

# **Distance Aware Scheme Survey**

**March 2022**

**April 2022**



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# Distance Aware Scheme Survey – March 2022

## Background

A continuing theme across user research with people on the Highest Risk List has been respondents' anxiety about the behaviour of other people and whether it puts them at risk of catching covid-19.

[A survey conducted in July 2021, explored the idea of offering respondents some form of small wearable item](#) (such as a badge, wristband or lanyard) to indicate that they would like others to keep a safe distance. Of the 4600 people surveyed, 73% felt that this would be beneficial, 11% were not interested and 16% were unsure. The high number of those interested indicated the majority of respondents were receptive to the idea.

Following this feedback, Scottish Government agreed to adopt the existing 'Distance Aware' initiative developed by the Bevan Commission and adapt it for Scotland. It was also agreed that while the initial insight came from those on the Highest Risk List, the offer should be made to anybody who was interested in it. This aligns with the scheme being open to everyone in England, Wales and Scotland to support anyone who would like access to the wearable for any reason. In addition, there were some participants very opposed to the scheme as potentially stigmatising. As such it was considered important that the scheme would be completely voluntary and did not seek to identify people as being at highest risk.

The purpose of the scheme is for people to signal that they would like additional space and extra care around them in public or work places. This depends on wider recognition of the symbol and its meaning amongst the general population. Monitoring and evaluation is assessing awareness, support, and impact on recognition, behaviour and response to the scheme in the general population.

However, as the initial interest came from people on the Highest Risk List there is also a need to evaluate the uptake, perceived benefits and impacts of the offer, and this strand of evaluation reached out to people on the Highest Risk List to find out if and how the scheme was being used.

This survey went live on **Thursday 24 February 2022**, closed on **Thursday 3 March 2022**. The survey had **3998 responses**.

## Aim of this research

In this research we wanted to know more about the experiences of those who have taken up the Distance Aware offer. Exploring whether it has helped to reduce anxiety, supported people to re-engage with day to day activities, and given them the confidence to be around others as restrictions continue to ease.

This will inform any future investment in or promotion of the scheme.

## Limitations of the research

It is important to note that these results are **not** statistically representative of the wider Highest Risk cohort but do give a good indication of the experiences of those who have engaged with the Distance Aware Scheme.

There are a number of other limitations with this survey:

- Only 2 out of 4 respondents who were attending school, college or university in person had used a Distance Aware badge or lanyard in their place of education. Very little insight can be gleaned from such low numbers.
- Because we recruited participants who were already signed up to the Covid Highest Risk research participant list, they are likely to be very engaged in services offered by the division in comparison to the wider group.
- Bias related to self-selecting sampling approach (e.g., non-response bias in survey method) and because this survey was only available to complete online.

## 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 that they are at Highest Risk from COVID-19 or were asked to Shield early in the pandemic. Only **0.3%** of respondents answered no and were not permitted to complete the survey.

**97%** of respondents said that they were identified as being at highest risk while **4%** said that they were caring for an adult (over 16) who had been identified as highest risk.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Total does not equal 100% because some might have been identified as highest risk and be caring for someone at highest risk.

## Key findings

### Awareness of the Distance Aware scheme

A wide-ranging campaign was set up ahead of the launch of the Distance Aware Scheme which aimed to make as many of those on the Highest Risk List aware of the scheme as possible. Of those who were eligible to take part in the survey, 87% were aware of the scheme.

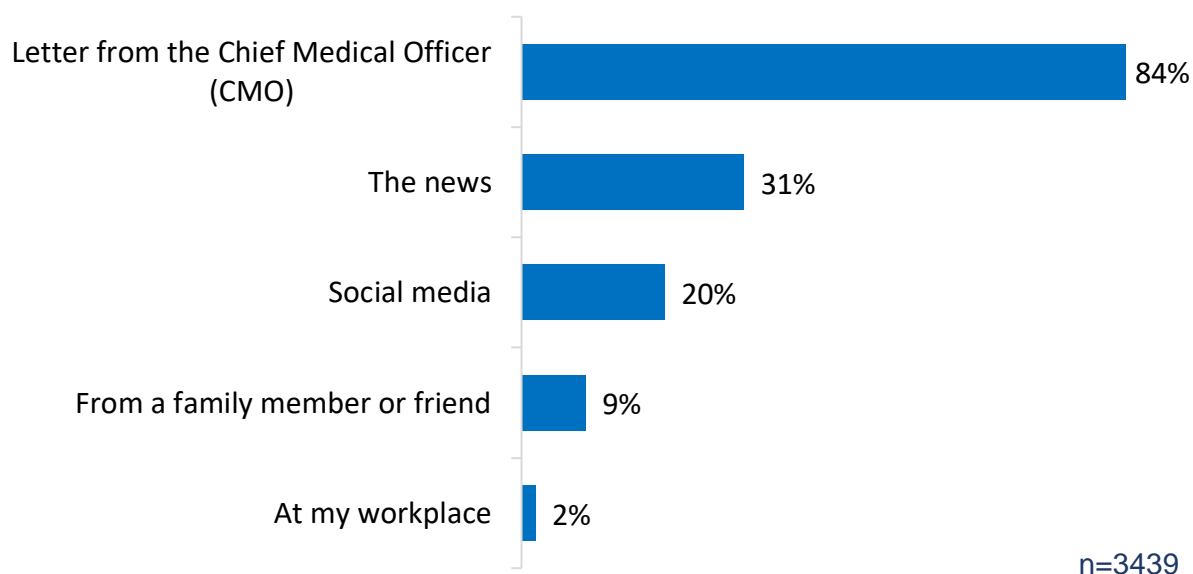
Yes	<b>87%</b>
No	<b>13%</b>
Response count	3967

### Where respondents heard about the Distance Aware scheme

The most common channel where people learned about the scheme was through letters that they received from the Chief Medical Officer (**84%**).

Other ways they found out about it included:

- through the news (**31%**)
- through social media posts (**20%**)
- from a family member or friend (**9%**)
- through their workplace (**2%**).



Percentages add up to more than 100% as participants were able to pick more than one response.

## Whether respondents decided to pick up a Distance Aware badge or lanyard

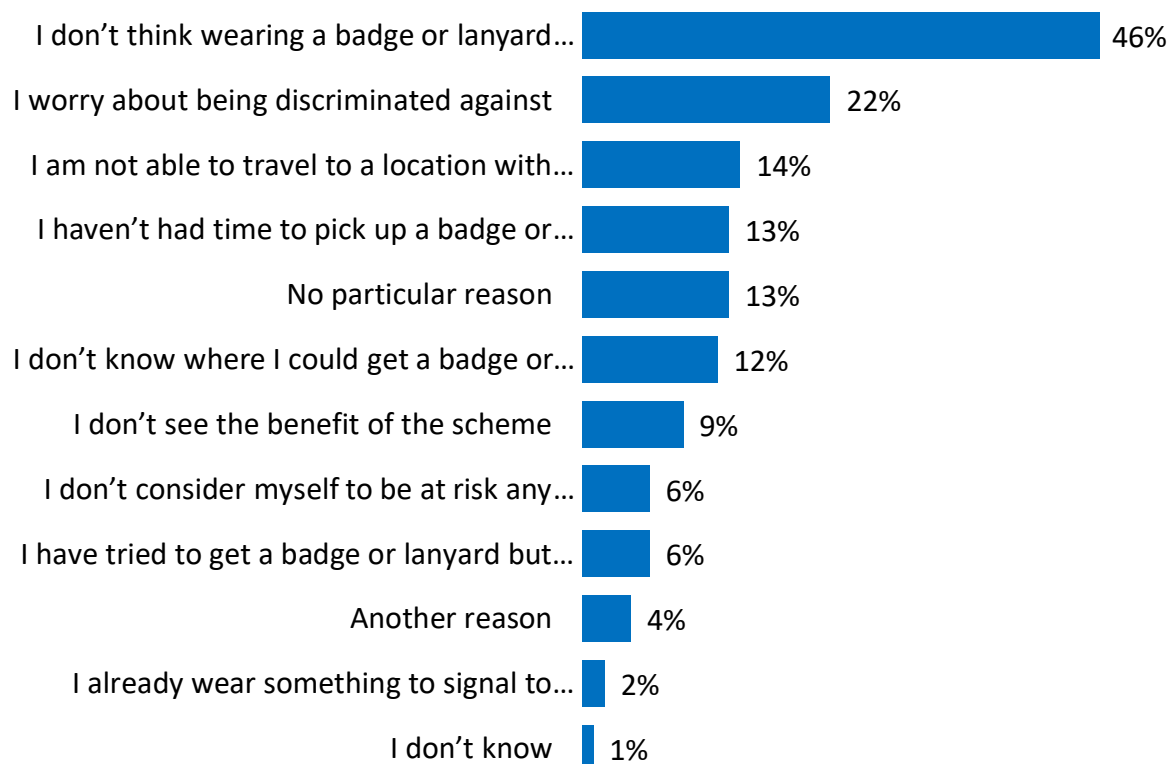
Of those who were aware of the Distance Aware Scheme, **28%** had decided to pick up a Distance Aware badge or lanyard.

Yes	<b>28%</b>
No	<b>72%</b>
Response count	3442

Of the 72% of respondents (n=2491) that had decided not to pick up a badge or lanyard. The top reasons for this included:

- I don't think wearing a badge or lanyard would change people's behaviour **(46%)**
- I worry about being discriminated against **(22%)**
- I am not able to travel to a location with badges and lanyards **(14%)**

Of those who responded 'another reason' the most common responses were from people who said that they felt able to manage their own risk or that they hadn't been out and therefore wouldn't need a badge or lanyard.



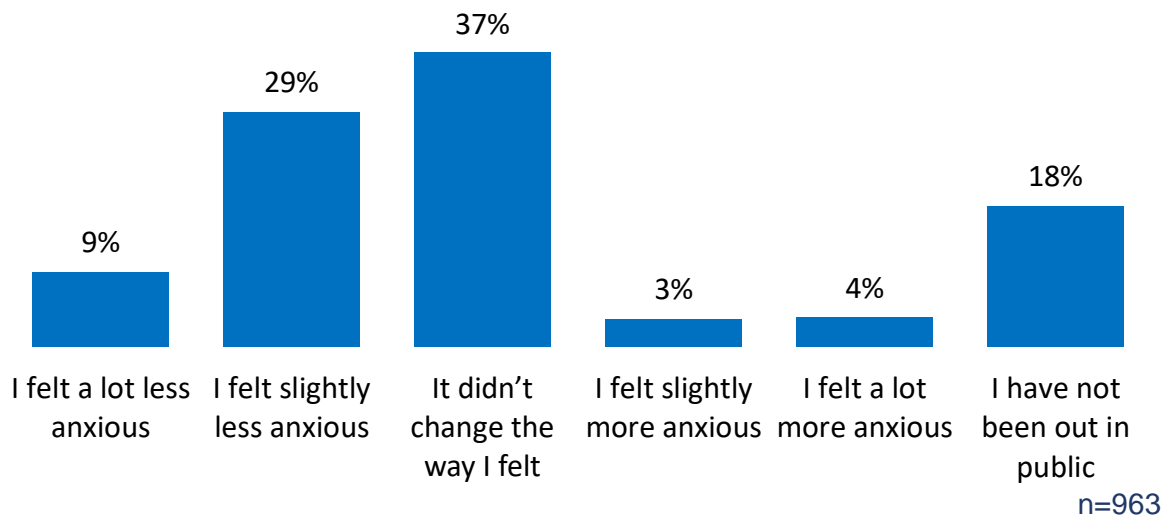
Percentages add up to more than 100% as participants were able to pick more than one response.

### Impact of the scheme on how people felt when out in public

Of those who had decided to pick up a Distance Aware badge or lanyard (n=963), **37%** said that it did not change the way they felt when they were out in public. **9%** said they felt a lot less anxious when out in public and **29%** said they felt slightly less anxious.

**3%** said that they felt more anxious and **4%** said that they felt a lot more anxious. It is unclear if this was because they were wearing the badge or lanyard, or because of other factors.

**18%** said that they had not been out in public since picking up their badge or lanyard.

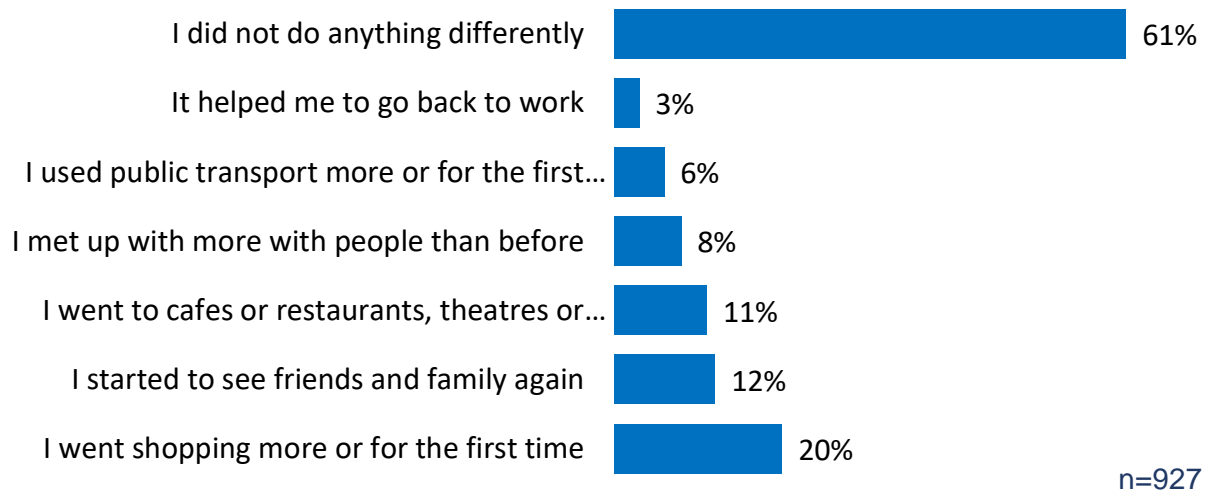


### Impact of the scheme on wearers' confidence to do day-to-day activities

**61%** of those who said that they had picked up a badge or lanyard (n=927) said that they did not do anything differently after picking up a badge or lanyard. However, of those who did change their behaviour:

- **20%** said they had more confidence to go shopping more or for the first time
- **12%** said that they started to see friends and family more or for the first time
- **11%** had more confidence to go to cafes, restaurants or other leisure facilities for the first time
- **8%** said they had more confidence to meet up with more people
- **6%** said that they now had confidence to use public transport more or for the first time

Of the **1%** who had chosen an activity not on the list, the most common response was going to the doctors or healthcare appointments.



Percentages add up to more than 100% as participants were able to pick more than one response.

### Impact of the scheme on attending work or education

Of participants who had decided to pick up a badge or lanyard, **29%** were either employed or self-employed (n=268).

Of these participants, **68%** needed to go to the workplace for their job or were doing a mixture of home and workplace based working.

I am working from home	<b>28%</b>
I go to my workplace	<b>47%</b>
I do a mixture of working from home and going to my workplace	<b>21%</b>
I can't work from home but I am not going into my workplace	<b>4%</b>
Response rate	268

Of those who were attending a workplace (n=181), **63%** said that they wore their badge or lanyard in their workplace.

Yes	<b>62%</b>
No	<b>38%</b>
Response count	181

Of the respondents who were wearing their badge or lanyard at work (n=111), **56%** said that wearing their badge or lanyard had made them feel more reassured in their workplace.

Yes	<b>56%</b>
No	<b>44%</b>
Response count	111



Very few participants told us that they were in education (1% of responses). Of the 10 respondents, 4 of them had to attend classes in person and only 2 people wore a badge or lanyard to their school, workplace or university. Limited insight can be gained from the additional questions with such low response numbers.

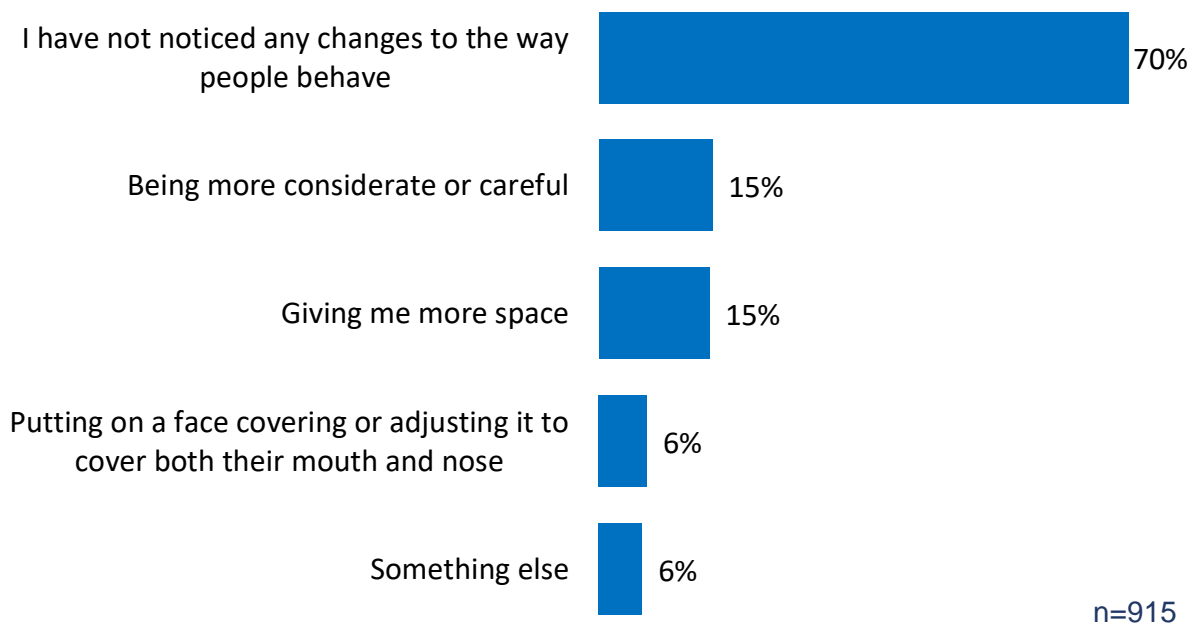
### Impact of the scheme on the behaviour of others

Of those who had picked up a badge or lanyard (n=915), **70%** had not noticed any changes to the way that other people behaved when they were close to them.

However, **15%** said that they noticed others being more careful or considerate, **14%** noticed others giving them more space and **6%** noticed other putting on or adjusting their face covering.

Of the 6% who responded 'Something else' (n=53) the most common reasons provided were:

- That they had not been out or used a badge/lanyard
- That they had a negative response from people
- That people came too close to read what was on the badge/lanyard



Percentages add up to more than 100% as participants were able to pick more than one response.

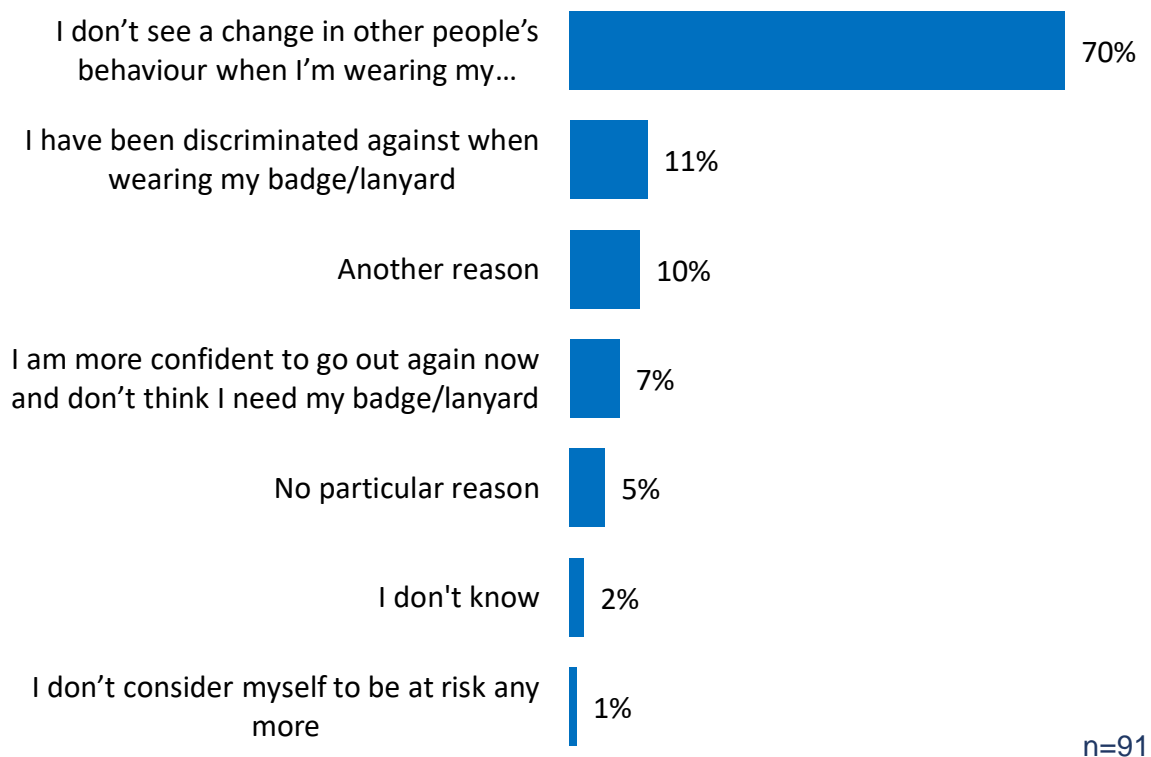
## Future of the scheme

When thinking about how they might use their badge or lanyard in the future, **90%** of respondents (n=915) said that they will continue to wear their badge or lanyard in the future.

Yes	<b>90%</b>
No	<b>10%</b>
Response count	915

The 10% of respondents who said that they would not continue to wear their badge or lanyard in the future (n=91) gave a range of reasons as to why not. The most common reason for this was **70%** saying that they had not seen a change in the way people behave when they wear their badge or lanyard.

Of those who picked 'another reason' the most common answer provided was that they didn't feel there was enough public awareness about the scheme (n=5). This is likely to be linked to the 70% who said they did not see a change in the way people behave around them.



Percentages add up to more than 100% as participants were able to pick more than one response.



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