very/somewhat likely to the statements shown

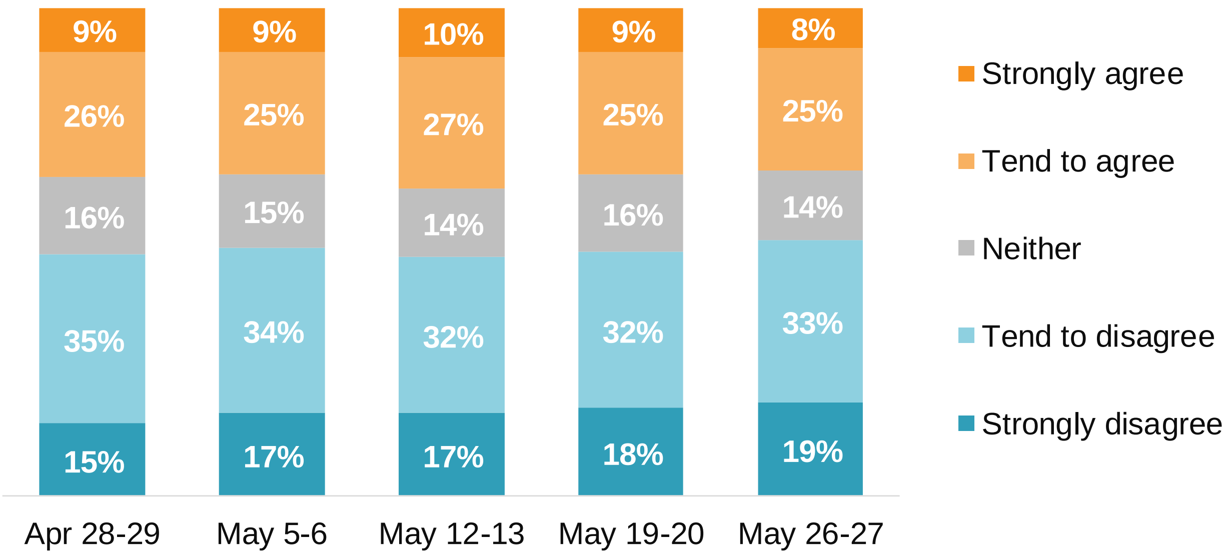


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=500-684)

To understand the potential impact on non-COVID related health issues, respondents were asked if they would avoid going to a hospital or GP practice if they had a medical concern unrelated to Coronavirus. As shown in Figure 5, in the most recent survey wave a third agreed that they would avoid a hospital or GP practice. This has remained relatively stable since the end of April.

Although not shown on the chart, as it is outside the reporting period, this question was first asked April 21-22 when 45% agreed and 41% disagreed.

Figure 5: Proportions who agreed/disagreed that 'I would avoid going to a hospital or GP practice at the moment even if I had an immediate medical concern (not related to Coronavirus)'



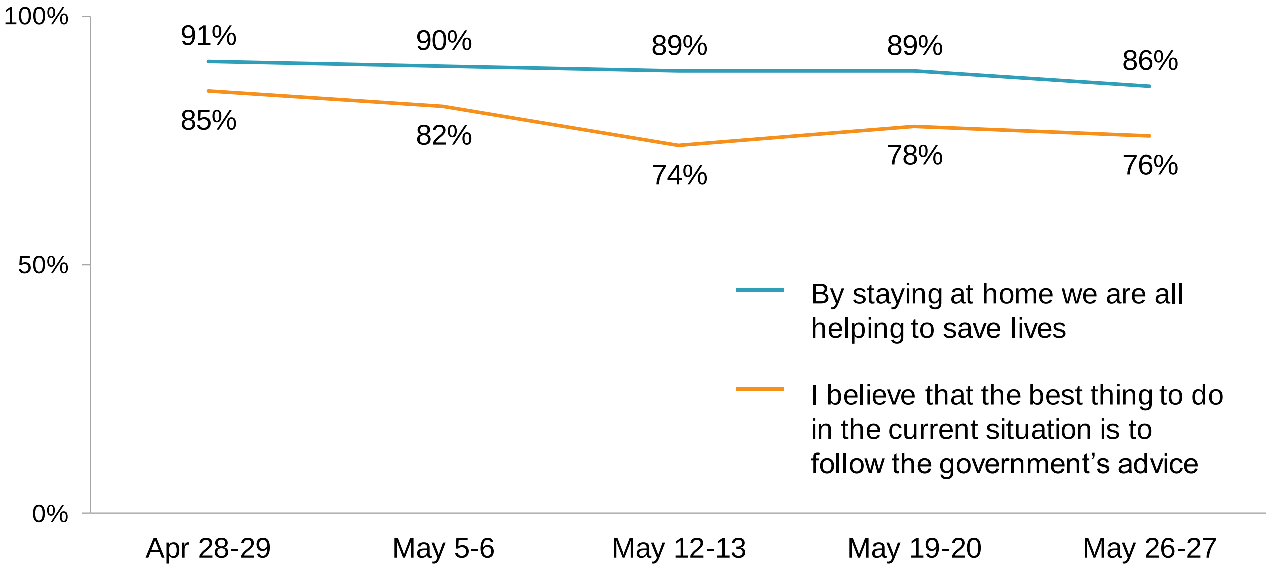
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

2. Compliance

Views on guidance

Respondents were asked about their views on government guidance and advice. As shown in Figure 6, the vast majority of respondents agreed that ‘by staying at home we are all helping to save lives’, and this has remained relatively stable since the end of April. There was also strong agreement with the statement ‘I believe the best thing to do in the current situation is to follow the government’s advice’ although since the end of April there has been a fall in the proportion agreeing with this.

Figure 6: Proportion who agreed/agreed strongly with each statement



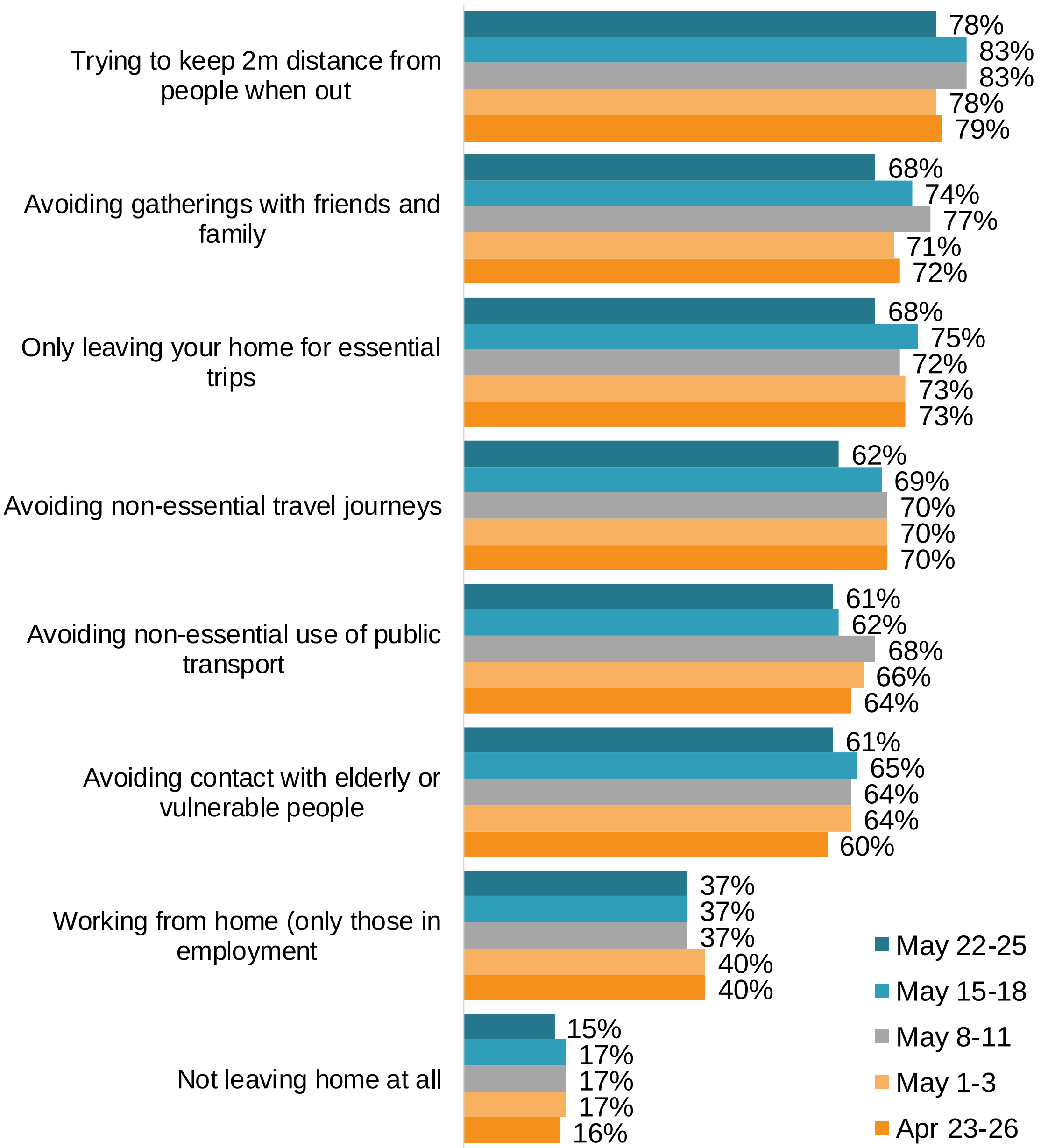
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Levels of compliance

Respondents were asked which social distancing guidelines they were following from a list provided. As shown in Figure 7, the majority of respondents claimed to be following each of the options shown about avoiding contact, gatherings and non-essential travel or trips. However, the proportions who were trying to keep 2 metres distance when out, avoiding gatherings with friends and family, avoiding non-essential travel and only leaving home for essential trips have fallen in the most recent survey wave.

Of those who were employed, just under two fifths said they were working from home.

Figure 7: Proportions claiming to follow each of the social distancing measures



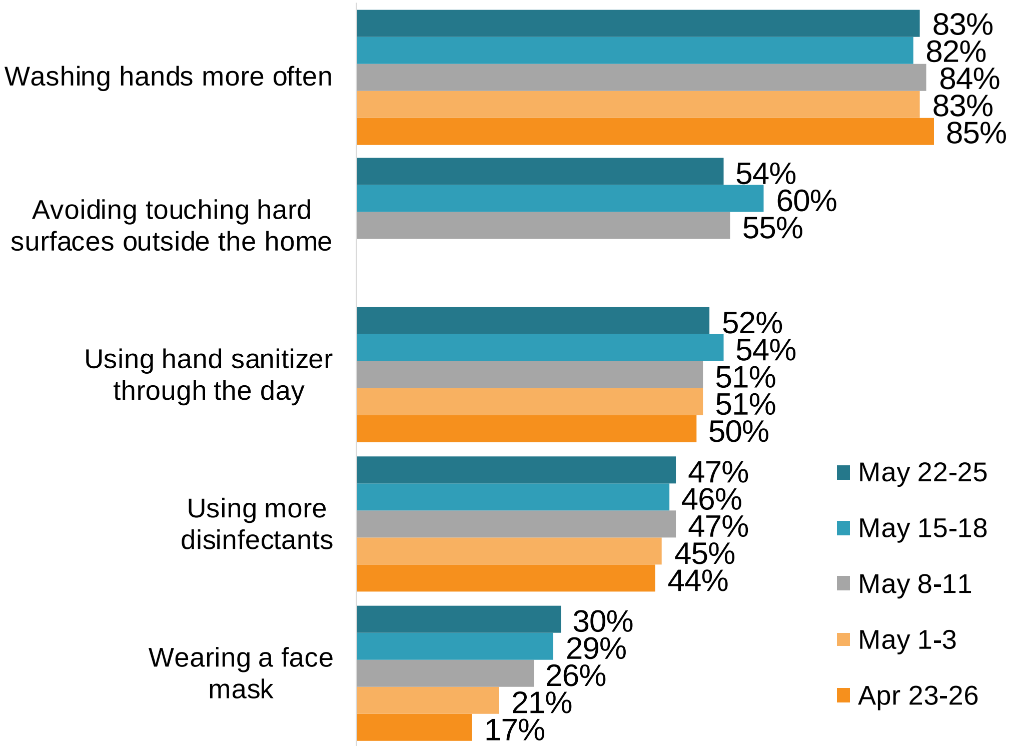
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=500-684)

Personal protective actions

Respondents were also asked which personal hygiene actions they had taken to protect themselves from Coronavirus. As shown in Figure 8, the vast majority of respondents reported washing their hands more often, which has remained relatively stable over the last month. Around half were also avoiding touching hard surfaces outside the home, using hand sanitiser throughout the day and using more disinfectants.

While the proportion reporting wearing a face-mask is relatively low, this has increased since the end of April.

Figure 8: Proportions claiming to take each action to protect themselves from Coronavirus



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base (n=500-684)

Testing

Respondents were asked at two surveys waves whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about testing, tracing and isolation. As shown in Table 1, the vast majority of respondents agreed with each statement.

Table 1: Proportion who agreed or agreed strongly with each statement about testing

Statements	% who agreed/ agreed strongly
I would be willing to isolate for 14 days if someone I had come into contact with had Coronavirus symptoms	90%
I would be willing to undergo Coronavirus testing if asked to do this by the NHS	90%
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey May 12-13. Base (n=1007)	
As part of Scotland's testing process I would be happy to provide details of people I had been in contact with if I developed coronavirus symptoms	88%
If I had coronavirus symptoms, I would want to have a test if at all possible	88%
I understand the importance of testing to stop the spread of coronavirus	91%
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey May 19-20. Base (n=1037)	

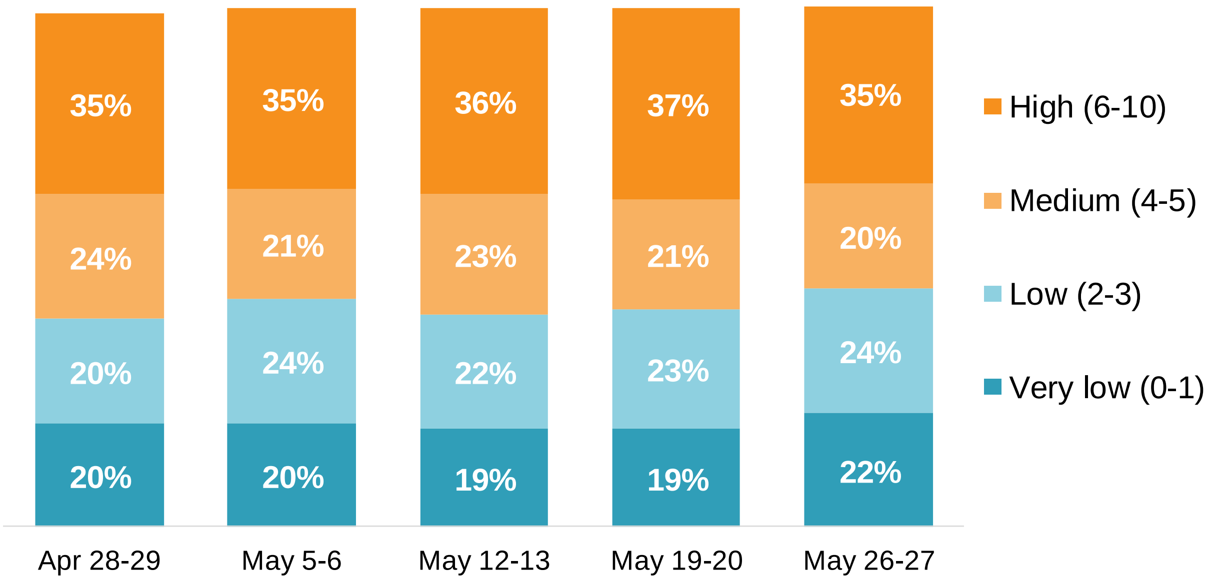
3. Wellbeing

Levels of anxiety and happiness

The YouGov survey included two of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) wellbeing questions[2] to measure levels of anxiety and happiness. Respondents were asked how anxious and how happy they felt 'yesterday', on a scale of 0 to 10.

As shown in Figure 9, anxiety levels have remained stable and relatively high since the end of April. However, as reported previously, anxiety levels at the end of March were much higher with 60% feeling highly anxious (score of 6-10)[3].

Figure 9: How anxious respondents felt yesterday on a scale of 0-10

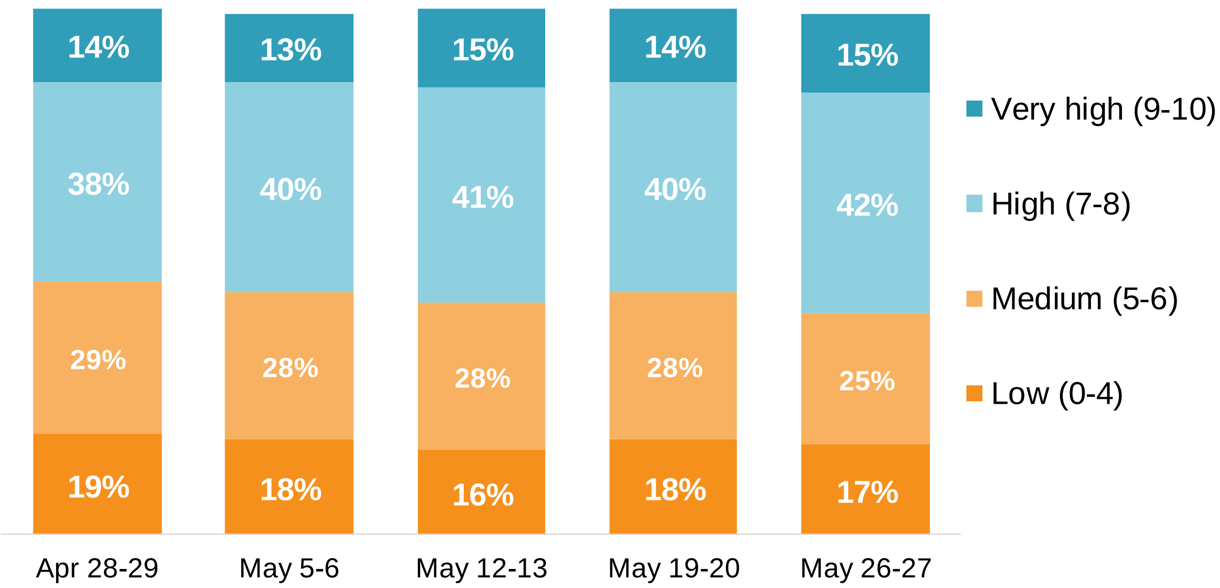


Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

As shown in Figure 10, the majority of respondents reported high or very high levels of happiness (score of 7-10), and this has increased slightly since the end of April. Just under one in five felt very low levels of happiness (score of 0-4), which has remained stable over the past month but was higher at the end of March (34%)[4].

[2] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/personalwellbeingsurveyuserguide
[3] https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-attitudes-coronavirus-april-summary/pages/8/ - Figure 8
[4] https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-attitudes-coronavirus-april-summary/pages/8/ - Figure 9

Figure 10: How happy respondents felt yesterday on a scale of 0-10



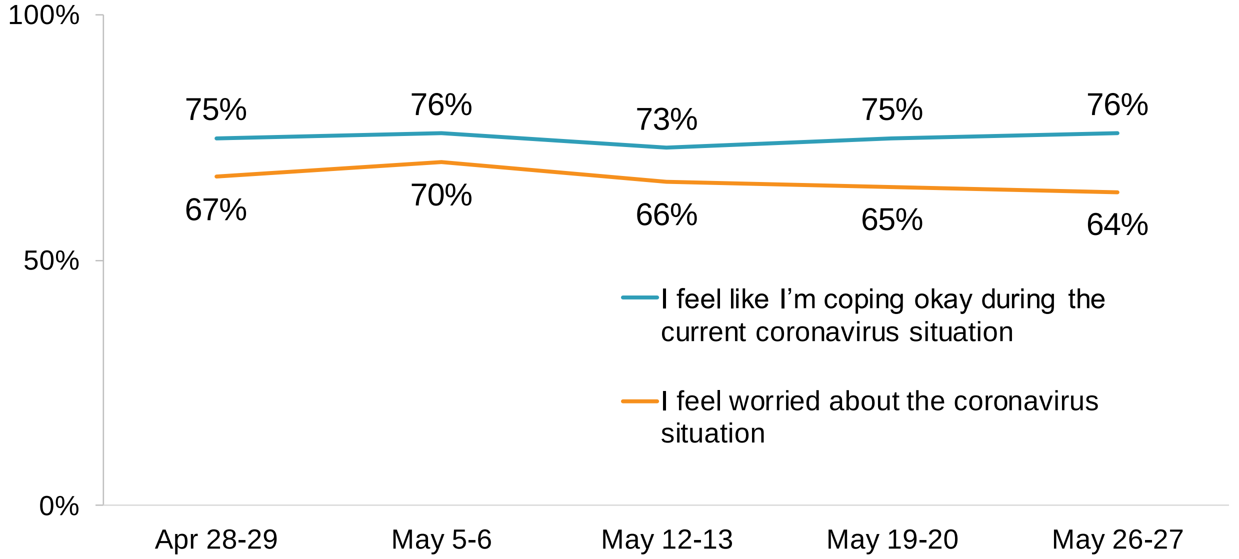
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Coping and worries

To understand worries in relation to Coronavirus, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements shown in Figure 11. The majority agreed that they felt worried about the Coronavirus situation and this has remained relatively stable since the end of April. However, as previously reported, the proportion who agreed with this statement at the end of March was higher at 80%[5]. Three quarters of respondents agreed that they were coping okay with the current coronavirus situation, which has remained stable throughout the month.

[5] https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-attitudes-coronavirus-april-summary/pages/8/ Figure 7

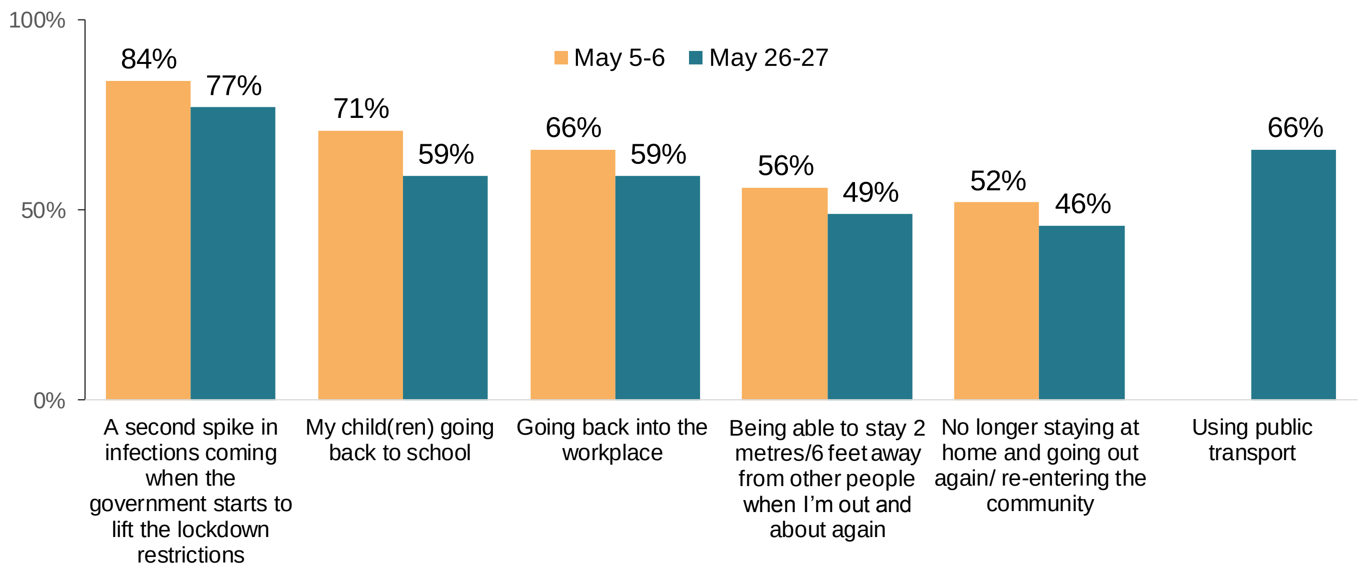
Figure 11: Proportion of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with each statement about coping and worry



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Respondents were asked at the start and end of May how worried they were about a range of issues in relation to restrictions being lifted. At the end of the month, respondents were most likely to be very or fairly worried about a second spike in infections, using public transport and going back to their place of work (among those working from home, furloughed or laid off). Parents were also likely to be worried about their children going back to school. However, the proportions worried about each concern fell between the survey waves.

Figure 12 Proportion who are very or fairly worried about each concern shown[6]



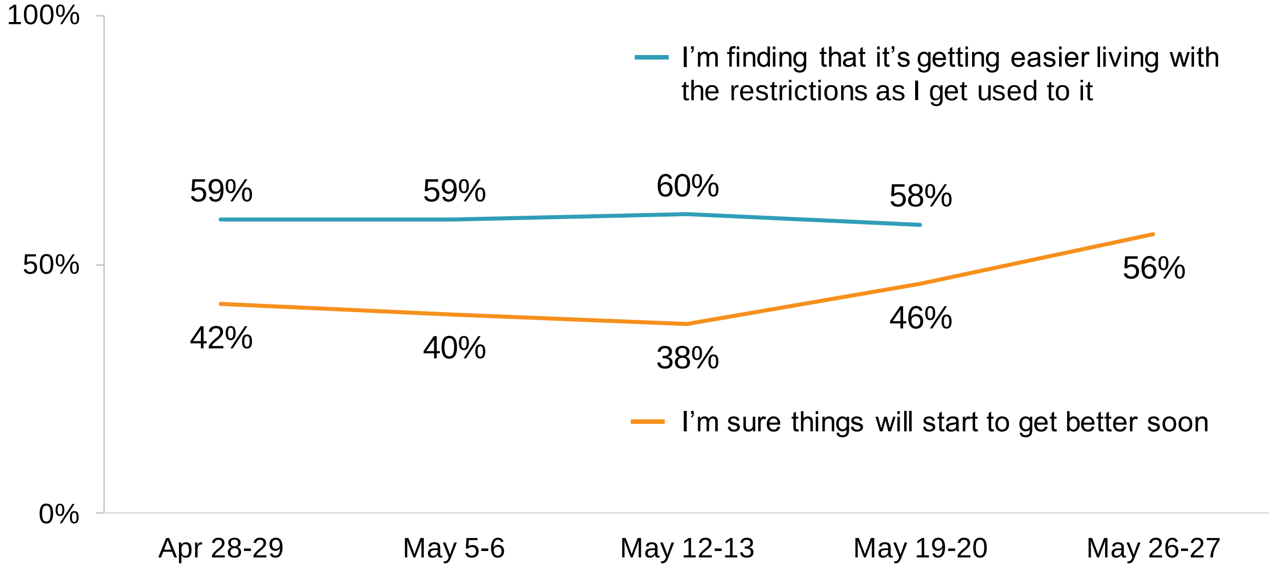
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1036)

[6] In the earlier wave, the statement 'going back into the workplace' included the following 'if I were asked to do so in the next 2 to 3 weeks'

Optimism

The majority agreed that they find it is getting easier living with restrictions as they get used to it, and this has remained stable since the end of April. In the most recent survey wave, over half of respondents agreed that things will start to get better soon, an increase since the middle of May.

Figure 13 Proportion of respondents who agreed/strongly agreed with each statement about the current restrictions[7]



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

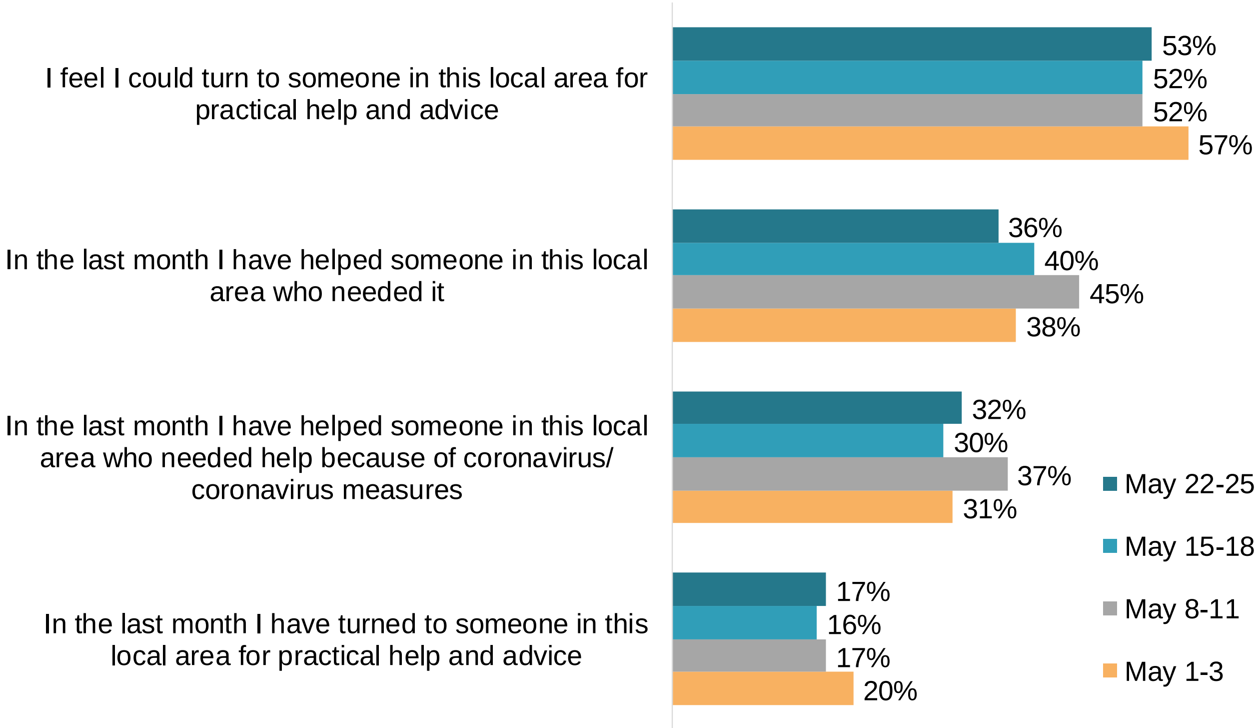
[7] The statement 'I'm finding that it's getting easier living with the restrictions as I get used to it' was not asked in the latest survey wave

4. Community support

Neighbourhood perceptions

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about help and advice in their local area. Around half agreed there was someone in the local area they could turn to for help and advice, and just over a third agreed they had provided help to someone locally who needed it. The proportions who had helped someone, either in general or because of Coronavirus, were highest in the second week of May (8th - 11th).

Figure 14: Proportion who agree strongly/tend to agree with each of the statements show

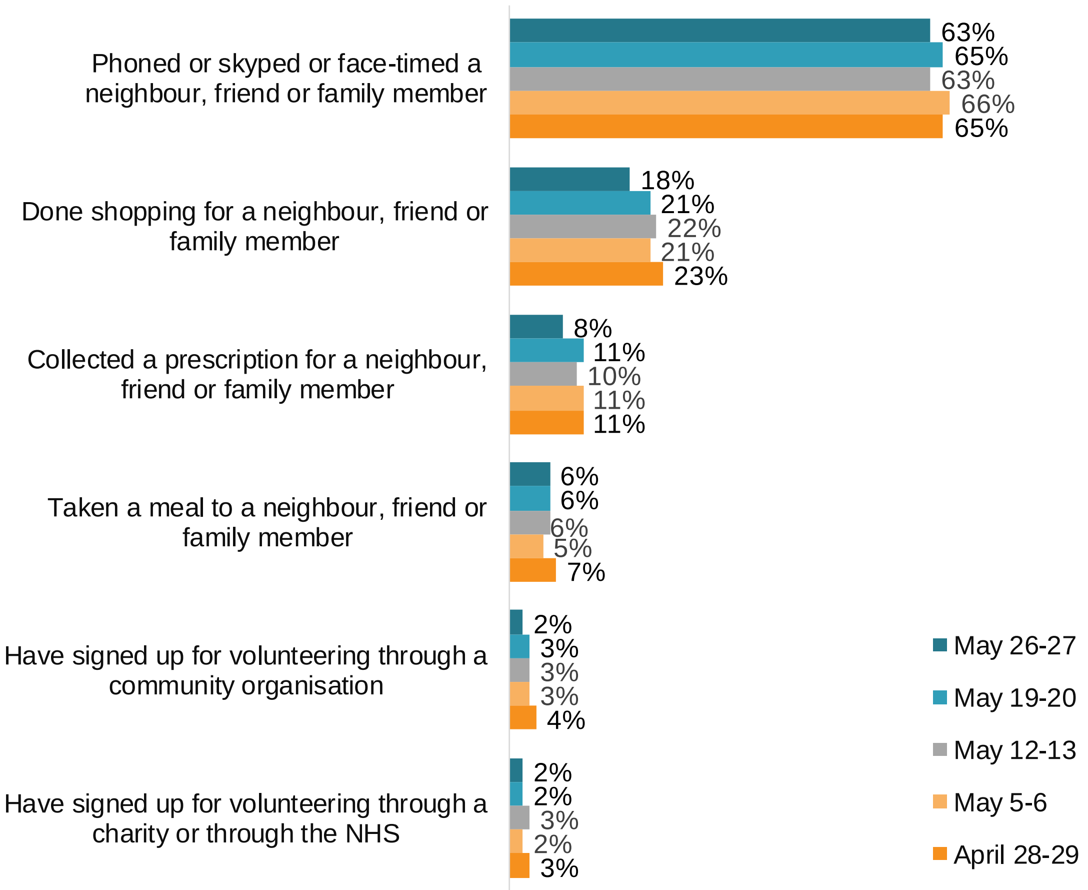


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=500-684)

Community activity

Respondents were shown a list of activities and asked to indicate those they had undertaken in the last week. Two-thirds had phoned/skyped and this has remained stable throughout the month. Just under one in five had done shopping for a neighbour, friend or family member, a small decrease since the end of April. A small proportion had signed up to formal volunteering activities, such as through a community organisation, a charity or the NHS.

Figure 15: Proportion who had done each of the activities shown in the last week



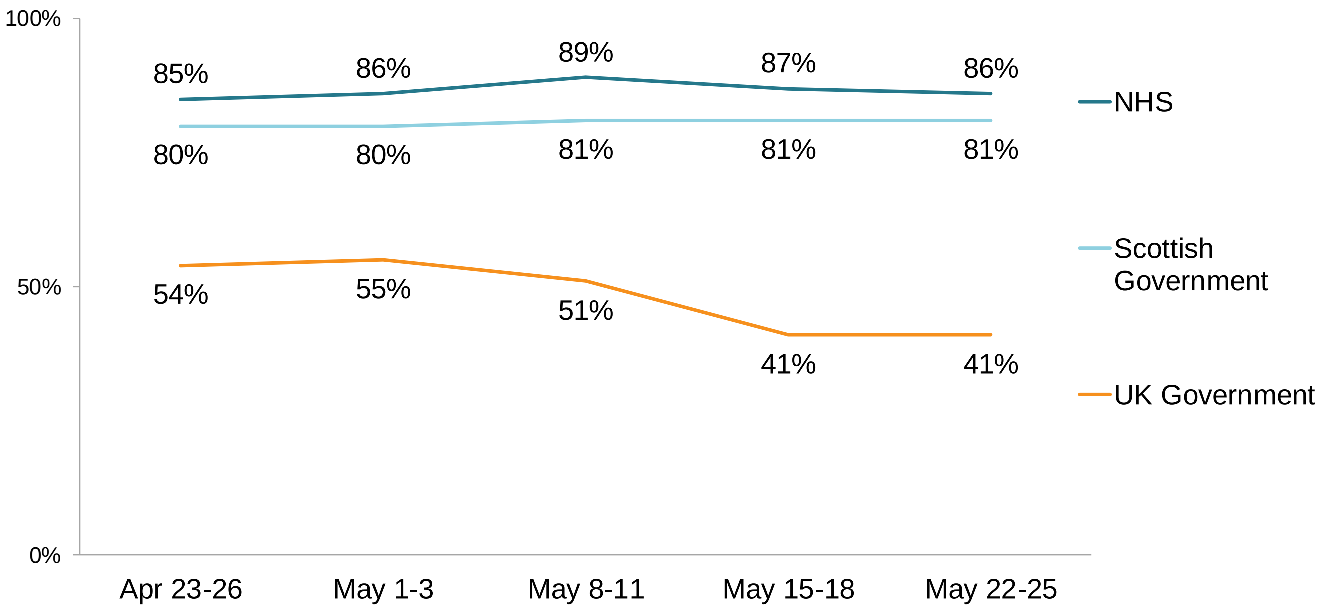
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

5. Views on government and information sources

Rating of government

Respondents were asked how good or poor a job various institutions were doing to contain the spread of the virus. Figure 16 below shows that respondents have been consistent in their high rating of the NHS. Scottish respondents continue to rate the Scottish Government more highly than the UK Government, with the rating of the latter falling towards from the middle of the month.

Figure 16: Proportion who rate each as doing a good/very good job to contain the spread of Coronavirus

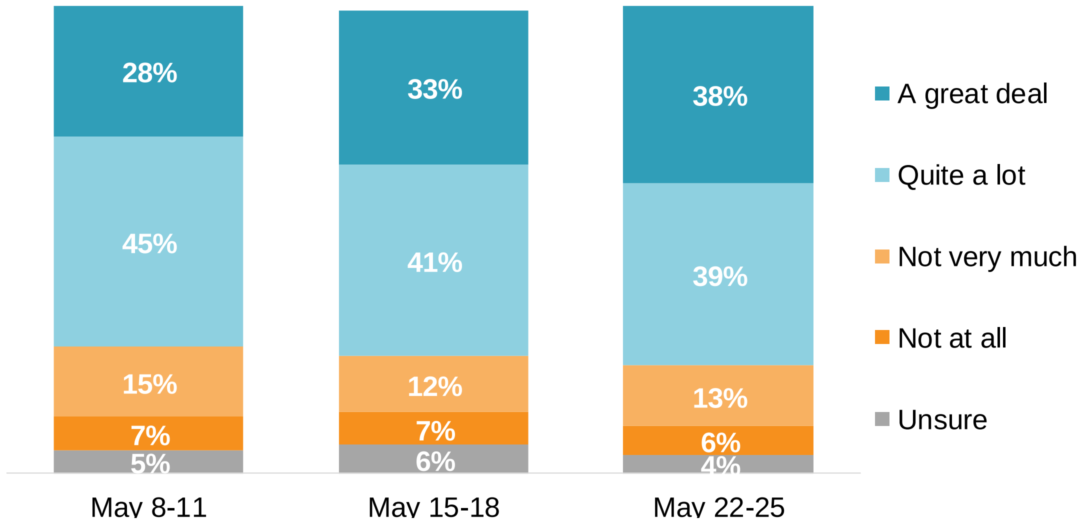


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=500-684)

Trust in Scottish Government

Respondents were asked to what extent they trust the Scottish Government to work in Scotland's best interests during the Coronavirus pandemic. The vast majority have either 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of trust in Scottish Government. The proportion who have 'a great deal' of trust increased across the three survey waves.

Figure 17. Whether respondents trust Scottish Government to work in Scotland's best interests during the Coronavirus pandemic

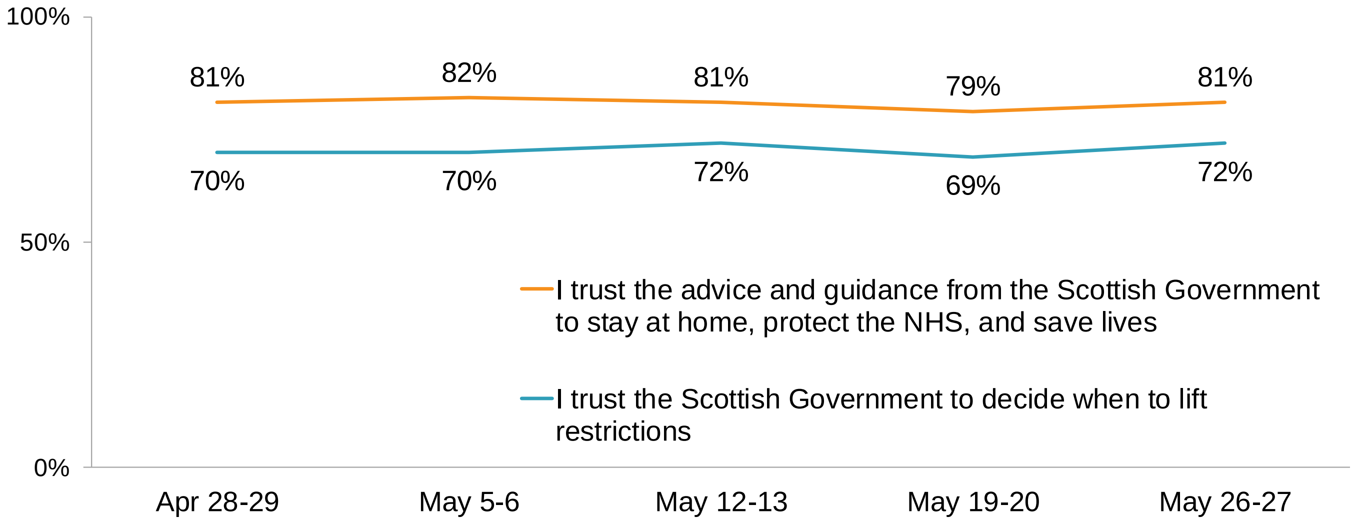


Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=500)

Trust in Scottish Government advice and guidance

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they trust the advice from Scottish Government and trust the Scottish Government to decide when to lift restrictions. The majority agreed with both of these statements and this has remained relatively stable in recent weeks.

Figure 18: Proportions who agreed/strongly agreed with the two statements shown

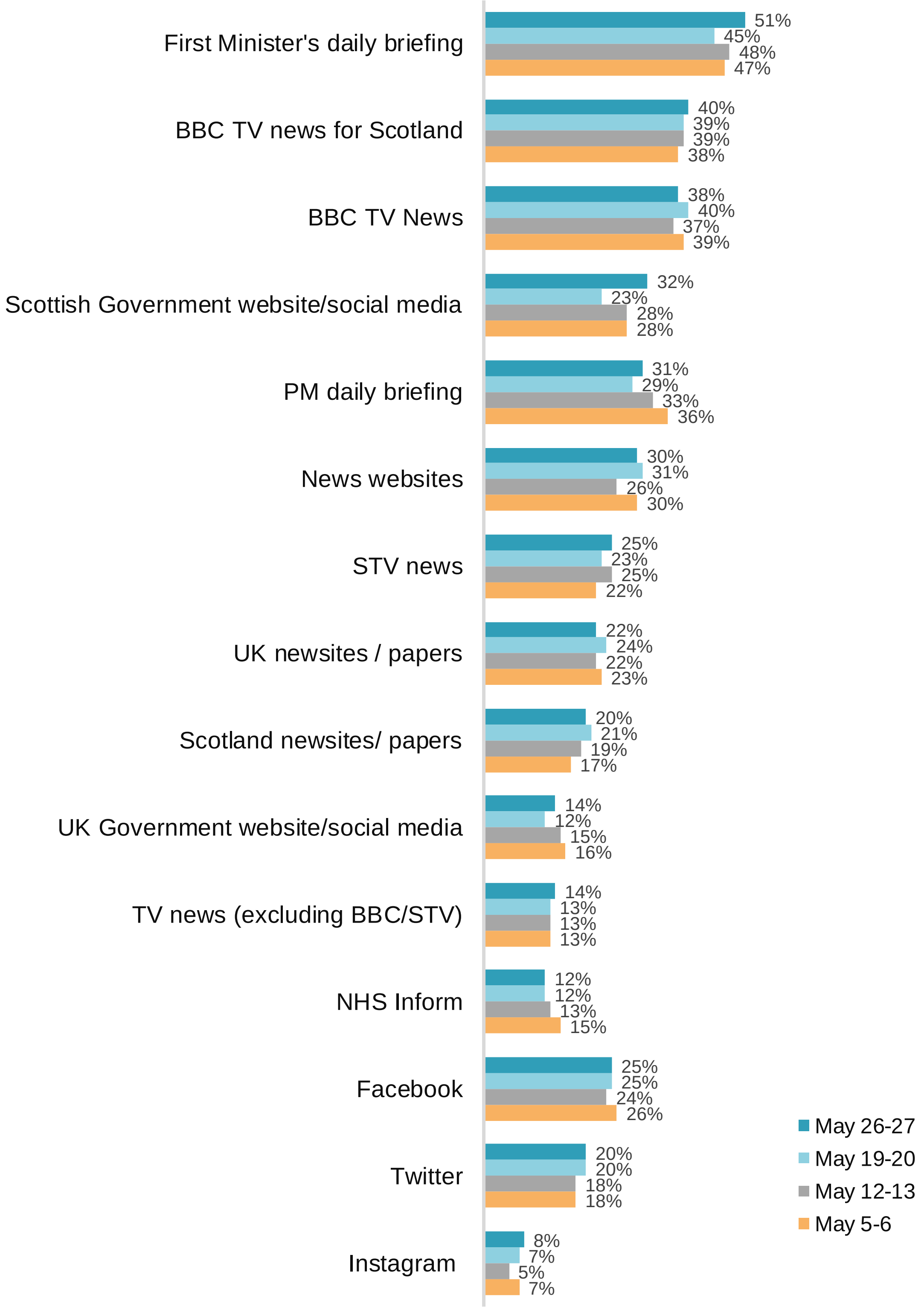


Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Sources of information

Respondents were shown a list of information sources (see figure 19) and asked which they use regularly i.e. at least three times a week. The most commonly used sources were the First Minister's daily briefing and BBC TV News.

Figure 19: Proportion using each information source regularly to access information on coronavirus



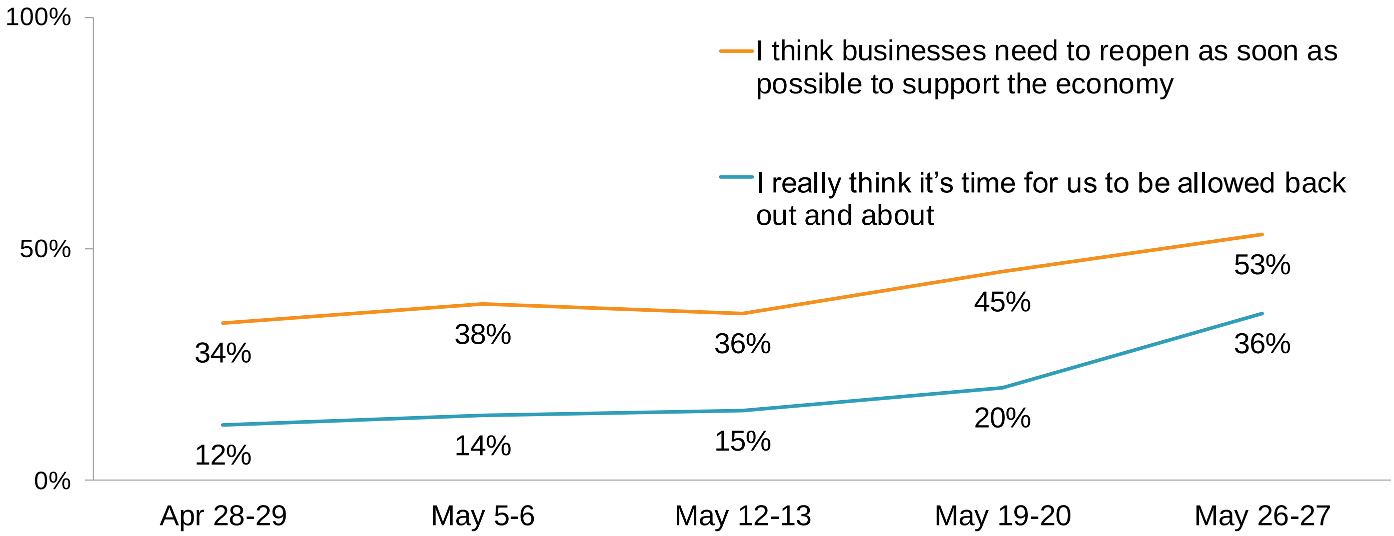
Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

6. Looking forward

Lifting restrictions

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with two statements about lifting restrictions. Over the past three survey waves, there has been an increase in the proportions agreeing with each statement. In the most recent wave, over half agreed that businesses need to reopen as soon as possible, however 22% disagreed and 24% felt neutral. Just over a third agreed that 'it's time for us to be allowed back out and about', 37% disagreed and 27% felt neutral.

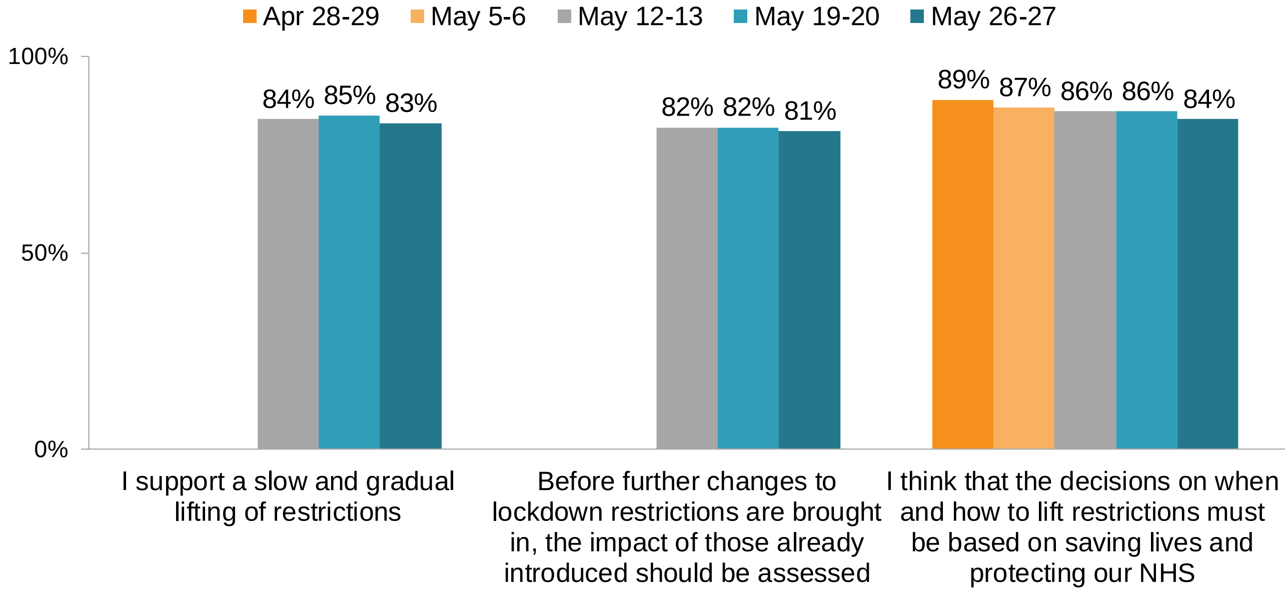
Figure 20: Proportions who agreed/agreed strongly with the two statements shown about lifting restrictions



Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with three statements about how to decide when to lift restrictions. The vast majority of respondents agreed with each statements shown. However, the proportion who agreed that decisions on lifting restrictions must be based on saving lives and protecting our NHS (third statement) has fallen slightly since the end of April.

Figure 21: Proportions who agreed/agreed strongly with each statement about lifting restrictions

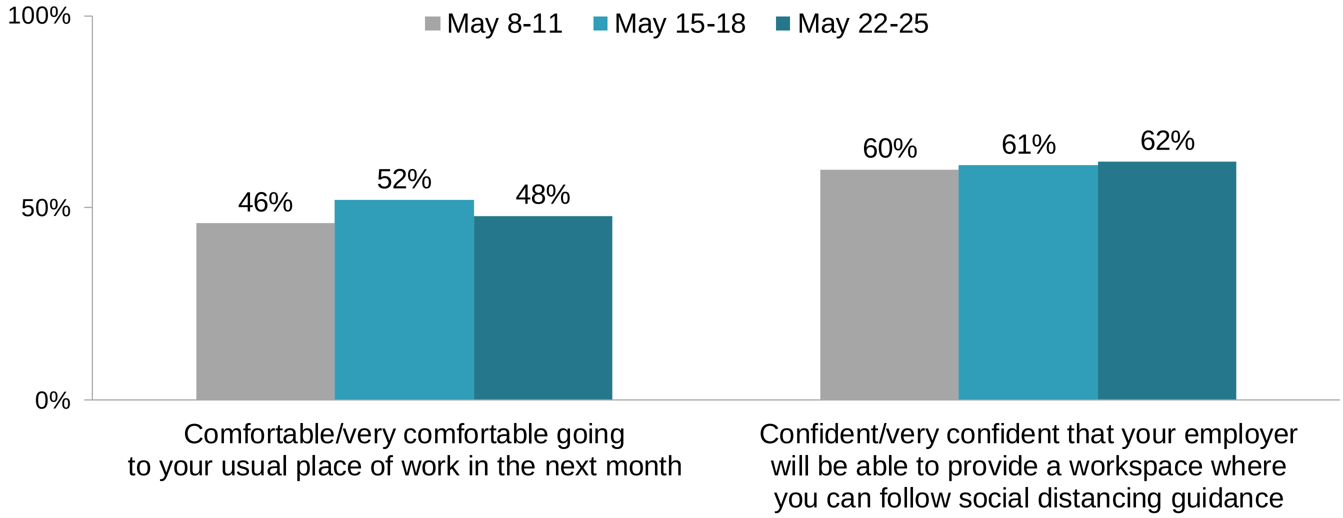


Source: YouGov weekly Scotland survey. Base (n=1004-1037)

Returning to work

Respondents in employment were asked whether they felt comfortable returning to their place of work, and whether they were confident that their employer could provide a workspace where social distancing guidance could be followed[8]. Around half felt comfortable returning to their place of work in the next month, and a higher proportion were confident that a safe working environment could be provided.

Figure 22: Proportions who felt comfortable/very comfortable or confident/very confident in the statements shown about employment



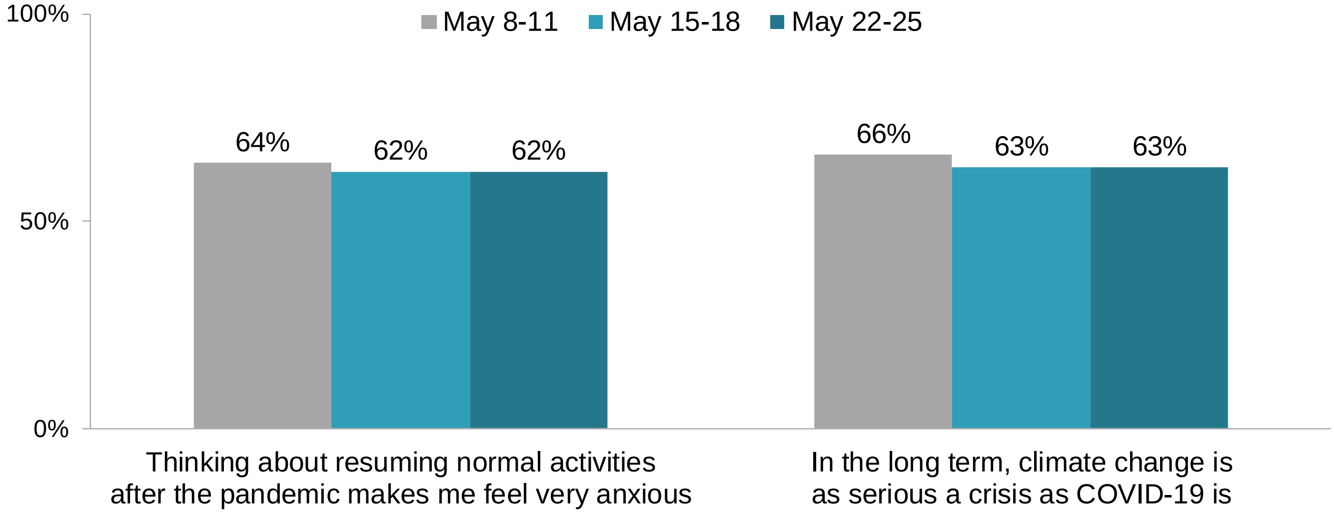
Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Base: those in employment (n= 301-444), excluding self-employed (n= 267-281)

[8] The latter question was not asked to those who were self-employed

Returning to normal

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with two statements about the future. Over the past three survey waves, just under two thirds agreed that they felt anxious about resuming normal activities after the pandemic. Similar proportions also agreed that, in the long term, climate change is as serious as COVID-19

Figure 23: Proportions who agreed/strongly agreed with the statements shown about the future



Source: Ipsos MORI, Scotland data. Scottish base (n=500)

Further information

The data sources used in this report are ongoing, and Scottish Government will publish another similar report in future. This next report will contain findings from June and draw out any differences between the lockdown and recovery periods.

Annex A: Sample sizes

The Ipsos MORI sample is broadly representative of the adult population aged 16-74. Data is weighted to reflect the age and gender profile of the Scottish population aged 16-74. Waves 10 and 11 were run as boosts on the Ipsos MORI Global Advisor survey. The sample size for these waves also includes respondents living in Scotland from the UK sample of that survey. From Wave 12 onwards, a separate survey of 500 people in Scotland was run by Ipsos MORI Scotland, though a number of questions continue to mirror questions asked globally.

YouGov results are based on a sample of c.1,000 adults 18+ across Scotland at each wave. YouGov apply weighting to the data to match the population profile to adjust for any over/under representations and to maximise consistency from wave to wave. Parameters used include age, gender, social class, region and level of education.

Table 2: Fieldwork information

Name	Sample size	Age group	Field dates
Ipsos MORI Global Advisor	Wave 10 – 659 Wave 11 – 684 Wave 12 – 500 Wave 13 – 500 Wave 14 – 500	16-74	Wave 10 – 26th – 28th April Wave 11 – 1st – 3rd May Wave 12 – 8th – 11th May Wave 13 – 15th – 18th May Wave 14 – 22nd – 25th May
YouGov weekly survey	Wave 6 – 1011 Wave 7 – 1036 Wave 8 – 1007 Wave 9 – 1037 Wave 10 – 1004	18+	Wave 6: 28th - 29th April Wave 7: 5th - 6th May Wave 8: 12th - 13th May Wave 9: 19th - 20th May Wave 10: 26th – 27th May

Fieldwork dates cover the period where the bulk of the survey fieldwork was completed.

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