

This publication will be available in accessible HTML on the [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot) website.

Scottish Government Shielding Division

COVID-19 Shielding Survey January 2021

February 2021

Scottish Government Shielding Division COVID-19 Shielding Survey January 2021

User researchers: Nicola Hancock, Fiona Gray, Grant
Anderson

Contents

Background	5
Limitations of this research	5
Eligibility to participate	6
Key Findings	7
Changing Behaviours	8
Left home for any reason	8
Visited shops	9
Met people outside of your household or extended household	9
Been on public transport	10
Gone to work if you can't work from home	10
Gone to school, childcare or college	11
Vaccination	11
Whether people plan to get vaccinated when it is offered to them	11
Why respondents were unsure about getting the vaccine	12
Why respondents did not want to get the vaccine	13
Festive household bubbles	13
Planning to form festive household bubbles	14
Following Guidance	15
Awareness of additional guidance	15
Where respondents had heard about the additional guidance	16
Clarity of additional guidance	16
Whether people are following the additional guidance	17
What aspects of additional guidance are being followed	17
Deciding which activities are safe	18
Do respondents feel confident when deciding which activities are safe?	18
Trusted sources of information for deciding which activities are safe	19
Communications	19
What communications respondents have received since July 2020	20
Helpfulness of letters and leaflets	20
Feedback on volume of communication about shielding	20
Service Feedback	21
Text messaging alert service	21
Respondents signed up to text messaging alert service	21
Helpfulness of the text messaging alert service	21

Reasons why people had not signed up for text messages	22
Local Authority support	22
Respondents who asked their local authority for support	22
What support people were asking for from their local authority	23
Helpfulness of local authority support	24
Third sector support	24
Respondents who asked a third sector organisation for support	24
What support people were asking for from third sector organisations	25
Helpfulness of third sector organisation support	26
Priority supermarket shopping	26
Respondents signed up for priority supermarket shopping	26
Helpfulness of priority supermarket shopping service	27
Free supply of Vitamin D	27
Respondents who were aware of the Vitamin D offer	27
Respondents who took up the free supply of Vitamin D	27
Why respondents took up the Vitamin D offer	28
Why respondents didn't take up the Vitamin D offer	29
Workplace risk assessments	30
Returned to the workplace since July 2020	30
Workplace risk assessment using COVID-age calculator with employer	30
Helpfulness of workplace risk assessment tool (COVID-age calculator)	30
Feeling safe returning to work after workplace risk assessment	31
Level 4 fit note	31
Use of Chief Medical Officer fit note to be absent from work	31
Employer acceptance of fit note to be absent from work	31
Gaps in support and access	31
What people are struggling to access at the moment	32
Impact of Pausing Shielding.....	33
Quality of life	33
Mental health	34
The condition(s) for which they were shielding	34
The quality of care they receive	35
Relationship with their partner	35
Relationship with their children	36
Relationship with other friends and family	36
Employment	37

Education	38
Financial situation	38
Eating habits	39
How much physical activity they do	39
Alcohol consumption	40
Use of tobacco	40
Appendix.....	42
Respondent profiles	42

Background

An online survey was conducted with users of the Scottish Government's COVID-19 'Shielding' service for clinically high risk people. This was defined as people who had previously received a letter from the Chief Medical Officer advising them to shield.

The survey explored;

- Awareness of and compliance with the guidance for those at higher risk
- How behaviours have changed since shielding stopped
- If support services are meeting user needs
- Expectations on vaccination from people who are at higher risk

The purpose of this work is to;

- Embed a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of shielding within the teams working on delivering support and information to them.
- Uncover insights that can inform service and policy design from a user centred perspective in a fast-paced environment.

The survey went live on **21 December 2020** and closed on **11 January 2021**, it had **4590** responses.

Important changes to the context of shielding while the survey was live:

- A few days after the survey was published, Scotland-wide guidance was updated in advance of the Christmas holidays, advising that the whole country would go into Level 4 restrictions from the 26th of December.
- Due to rapidly rising COVID-19 case numbers, mainland Scotland returned to full lockdown on 5th January 2021 and everyone on the shielding list was advised not to go to work.

Therefore, individual's circumstances were different depending on when they completed the survey. This will impact the results for some questions.

Limitations of this research

This survey is **not** statistically representative of the wider shielding population, but the sample gives a good indication of the behaviours and attitudes of the group. A demographic breakdown of participants (including comparison with the shielding population) can be found in the [Respondents Profile page in the appendix](#).

Respondents were not required to answer any question except the initial screening one. This explains why the total number of responses fluctuates throughout the survey as they could skip past questions they did not want to answer.

Participants were recruited via:

- An email sent to individuals signed up to the *Shielding Research Participant List*, who opted in to being contacted after taking part in a Public Health Scotland survey in May 2020 – these participants are generally very active and engaged (**2214** responses)
- Stakeholder organisations, such as charities and local authorities, encouraging them to take part via their existing networks (**2376** responses)

We recognise that people with low digital skills or no internet access would not be able to participate. We provided an offline option for returning the survey, where it could be completed on paper and submitted with the support of third sector partners. However we didn't receive any submissions through this route.

Eligibility to participate

At the start of the survey, we asked participants to tell us whether they had received a letter from Scotland's Chief Medical Officer advising them to follow shielding guidance. **9%** of respondents answered no and were not permitted to complete the survey. This suggests that many still identify with the term 'shielding' despite not technically being 'on the list'.

Key Findings

1. **86% of respondents planned to get the vaccine when it was offered to them.**

Of the remaining responses, **11%** of participants were undecided and **3%** did not want the vaccine. The top three reasons people gave for being undecided about the vaccine were:

- I am worried about the side effects (**62%**)
 - I wouldn't be confident it had been tested on people with my health condition (**52%**)
 - I would like to wait until others have had it first (**30%**)
-

2. **55% of respondents returning to work didn't feel safe about this, despite a workplace risk assessment.**

- **29%** of respondents had returned to their place of work since July 2020.
 - **66%** of them had done a workplace risk assessment using the COVID-age calculator, but more than half (**55%**) still did not feel safe about returning to work after this assessment.
 - Elsewhere in the survey, we asked respondents whether there was anything they were currently struggling to access. Many responses were from people (especially key workers) highlighting their challenges with returning to work once shielding had paused, feeling unsafe and unsupported by their employers.
-

3. **96% of respondents were aware of the additional guidance for those at higher risk.**

Direct communications were the most effective way for respondents to find out about the additional guidance. The majority had heard about it from:

- A letter from the Chief Medical Officer (**85%**)
- In a text from the Shielding text message alert service (**74%**)

88% of respondents found the additional guidance either very or quite clear.

66% of respondents follow the additional guidance completely.

4. **62% of respondents feel confident when deciding which activities are safe.**

Respondents told us their trusted sources of information for deciding which activities are safe were:

- Scottish Government (**83%**)
- Public Health Scotland (**56%**)
- Specialist healthcare professionals (**34%**)
- Their GP (**33%**)

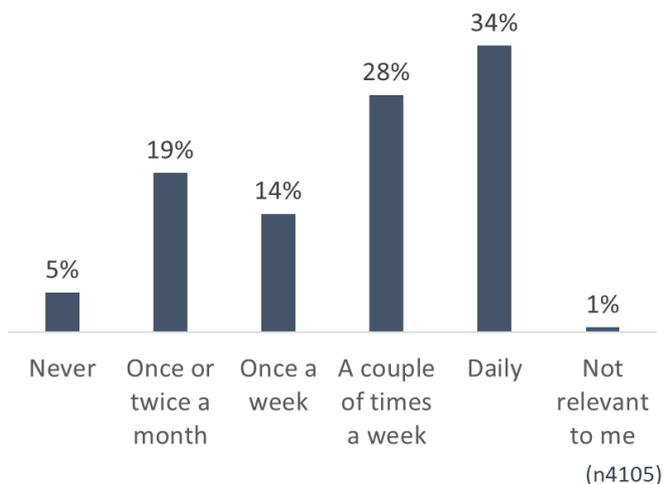
Changing Behaviours

In Scotland, people were advised to stop shielding at the end of July 2020. However, the Shielding Division in Scottish Government has continued to provide support services, information and guidance.

Since July, while **34%** have left their home on a daily basis, many people have chosen not to return to day-to-day activities. **20%** have never visited shops, **33%** have never met people outside of their household, and **84%** have never been on public transport. This may be due to compliance with the guidance or personal choice. The guidance has changed multiple times since July and is different in local areas depending on current infection rates, so it's not possible to differentiate.

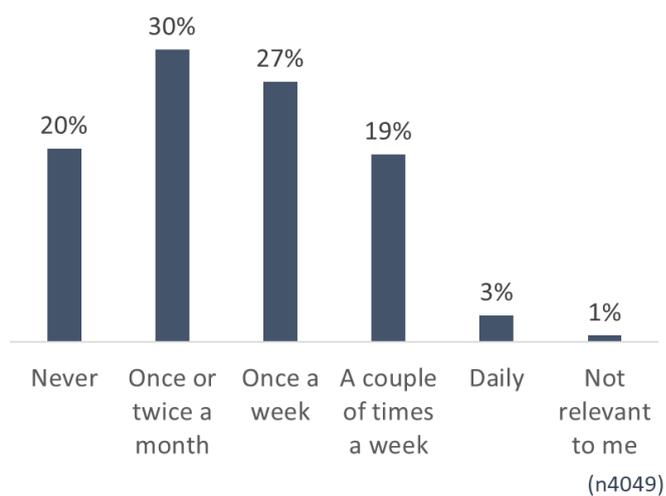
We asked participants how often they had done the following activities since shielding ended in July 2020:

Left home for any reason



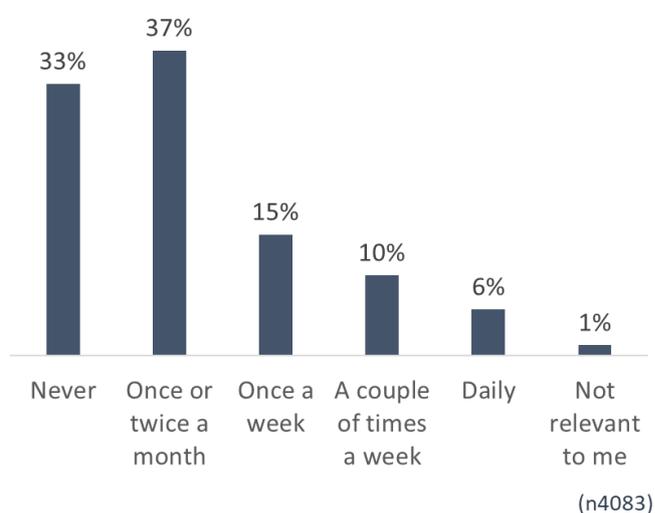
Never	5%
Once or twice a month	19%
Once a week	14%
A couple of times a week	28%
Daily	34%
Not relevant to me	1%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4105</i>

Visited shops



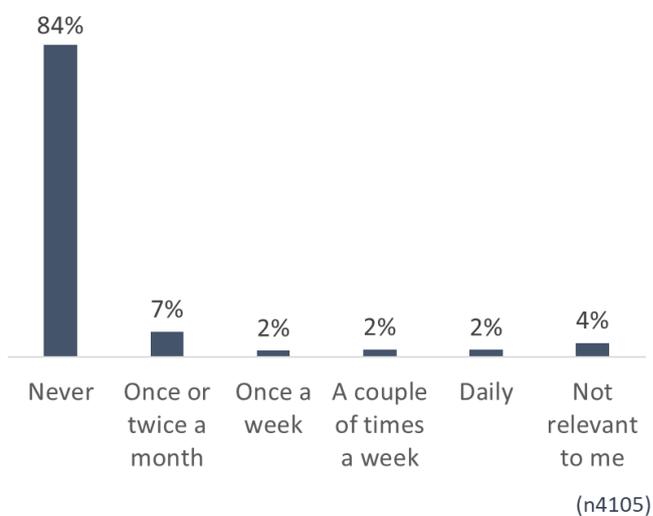
Never	20%
Once or twice a month	30%
Once a week	27%
A couple of times a week	19%
Daily	3%
Not relevant to me	1%
<i>Response count</i>	4049

Met people outside of your household or extended household



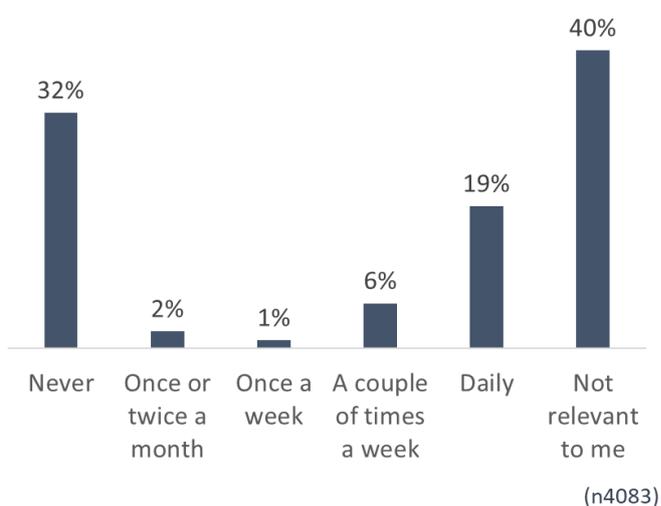
Never	33%
Once or twice a month	37%
Once a week	15%
A couple of times a week	10%
Daily	6%
Not relevant to me	1%
<i>Response count</i>	4083

Been on public transport



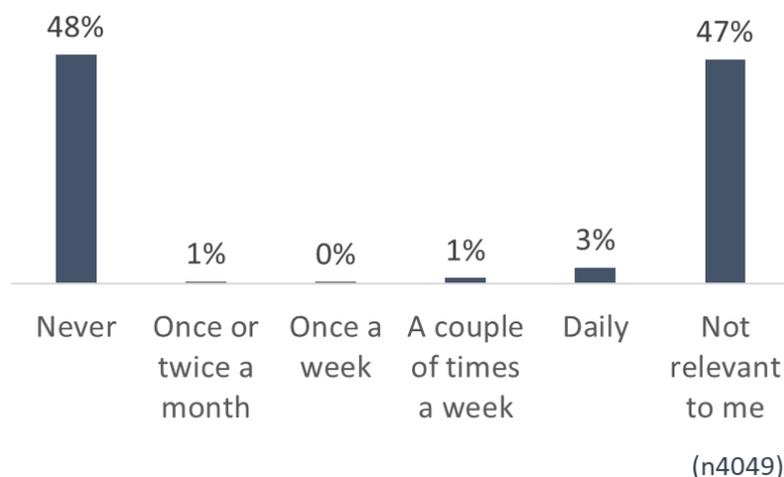
Never	84%
Once or twice a month	7%
Once a week	2%
A couple of times a week	2%
Daily	2%
Not relevant to me	4%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4105</i>

Gone to work if you can't work from home



Never	32%
Once or twice a month	2%
Once a week	1%
A couple of times a week	6%
Daily	19%
Not relevant to me	40%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4083</i>

Gone to school, childcare or college



Never	48%
Once or twice a month	1%
Once a week	0%
A couple of times a week	1%
Daily	3%
Not relevant to me	47%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4049</i>

Note that based on final demographic data only **2%** of participants identified as being 'in education'. We suspect that the majority of those who answered 'Never' should largely be in the 'Not relevant to me' column.

Vaccination

At the time of issuing the survey, the COVID-19 vaccinations had begun in Scotland. We wanted to understand how people who were at high risk from coronavirus felt about the vaccine.

86% of respondents planned to get the vaccine when it was offered to them. Of the remaining responses, **11%** of participants were undecided and **3%** did not want the vaccine. The top three reasons people gave for being undecided about the vaccine were:

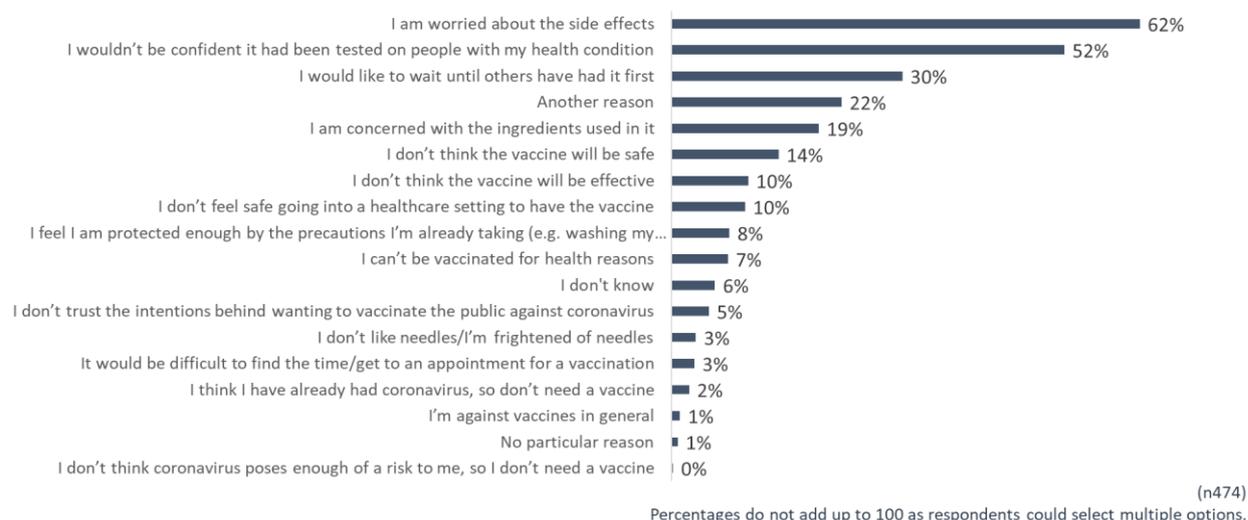
- I am worried about the side effects (**62%**)
- I wouldn't be confident it had been tested on people with my health condition (**52%**)
- I would like to wait until others have had it first (**30%**)

Whether people plan to get vaccinated when it is offered to them

Yes	86%
I don't know/haven't decided yet	12%

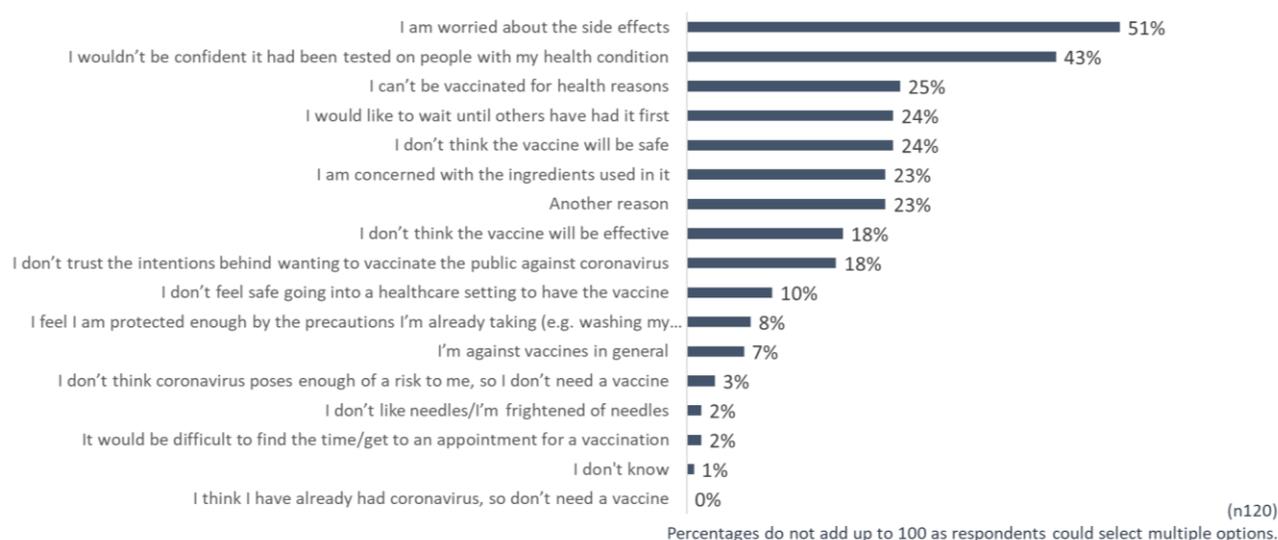
No	3%
<i>Response count</i>	4143

Why respondents were unsure about getting the vaccine



I am worried about the side effects	62%
I wouldn't be confident it had been tested on people with my health condition	52%
I would like to wait until others have had it first	30%
Another reason	22%
I am concerned with the ingredients used in it	19%
I don't think the vaccine will be safe	14%
I don't think the vaccine will be effective	10%
I don't feel safe going into a healthcare setting to have the vaccine	10%
I feel I am protected enough by the precautions I'm already taking (e.g. washing my hands, distancing from others)	8%
I can't be vaccinated for health reasons	7%
I don't know	6%
I don't trust the intentions behind wanting to vaccinate the public against coronavirus	5%
I don't like needles/I'm frightened of needles	3%
It would be difficult to find the time/get an appointment for a vaccination	3%
I think I have already had coronavirus, so don't need a vaccine	2%
I'm against vaccines in general	1%
No particular reason	1%
I don't think coronavirus poses enough of a risk to me so I don't need a vaccine	0%
<i>Response count</i>	474
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options</i>	

Why respondents did not want to get the vaccine



I am worried about the side effects	51%
I wouldn't be confident it had been tested on people with my health condition	43%
I can't be vaccinated for health reasons	25%
I would like to wait until others have had it first	24%
I don't think the vaccine will be safe	24%
I am concerned with the ingredients used in it	23%
Another reason	23%
I don't think the vaccine will be effective	18%
I don't trust the intentions behind wanting to vaccinate the public against coronavirus	18%
I don't feel safe going into a healthcare setting to have the vaccine	10%
I feel I am protected enough by the precautions I'm already taking (e.g. washing my hands, distancing from others)	8%
I'm against vaccines in general	7%
I don't think coronavirus poses enough of a risk to me so I don't need a vaccine	3%
I don't like needles/I'm frightened of needles	2%
It would be difficult to find the time/get an appointment for a vaccination	2%
I don't know	1%
I think I have already had coronavirus, so don't need a vaccine	0%
<i>Response count</i>	120
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options</i>	

Festive household bubbles

At the time of issuing the survey, guidance had just been released from the Scottish Government advising that people who were at high risk could form a festive household bubble between 23 to 27 December, including being able to meet indoors. Question: Is there any particular reason why you are unsure about getting the covid-19 vaccine?

When respondents were asked if they planned to or did form a household bubble during the festive period **58%** said no. It is worth noting that in the run up to the Christmas break, the rules across Scotland changed. Festive bubbles were permitted for 1 day only (25 December), and the whole country went into Level 4 restrictions from 26 December, which is likely to have impacted on peoples plans.

Planning to form festive household bubbles

Yes	42%
No	58%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4138</i>

Following Guidance

With the introduction of the [strategic framework](#) in Scotland in October 2020, people who had received a shielding letter were asked to follow the same advice as the general public but with some additional advice (see matrix image).

We wanted to understand participants' awareness of and adherence to this additional guidance.

Extra protection level advice for people at highest risk from coronavirus

Strategic Framework Extra protection level advice for people at highest risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)					
This is advice , consider which level of protection is right for you.					
All levels: we will not ask you to distance from people within your own homes or to stop taking outdoor exercise.					
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Contact with others	Follow the level advice to the general population	Follow the level advice to the general population	Reduce the number of people or households you have face to face contact with Avoid one metre zones	Limit meeting people outside your own household, avoid indoor public spaces	Minimise contact with people outside your own household if you can You should not take public transport
Shopping	Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping	Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping	Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping	Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping and limit the number of times you go to a shop Shop at quieter times	Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping and limit the number of times you go to a shop Shop at quieter times
If you cannot work from home	Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you The majority of workplaces can be made safe	Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you The majority of workplaces can be made safe	Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you The majority of workplaces can be made safe. Where you have a concern you should discuss this with your employer	Speak to your employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place The majority of workplaces can be made safe. Where you have a concern you should discuss this with your employer	The majority of workplaces in level 4 areas can be made safe. If you have any concerns you should discuss these with your employer However, at this level the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter which is similar to a fit note and which will last for as long as your area or workplace is under Level 4 restrictions. This letter can be used in the few cases where it is not possible to make your workplace safe Please note that this does not automatically mean you should not attend work. You should discuss this further with your employer, and if this results in adequate protection, you can continue to work
School/college/formal Childcare	Follow the level advice to the general population	Follow the level advice to the general population	Follow the level advice to the general population	Parents or guardians should discuss with their GP or clinician whether children should still attend	Children on the shielding list should not attend in person if they live or attend school, college, or formal childcare in a level 4 area

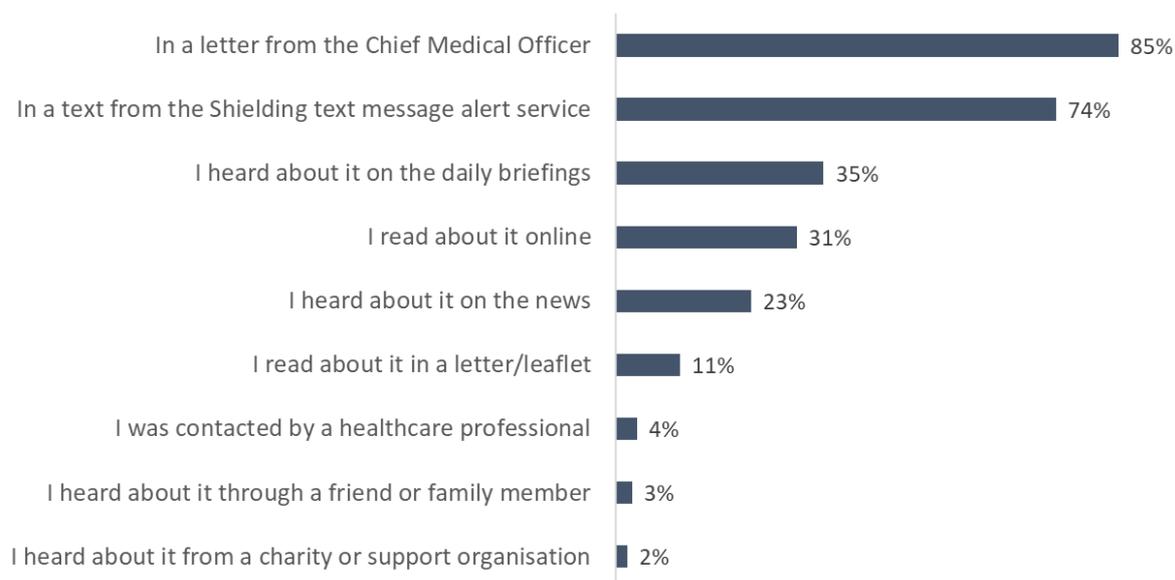
96% of respondents were aware of this additional guidance. **85%** of them heard about it in a letter from the Chief Medical Officer and **74%** in a text from the Shielding text message alert service. The third highest option was hearing about it on the daily briefings, but only **35%** heard about the guidance this way, suggesting that direct communications were the most effective form of communication.

In terms of quality and compliance: **88%** of respondents thought the additional guidance was quite or very clear and the majority of respondents (**66%**) were following the guidance completely.

Awareness of additional guidance

Yes	96%
No	4%
Response count	4146

Where respondents had heard about the additional guidance



(n3979)

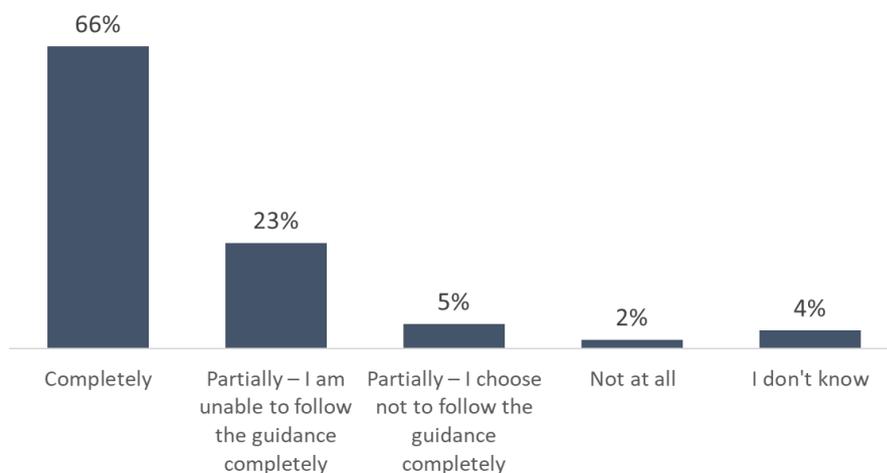
Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

In a letter from the Chief Medical Officer	85%
In a text from the Shielding text message alert service	74%
I heard about it on the daily briefings	35%
I read about it online	31%
I heard about it on the news	23%
I read about it in a letter/leaflet	11%
I was contacted by a healthcare professional	4%
I heard about it through a friend or family member	3%
I heard about it from a charity or support organisation	2%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>3979</i>

Clarity of additional guidance

Very clear	51%
Quite clear	37%
Neither clear or unclear	7%
Quite unclear	4%
Very unclear	1%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>3990</i>

Whether people are following the additional guidance

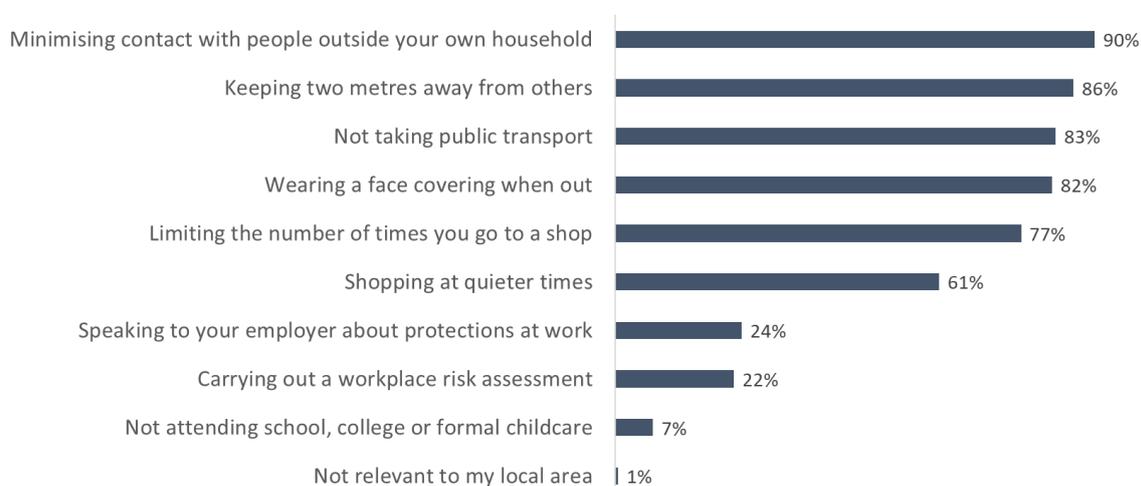


(n1010)

Completely	66%
Partially – I am unable to follow the guidance completely	23%
Partially – I choose not to follow the guidance completely	5%
Not at all	2%
I don't know	4%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>1010</i>

Note that there was an error in the display of this question for the first 3000 responses. This explains why the number of people who answered this question is significantly lower than other questions, and could also explain the relatively high number of “I don't know” responses.

What aspects of additional guidance are being followed



(n942)

Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

Minimising contact with people outside your own household	90%
Keeping two metres away from others	86%
Not taking public transport	83%
Wearing a face covering when out	82%
Limiting the number of times you go to a shop	77%
Shopping at quieter times	61%
Speaking to your employer about protections at work	24%
Carrying out a workplace risk assessment	22%
Not attending school, college or formal childcare	7%
Not relevant to my local area	1%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>942</i>
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options</i>	

Deciding which activities are safe

Since shielding was paused, communications and guidance from Scottish Government has aimed to provide users with information on personal risk, allowing people on the shielding list to assess risk of different activities for themselves. Letters and texts have included links to information such as localised infection rates via the [Public Health Scotland dashboard](#), and a booklet titled '[Balancing the risks of daily activities during coronavirus](#)' was produced, explaining the additional protection measures that those at high risk could take.

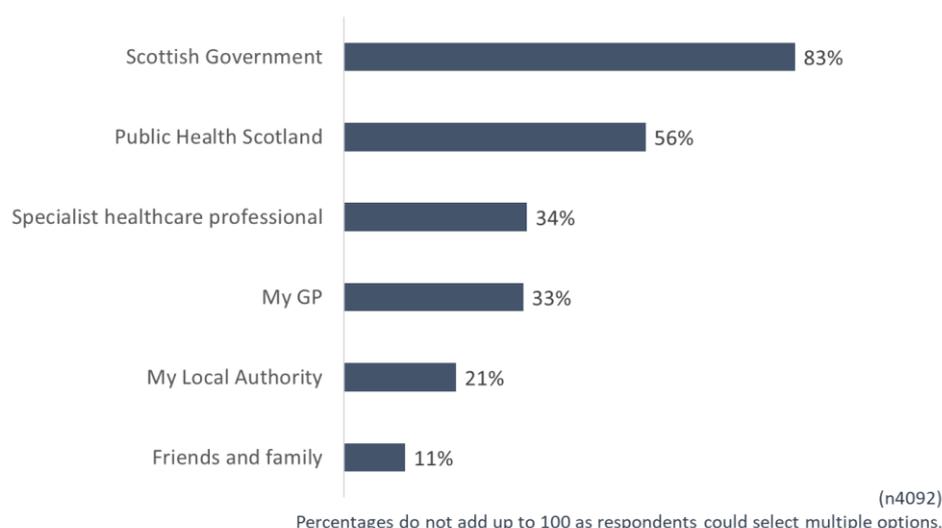
62% said that they felt confident about making decisions about which day-to-day activities (such as going outside for exercise, visiting shops and meeting others) are safe. It is unclear why the remaining **38%** don't feel confident. Over the course of the survey being live, there was a sharp rise in infection rates in Scotland, and guidance for those at higher risk changed significantly. This may have had an impact on people's confidence.

Respondents told us their top three trusted sources of information for deciding which activities are safe were: Scottish Government (**83%**), Public Health Scotland (**56%**) and specialist healthcare professionals (**34%**).

Do respondents feel confident when deciding which activities are safe?

Yes	62%
No	38%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4139</i>

Trusted sources of information for deciding which activities are safe



Scottish Government	83%
Public Health Scotland	56%
Specialist healthcare professional	34%
My GP	33%
My Local Authority	21%
Friends and family	11%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4092</i>
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options</i>	

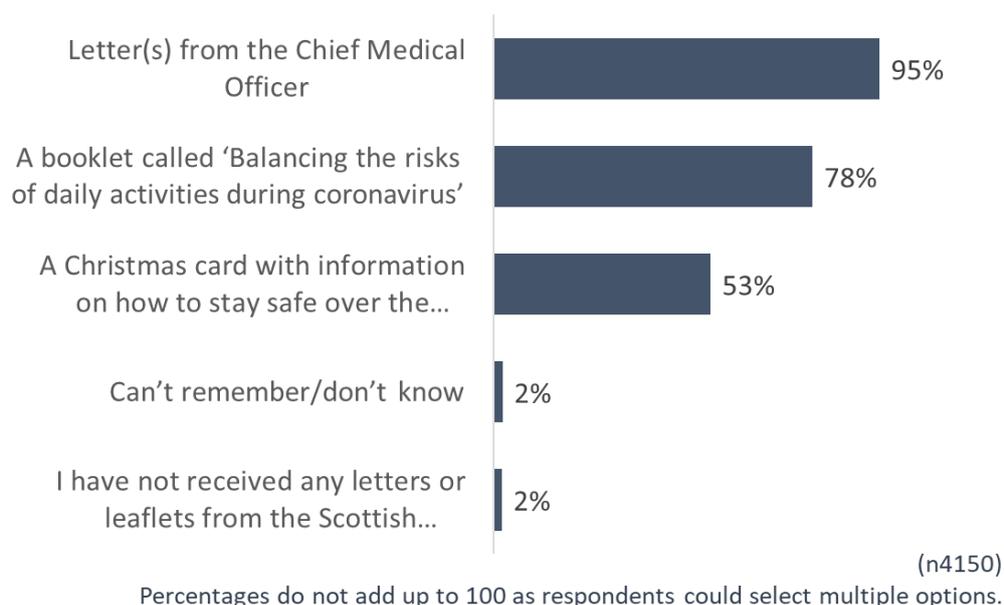
Communications

Direct communications and information is a key area of support that Scottish Government provides to people at higher risk. We wanted to understand what individuals thought about the communications and how helpful they were.

91% of respondents found the direction communications from the Scottish Government either very or somewhat helpful.

The majority of respondents (**81%**) felt that they were receiving about the right level of communication from the Scottish Government about shielding. However, **15%** still felt there was not enough communication. It is unclear what more they would expect to hear about or why it has not been enough, but early insight from in-depth interviews which followed the survey have highlighted people feeling unsupported once shielding was paused.

What communications respondents have received since July 2020



Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

Letter(s) from the Chief Medical Officer	95%
A booklet called 'Balancing the risks of daily activities during coronavirus'	78%
A Christmas card with information on how to stay safe over the festive break	53%
Can't remember/don't know	2%
I have not received any letters or leaflets from the Scottish Government since July 2020	2%
<i>Response count</i>	4092
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options</i>	

Helpfulness of letters and leaflets

Very helpful	56%
Somewhat helpful	35%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	7%
Somewhat unhelpful	1%
Very unhelpful	1%
<i>Response count</i>	4062

Feedback on volume of communication about shielding

Too much communication	5%
About the right level of communication	81%
Not enough communication	15%
<i>Response count</i>	4137

Service Feedback

Despite shielding being paused in July 2020, the Shielding division has continued to provide a number of services to support people on the shielding list. The survey explored how respondents felt about each of the services provided and assessed how helpful they thought they were, as well as reasons why offers had or had not been taken up.

The feedback on these services is largely positive, with respondents largely finding the support they receive from each service either very or somewhat helpful.

People have been contacting their local authority and third sector organisations for support with access to food, medication and emotional support. It is unclear whether access to food is about trying to be put on a priority shopping list or needing support to get food for financial or geographic (deliveries not available in their area) reasons.

Text messaging alert service

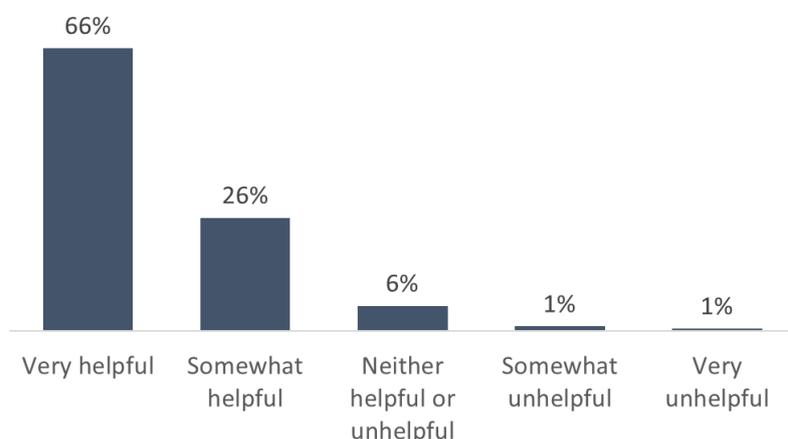
96% of respondents had registered with the shielding text messaging alert service. Of those who had registered, **92%** found it either very or somewhat helpful.

Of the small number of people (*n181*) who had not signed up to this service, the top reason given for why was because they didn't know about it (**37%**).

Respondents signed up to text messaging alert service

Yes	96%
No	4%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4140</i>

Helpfulness of the text messaging alert service



(n3944)

Very helpful	66%
Somewhat helpful	26%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	6%
Somewhat unhelpful	1%
Very unhelpful	1%
<i>Response count</i>	3944

Reasons why people had not signed up for text messages

I didn't know about it	37%
I didn't think it would be helpful for me	25%
I don't have access to a mobile phone	16%
Something else	24%
<i>Response count</i>	181

For the **24%** of respondents who answered 'something else' the most common reasons provided were:

- People had struggled to register with the service for a number of different reasons
- Poor phone reception in their homes
- Incompatible devices for the service

People felt they were able to get the information they needed from other sources

Local Authority support

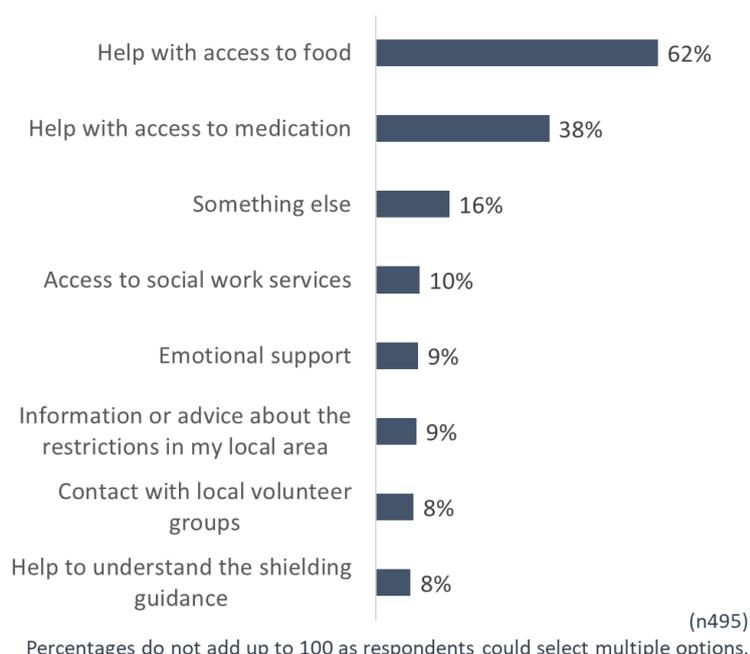
12% of respondents had asked their local authority for support since July 2020. Of those who had received support (*n*753), **64%** found this either very or somewhat helpful.

The main reasons why people contacted their local authority for support were: help with access to food (**62%**) and medication (**38%**).

Respondents who asked their local authority for support

Yes	12%
No	88%
<i>Response count</i>	4139

What support people were asking for from their local authority

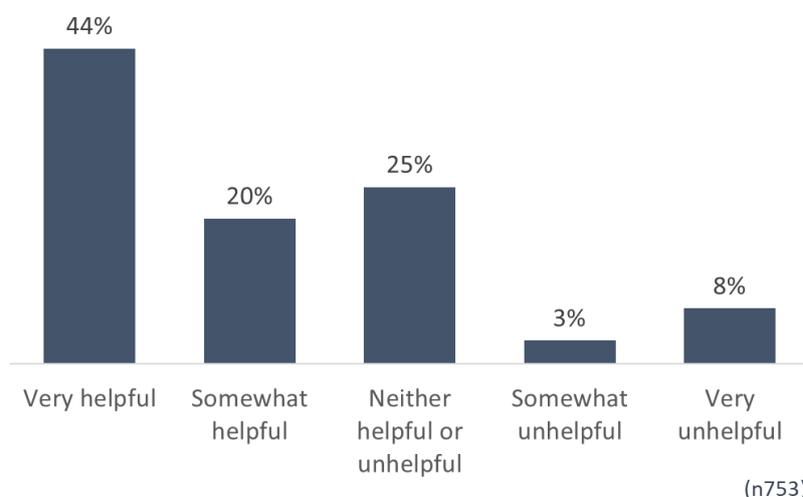


Help with access to food	62%
Help with access to medication	38%
Something else	16%
Access to social work services	10%
Emotional support	9%
Information or advice about the restrictions in my local area	9%
Contact with local volunteer groups	8%
Help to understand the shielding guidance	8%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>495</i>
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.</i>	

For the **16%** of respondents who answered 'something else' the most common reasons provided were:

- Ensuring they were added to the priority shopping list for supermarkets
- Access to PPE
- Financial support
- Employment support, particularly for those feeling unsafe at work
- Support with physical needs such as personal care and physiotherapy

Helpfulness of local authority support



Very helpful	44%
Somewhat helpful	20%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	25%
Somewhat unhelpful	3%
Very unhelpful	8%
<i>Response count</i>	753

Third sector support

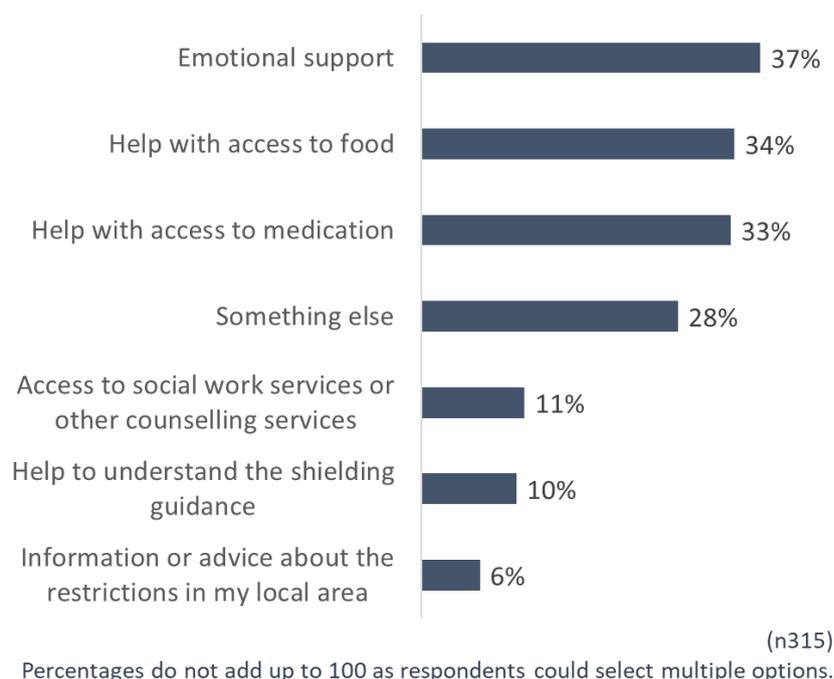
8% of respondents had asked a third sector organisation for support since July 2020. Of those who had received support (*n543*), **58%** found it either very or somewhat helpful.

The main reasons why people contacted a third sector organisation for support were: emotional support (**37%**), help with access to food (**34%**) and help with access to medication (**33%**).

Respondents who asked a third sector organisation for support

Yes	8%
No	92%
<i>Response count</i>	4133

What support people were asking for from third sector organisations

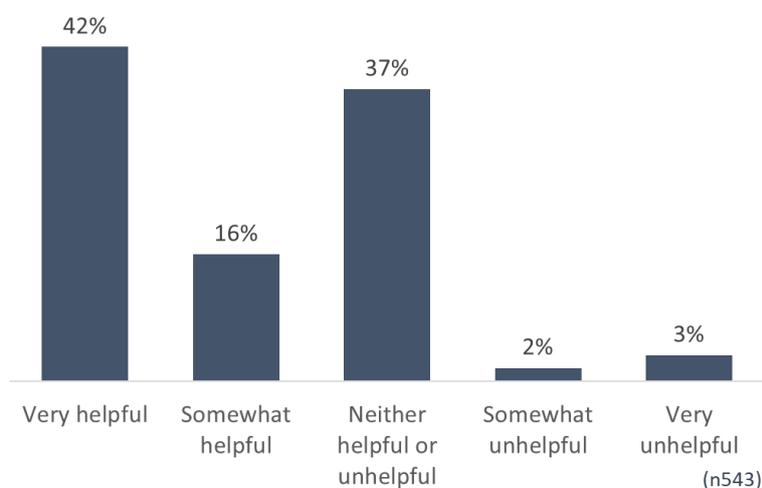


Emotional support	37%
Help with access to food	34%
Help with access to medication	33%
Something else	28%
Access to social work services or other counselling services	11%
Help to understand the shielding guidance	10%
Information or advice about the restrictions in my local area	6%
<i>Response count</i>	315
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.</i>	

For the **28%** of respondents who answered ‘something else’ the most common reasons provided were:

- Advice or support specific to the person’s medical condition, for example advice on whether they are able to take the vaccine based on their condition
- Financial support due to being unable to work while shielding
- Support with poor or deteriorating mental health

Helpfulness of third sector organisation support



Very helpful	42%
Somewhat helpful	16%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	37%
Somewhat unhelpful	2%
Very unhelpful	3%
<i>Response count</i>	543

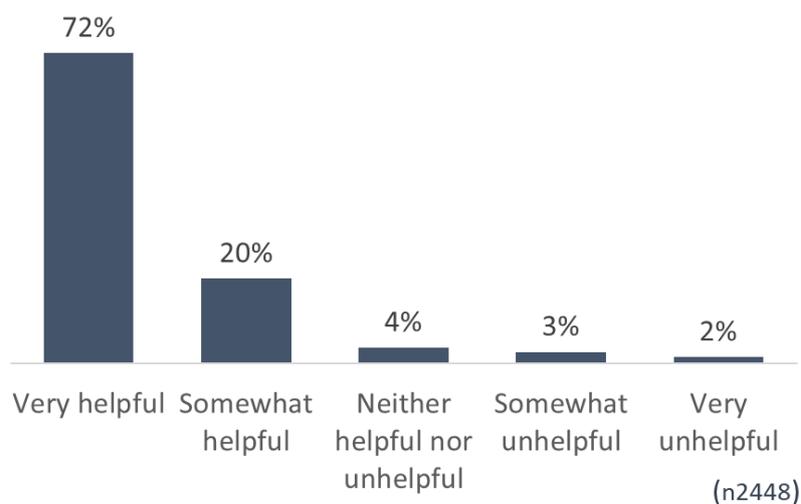
Priority supermarket shopping

59% of survey participants had used the priority supermarket shopping service to get online deliveries. Of those who had used the service (*n2448*), **92%** found it either very or somewhat helpful.

Respondents signed up for priority supermarket shopping

Yes	59%
No	41%
<i>Response count</i>	4146

Helpfulness of priority supermarket shopping service



Very helpful	72%
Somewhat helpful	20%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	4%
Somewhat unhelpful	3%
Very unhelpful	2%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>2448</i>

Free supply of Vitamin D

94% of participants were aware of the offer of a free supply of Vitamin D, with **79%** choosing to take up the offer.

Of those who chose to take up the offer (*n3044*), the main reasons provided were: to support health and wellbeing (**77%**), they had been inside a lot (**67%**) and the Scottish Government guidance advising to take Vitamin D (**65%**).

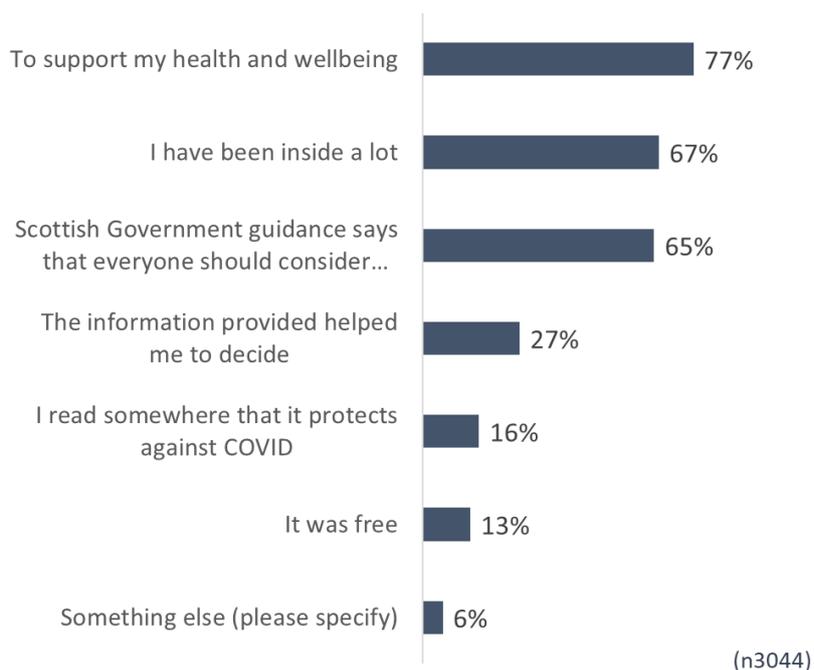
Respondents who were aware of the Vitamin D offer

Yes	94%
No	6%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4136</i>

Respondents who took up the free supply of Vitamin D

Yes	79%
No	21%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>3882</i>

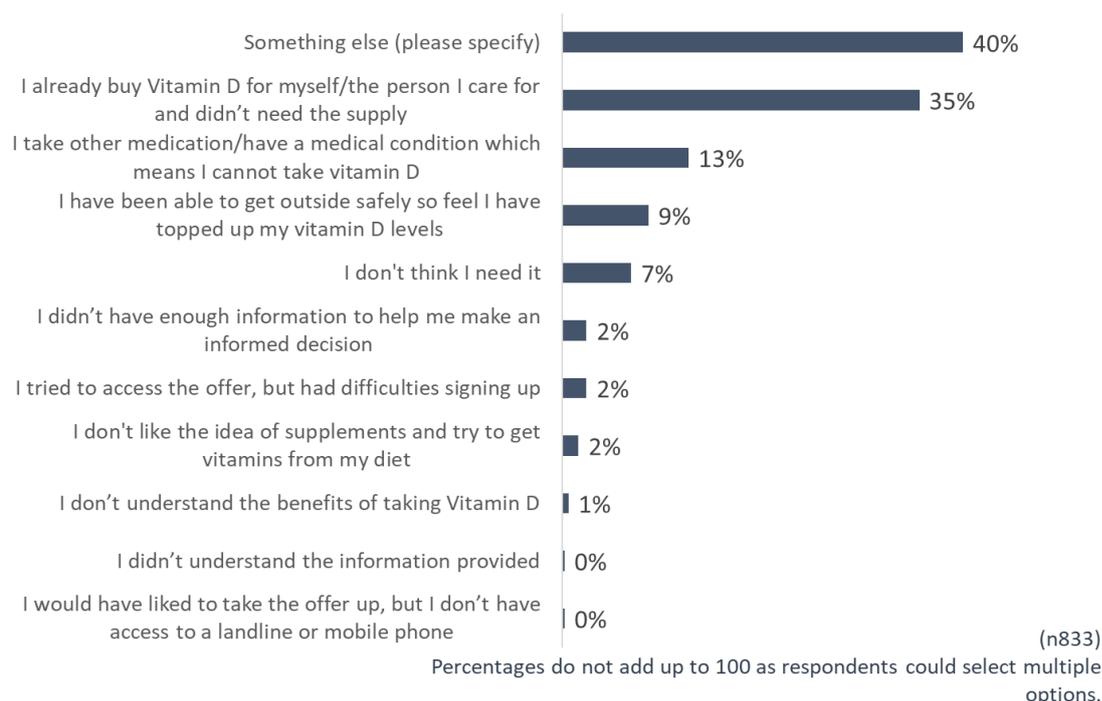
Why respondents took up the Vitamin D offer



Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.

To support my health and wellbeing	77%
I have been inside a lot	67%
Scottish Government guidance says that everyone should consider taking Vitamin D	65%
The information provided helped me to decide	27%
I read somewhere that it protects against COVID	16%
It was free	13%
Something else	6%
<i>Response count</i>	3044
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.</i>	

Why respondents didn't take up the Vitamin D offer



Something else	40%
I already buy Vitamin D for myself/the person I care for and didn't need the supply	35%
I take other medication/have a medical condition which means I cannot take Vitamin D	13%
I have been able to get outside safely so I feel I have topped up my Vitamin D levels	9%
I don't think I need it	7%
I didn't have enough information to help me make an informed decision	2%
I tried to access the offer, but had difficulties signing up	2%
I don't understand the benefits of taking Vitamin D	1%
I didn't understand the information provided	0%
I would like to take the offer up, but I don't have access to a landline or mobile phone	0%
<i>Response count</i>	833
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.</i>	

Of those who did not take up the offer (n833), many respondents picked 'something else' (40%). Analysis of the open text responses highlighted that people wanted to explain that they were already prescribed Vitamin D.

Workplace risk assessments

29% of survey participants had returned to their workplace since July 2020. **66%** of respondents returning to the workplace (*n*1200) carried out an individual workplace risk assessment using the COVID-age calculator and discussed this with their employer.

Of those who had used the workplace risk assessment tool, **62%** found it either very or somewhat helpful. However, despite using the risk assessment tool, **55%** of respondents still did not feel safe about returning to work.

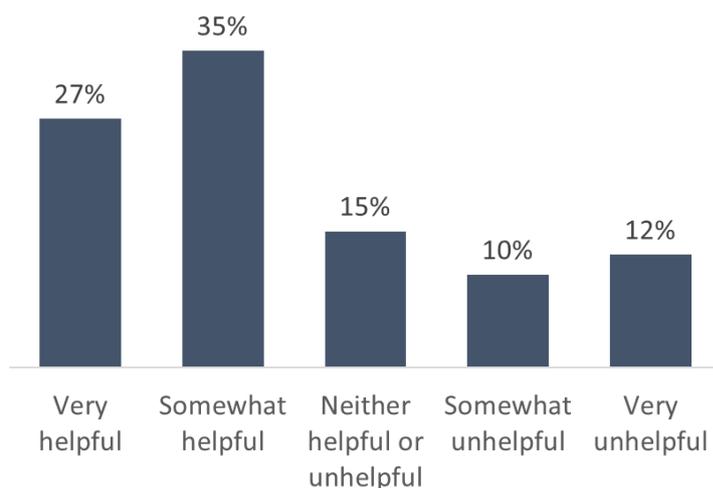
Returned to the workplace since July 2020

Yes	29%
No	16%
Not relevant to me	55%
<i>Response count</i>	4140

Workplace risk assessment using COVID-age calculator with employer

Yes	66%
No	30%
Not relevant to me	4%
<i>Response count</i>	1299

Helpfulness of workplace risk assessment tool (COVID-age calculator)



(*n*791)

Very helpful	27%
Somewhat helpful	35%
Neither helpful or unhelpful	15%

Somewhat unhelpful	10%
Very unhelpful	12%
<i>Response count</i>	791

Feeling safe returning to work after workplace risk assessment

Yes	45%
No	55%
<i>Response count</i>	790

Level 4 fit note

13% of people who had returned to work used the Level 4 fit note to be absent from work. Of the people who tried to use the fit note (*n*150), **25%** were still required to go to work.

Use of Chief Medical Officer fit note to be absent from work

Yes	13%
No	49%
Not applicable to me	38%
<i>Response count</i>	1197

Employer acceptance of fit note to be absent from work

Yes	75%
No	25%
<i>Response count</i>	150

Gaps in support and access

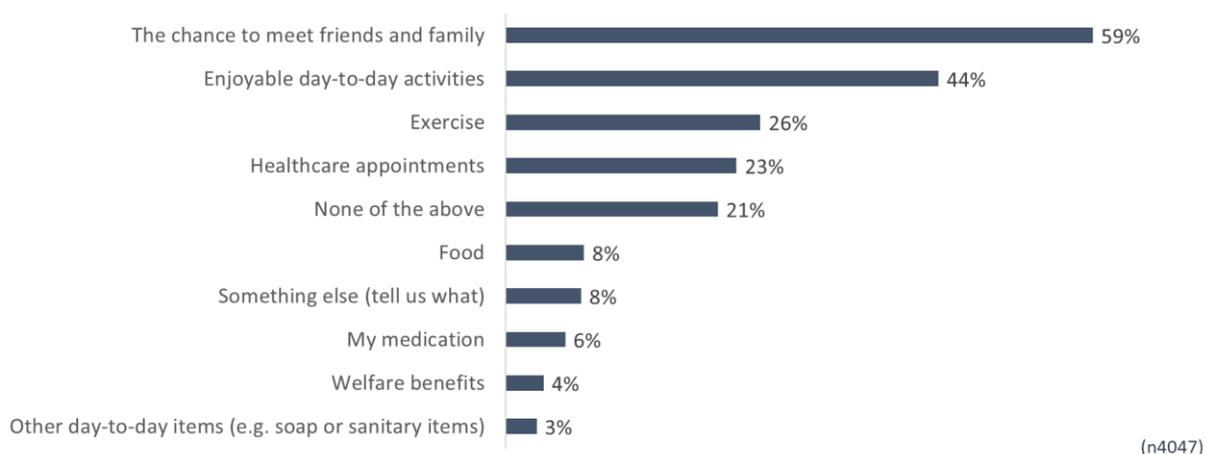
Survey respondents were asked whether there was anything they were struggling to access at the moment to try and identify where more or additional support could be provided.

The majority were struggling with challenges that are not easily addressed by government support, such as: the chance to meet friends and family (**59%**) and enjoyable day-to-day activities (**44%**). However, there are still people struggling with access to healthcare appointments (**23%**) which has been identified in previous research with this group.

Many of the comments in the open text responses (**8%** of people selecting 'something else') were aligned with existing categories such as healthcare appointments and exercise, but people wanted to provide more specific information

about the types of appointment they are missing out on. A number of responses (especially from key workers) highlighted challenges with returning to work once shielding had paused, feeling unsafe and unsupported by their employers, and looking for some kind of workplace support.

What people are struggling to access at the moment



The chance to meet friends and family	59%
Enjoyable day-to-day activities	44%
Exercise	26%
Healthcare appointments	23%
None of the above	21%
Food	8%
Something else	8%
My medication	6%
Welfare benefits	4%
Other day to day items (e.g. soap or sanitary items)	3%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4047</i>
<i>Percentages do not add up to 100 as respondents could select multiple options.</i>	

Impact of Pausing Shielding

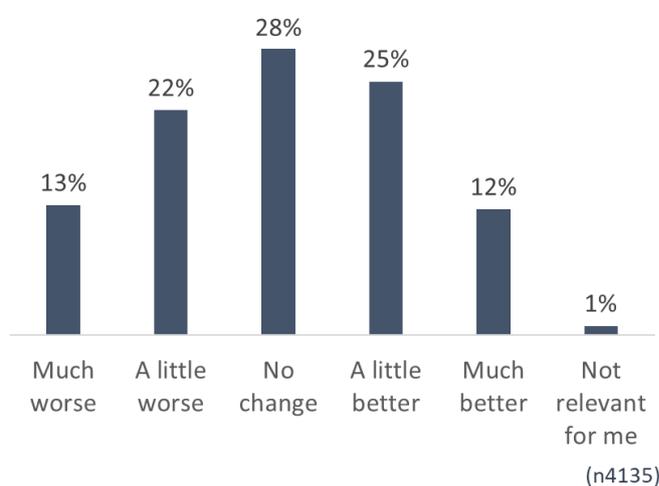
[Public Health Scotland \(PHS\) conducted a survey](#) to evaluate the effectiveness of the shielding programme and the impact of the advice provided on a number of aspects of people's lives (covering March – 31 August 2020). In this survey the question set around the 'impact of shielding' from the PHS survey was mirrored, and answers reframed, to understand whether these aspects of respondents lives had changed since shielding had been paused.

For many areas, the survey indicated there had been no change. However, there were areas where people identified that things had got worse since shielding was paused, including:

- **45%** of respondents saying that the amount of physical activity they did had been worse
- **42%** of respondents saying that their eating habits had got worse
- **41%** of respondents saying that their mental health had got worse.

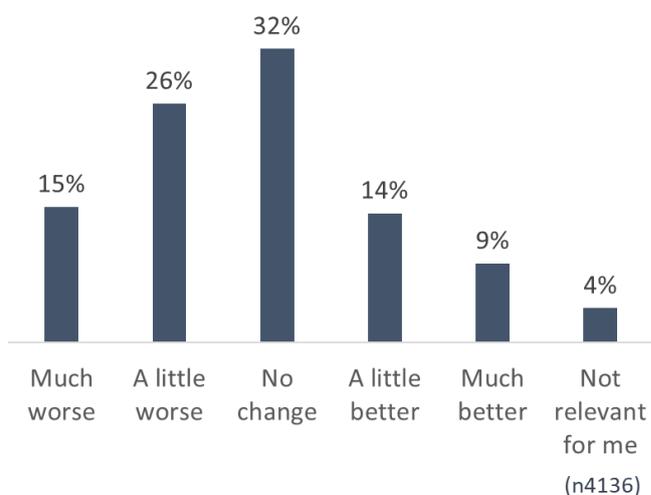
It is not possible to directly root these responses to; policy changes, the general context of coronavirus in the UK, or the many changes that occurred during the survey being live, but it's likely that all of these areas will have had an impact on responses.

Quality of life



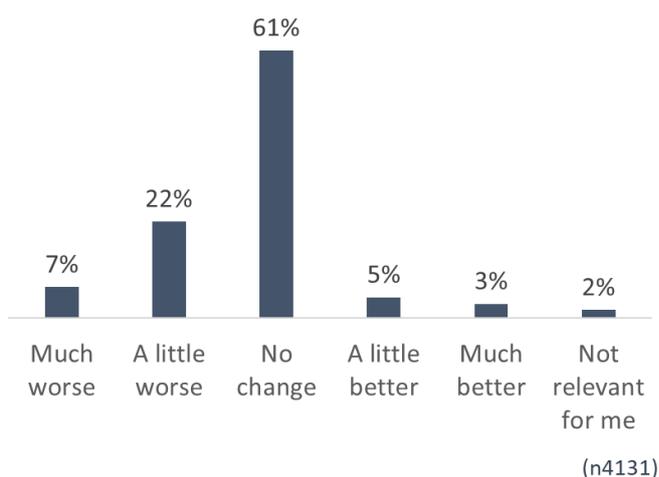
Much worse	23%
A little worse	22%
No change	28%
A little better	25%
Much better	12%
Not relevant for me	1%
<i>Response count</i>	4135

Mental health



Much worse	15%
A little worse	26%
No change	32%
A little better	14%
Much better	9%
Not relevant for me	4%
<i>Response count</i>	4136

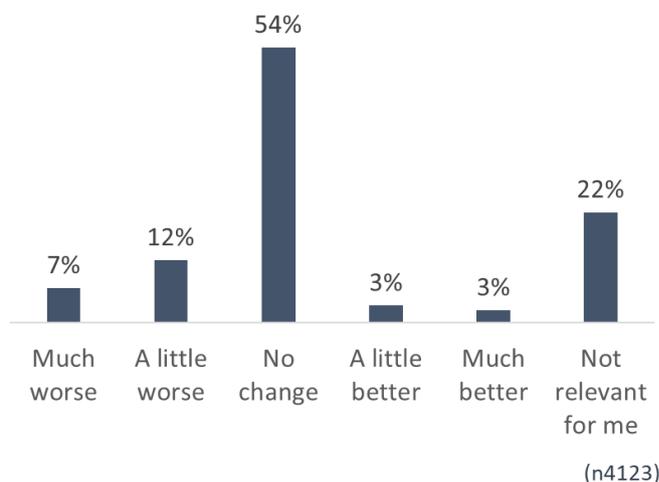
The condition(s) for which they were shielding



Much worse	7%
A little worse	22%
No change	61%
A little better	5%
Much better	3%

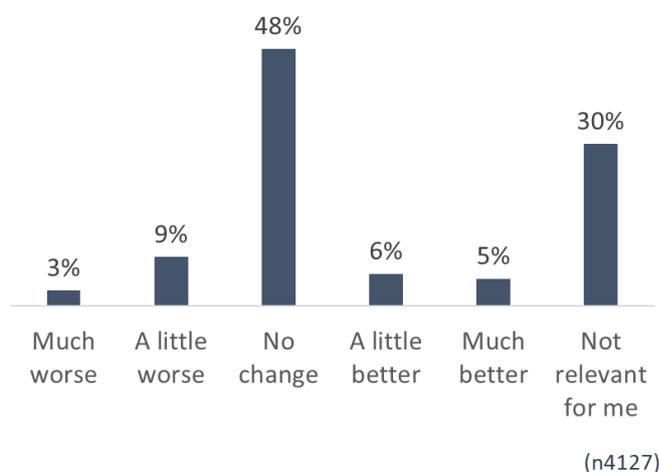
Not relevant for me	2%
<i>Response count</i>	4131

The quality of care they receive



Much worse	7%
A little worse	12%
No change	54%
A little better	3%
Much better	3%
Not relevant for me	22%
<i>Response count</i>	4123

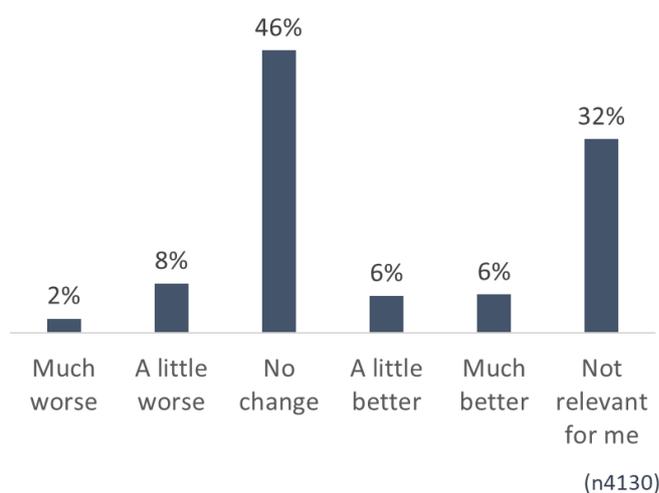
Relationship with their partner



Much worse	3%
A little worse	9%
No change	48%

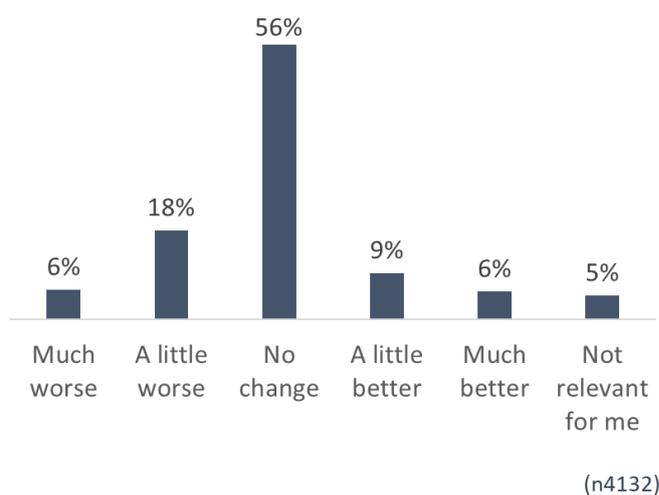
A little better	6%
Much better	5%
Not relevant for me	30%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4127</i>

Relationship with their children



Much worse	2%
A little worse	8%
No change	46%
A little better	6%
Much better	6%
Not relevant for me	32%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4130</i>

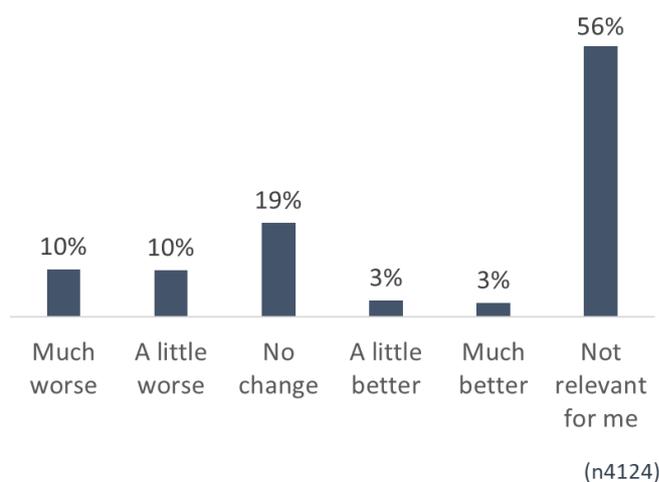
Relationship with other friends and family



Much worse	6%
------------	-----------

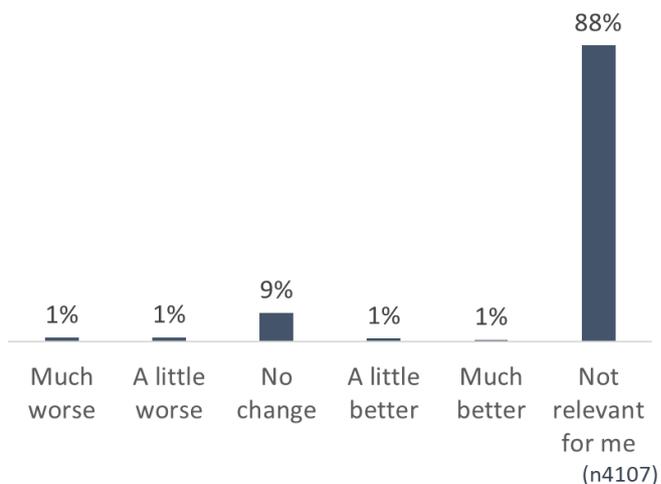
A little worse	18%
No change	56%
A little better	9%
Much better	6%
Not relevant for me	5%
<i>Response count</i>	4132

Employment



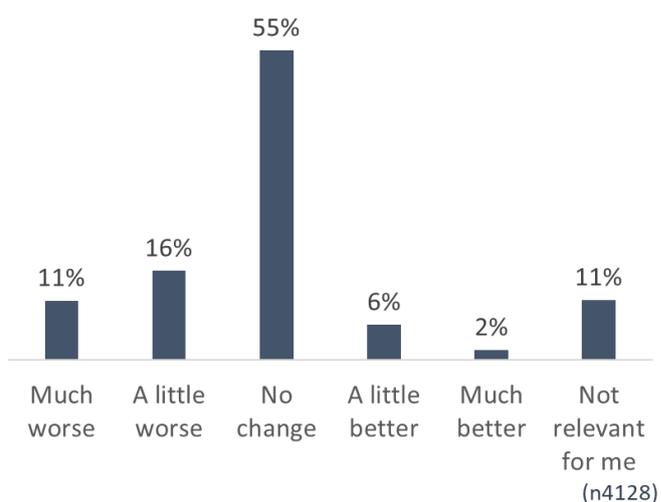
Much worse	10%
A little worse	10%
No change	19%
A little better	3%
Much better	3%
Not relevant for me	56%
<i>Response count</i>	4124

Education



Much worse	1%
A little worse	1%
No change	9%
A little better	1%
Much better	1%
Not relevant for me	88%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4107</i>

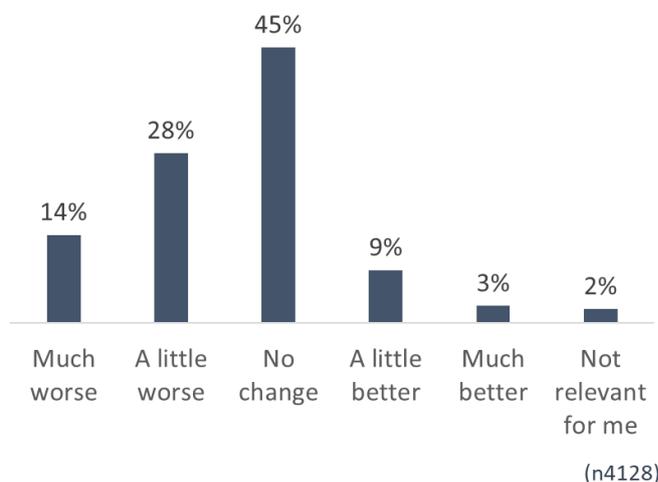
Financial situation



Much worse	11%
A little worse	16%
No change	55%
A little better	6%
Much better	2%

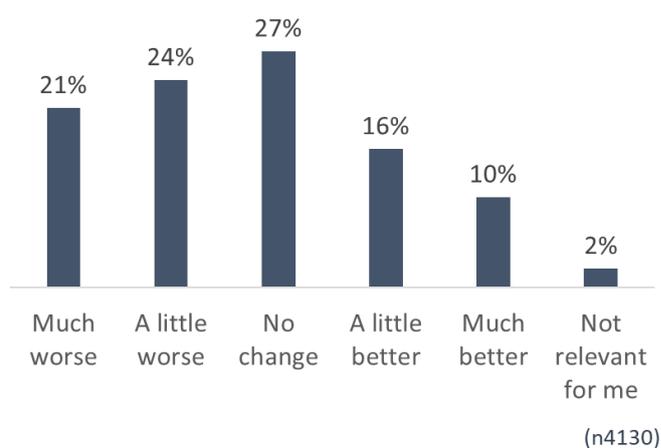
Not relevant for me	11%
<i>Response count</i>	4128

Eating habits



Much worse	14%
A little worse	28%
No change	45%
A little better	9%
Much better	3%
Not relevant for me	2%
<i>Response count</i>	4128

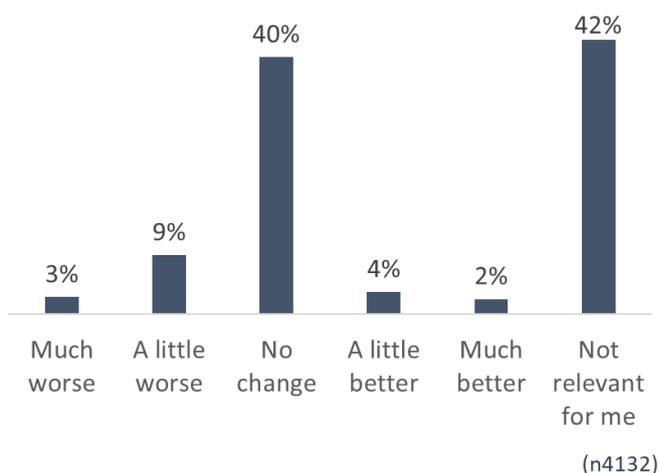
How much physical activity they do



Much worse	21%
A little worse	24%
No change	27%
A little better	16%

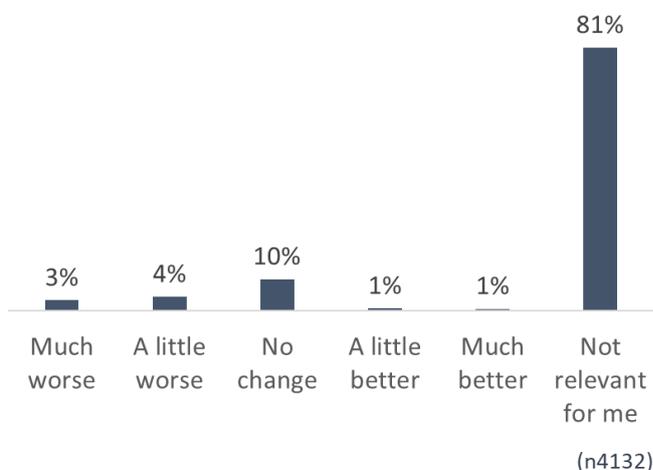
Much better	10%
Not relevant for me	2%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4130</i>

Alcohol consumption



Much worse	21%
A little worse	24%
No change	27%
A little better	16%
Much better	10%
Not relevant for me	2%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4130</i>

Use of tobacco



Much worse	3%
A little worse	4%

No change	10%
A little better	1%
Much better	1%
Not relevant for me	81%
<i>Response count</i>	<i>4132</i>

Appendix

Respondent profiles

	Survey Respondents	Wider Shielded Group *
Gender	33% Male 67% Female	45% Male 55% Female
Age	32% 65+ 68% <50	51% 65+ 49% <50
Condition **	46% respiratory disease 36% immunosuppression 11% cancer 9% rare disease 5% organ transplant 0.3% pregnant + significant heart disease 0.5% down's syndrome 2% kidney impairment 22% advised to shield by clinician	38% respiratory disease 18% immunosuppression 11% cancer 6% rare disease 3% organ transplant 0.0002% pregnant + significant heart disease 24% advised to shield by clinician ***
Local Authority ****	8% Glasgow 8% Edinburgh 6% North Lanarkshire 5% South Lanarkshire 7% Fife	13% Glasgow 7% Edinburgh 7% North Lanarkshire 6% South Lanarkshire 6% Fife
Indicator or (possible) proxy indicator of socio-economic vulnerability	92% access to internet at home 53% unexpected £100 expense no problem 23% unexpected £100 expense a bit of a problem 12% unexpected £100 expense a big problem 12% unexpected £100 expense impossible	26% 1 st SIMD quintile 23% 2 nd SIMD quintile 20% 3 rd SIMD quintile 17% 4 th SIMD quintile 14% 5 th SIMD quintile
Type of area lived in	19% live in a city 39% live in a town 13% live in a suburb 28% live in a village/rural area 1% live on an island	-
Employment **	36% retired 37% employed 4% self-employed 2% furloughed because of COVID-19	-

	<p>2% unemployed 2% looking after home or family 19% not working because of long-term condition or disability 2% in education 4% something else</p>	
Caring	<p>6% caring for an adult (16+) on the shielding list 1% caring for a child (under 16) on the shielding list</p>	-
Ethnicity	<p>98.7% white 0.4% Mixed 0.4% Asian 0.1% African, Caribbean or Black 0.4% Other ethnic group</p>	-

* Based on data from the social research Dashboard, last updated 7/1/2021

** The percentages do not add to 100% because an individual may fit more than one category.

*** Data unavailable for people with down's syndrome or kidney impairment in wider shielded group data

**** The local authorities mentioned are the five local authorities with the highest total number of shielded individuals among their residents. The wider shielded group data was last updated on 27/7/2020.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

© Crown copyright 2021

OGL

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80004-682-5 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, February 2021

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS831567 (02/21)

W W W . g o v . s c o t