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SHAPING PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES  
TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES AND HARM

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# Public opinion, compliance & communication during the pandemic

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LGA/ADPH annual public health conference 2021

March 23rd 2021

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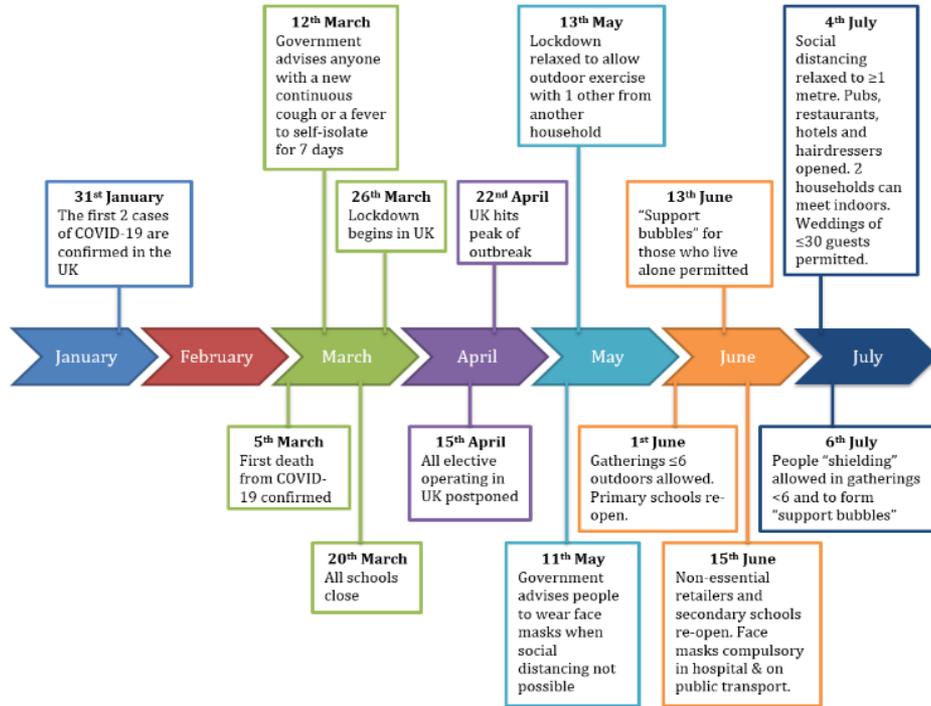
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# Outline

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- Context – timeline and comparisons of all cause mortality in Europe
  - What do we know from public opinion surveys and other data sources about levels of compliance with the restrictions we've had to live with over the past year in the UK?
  - How do these differ between groups?
  - What do we know about trust in government and sources of information?
  - Has the communication been clear and how can it be improved
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# Timeline and public health measures



- Over the past year, measures taken to address Covid-19 have required the public to change their behaviour in a whole range of ways
- Restrictions on movement, social interaction, employment, education and essential services have been profound
- We are only beginning to understand the societal impacts of the pandemic and these will be studied for years to come
- Questions were asked by policy makers, the media and others about whether the public would comply with restrictions, how long that compliance would last or how comprehensive it would be

Source: Collins, T, Pillai, A (2020) Changing perceptions during the Covid-19 pandemic peak in the UK

<https://www.boa.ac.uk/resources/knowledge-hub/changing-perceptions-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-peak-in-the-uk.html>

# Comparisons of all cause mortality between European countries and regions

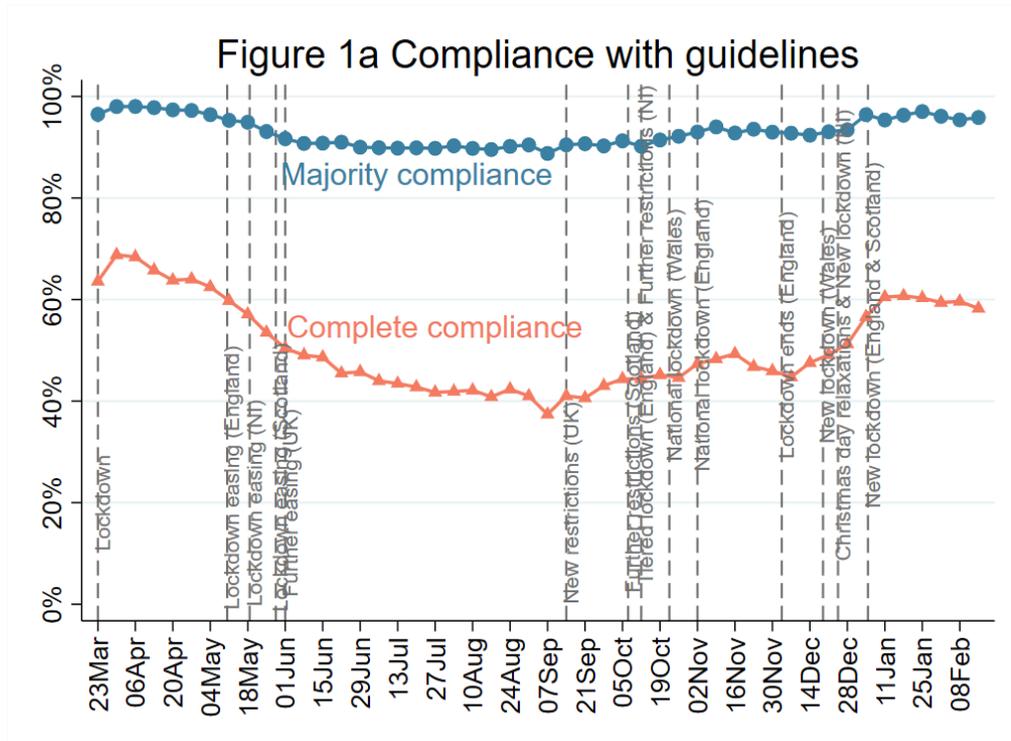
- The Office for National Statistics recently published updated comparisons of all cause mortality between European countries and regions for 2020 and up to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- The UK as a whole had very high levels of excess mortality during the first and second 'wave' of the pandemic
- During the first wave this was the highest in Europe – particularly England
- During the second wave other European countries fared worse to date although our levels of excess mortality were still far higher than most other countries in the dataset



Source: ONS (2021)

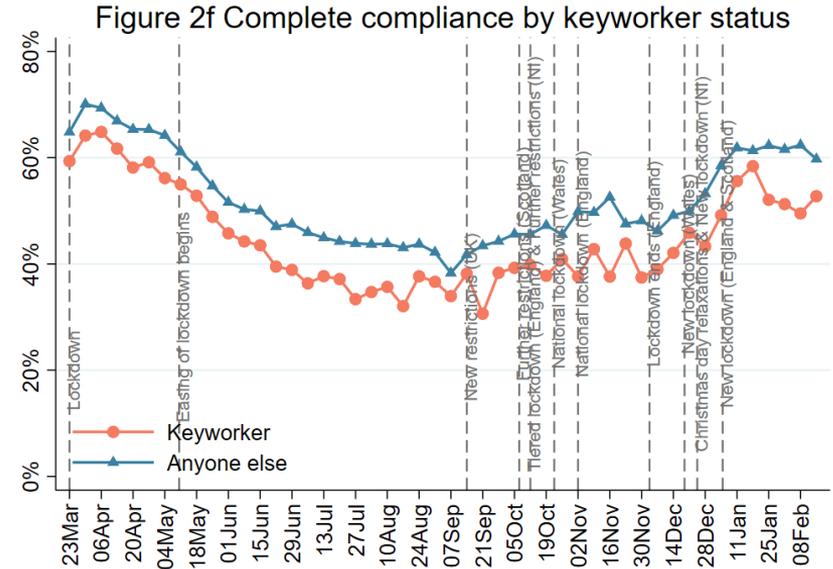
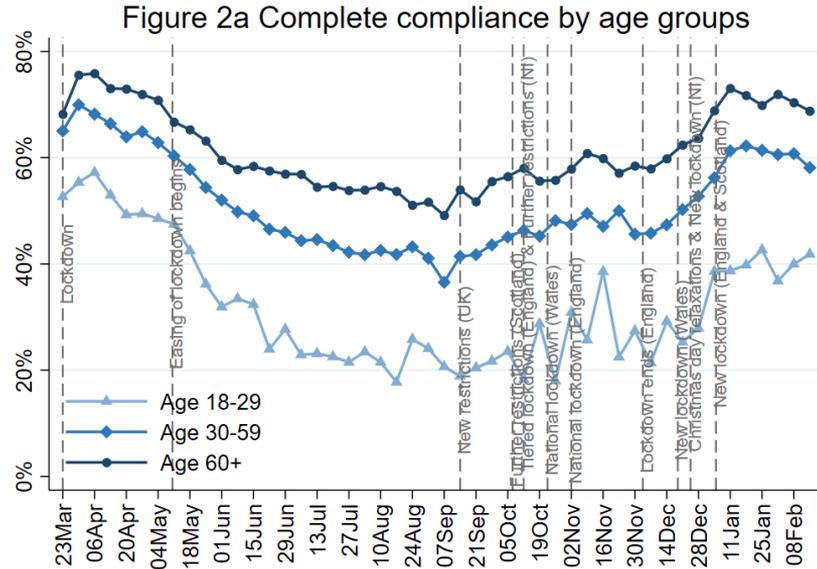
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/comparisonsofallcaus mortalitybetweeneuropeancountriesandregions/2020>

# Compliance with guidelines in the UK from March 2020 to February 2021

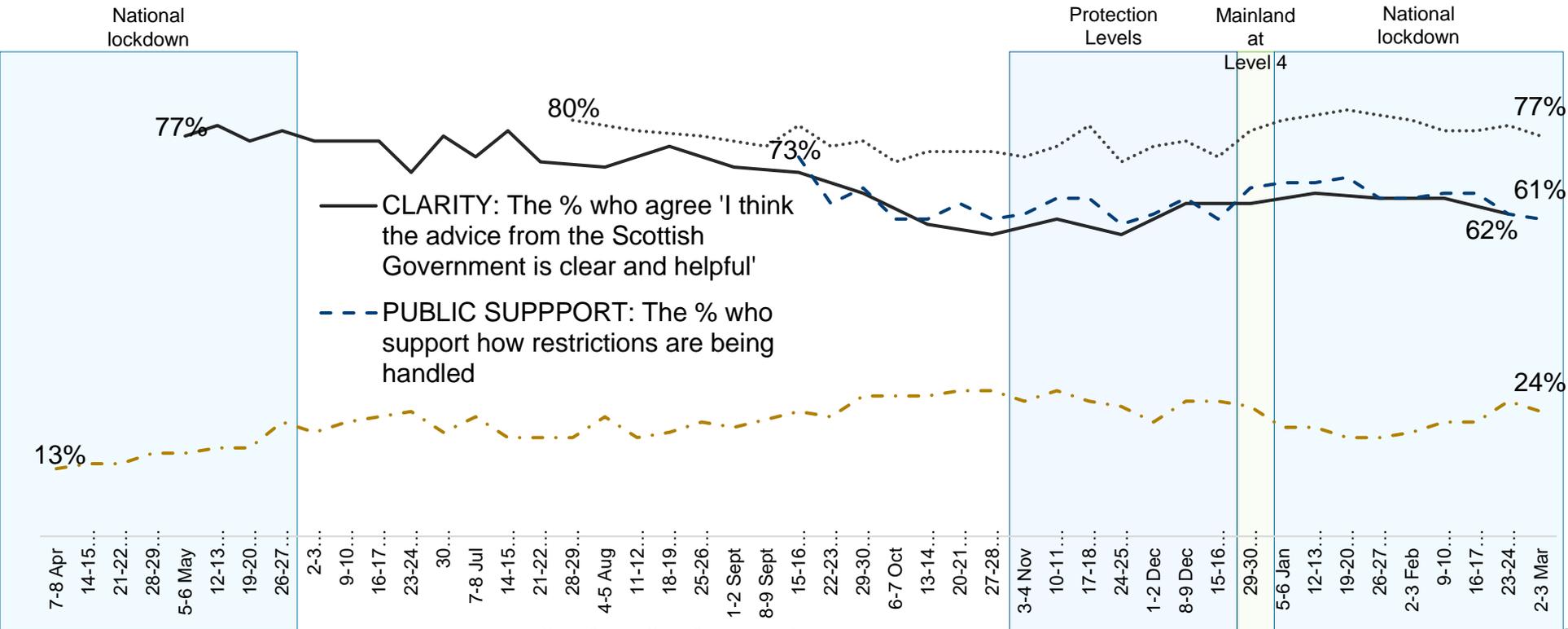


Source: Fancourt, D, Bu, F, Mak, H, Paul, E, Steptoe, A (2021) Covid-19 Social Study: Results Release 31. [www.covidsocialsturdy.org/results](http://www.covidsocialsturdy.org/results)

# 'Complete' compliance by age groups and key worker status

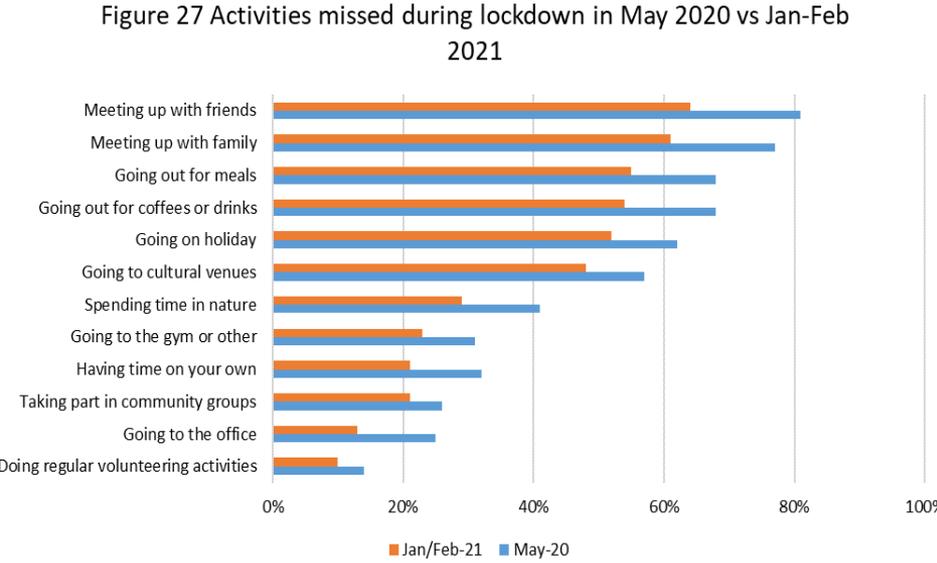
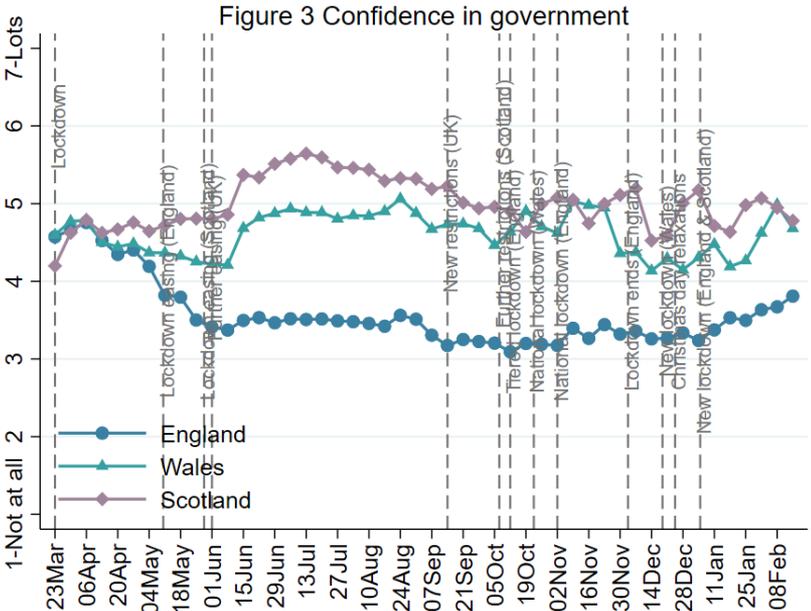


# Scotland: Trends in compliance from April 2020 to March 2021



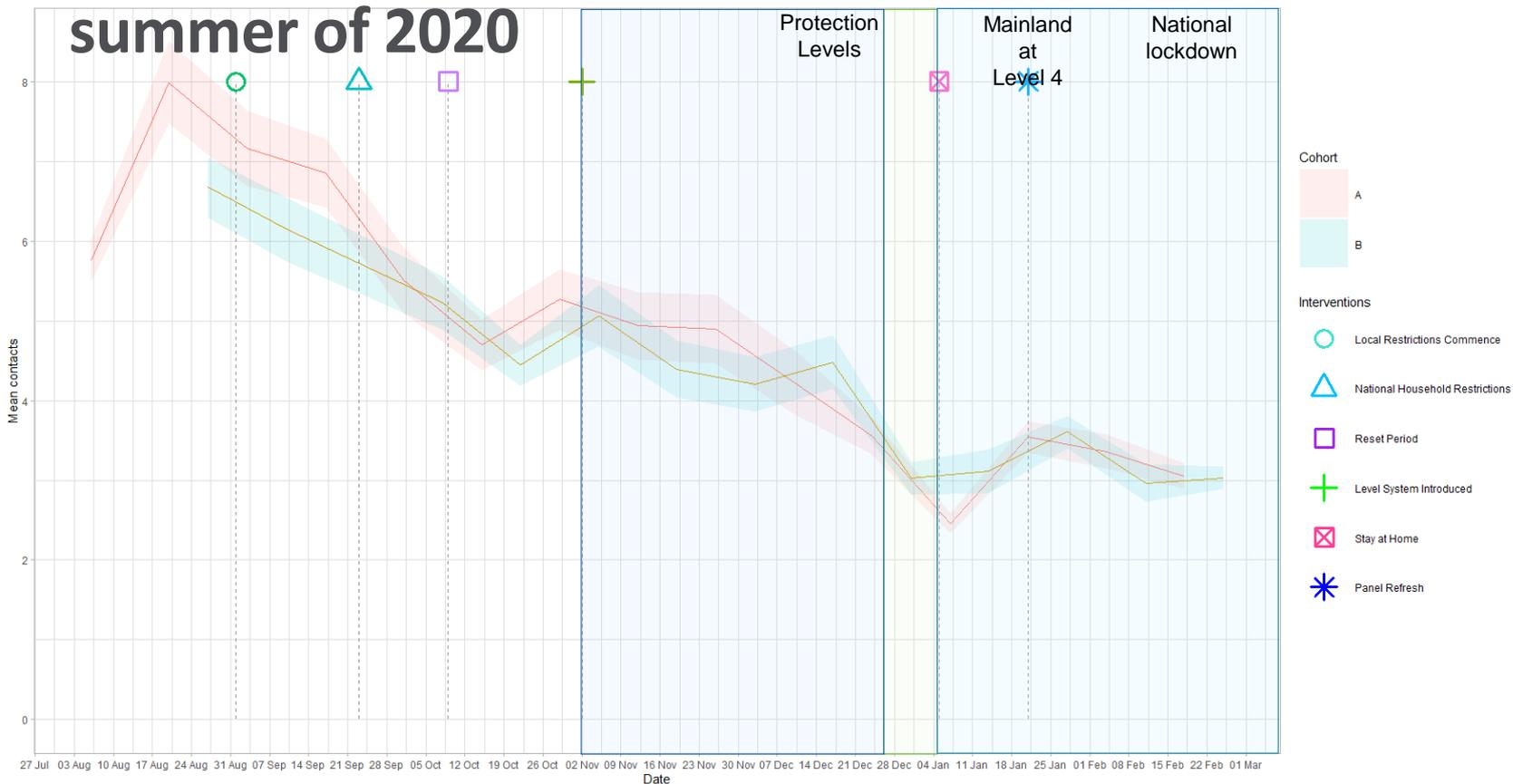
Source: YouGov polling for polling for Scottish government

# Confidence in government and activities missed during first & second UK wide lockdown periods



Source: Fancourt, D, Bu, F, Mak, H, Paul, E, Steptoe, A (2021) Covid-19 Social Study: Results Release 31. [www.covidsocialsturdy.org/results](http://www.covidsocialsturdy.org/results)

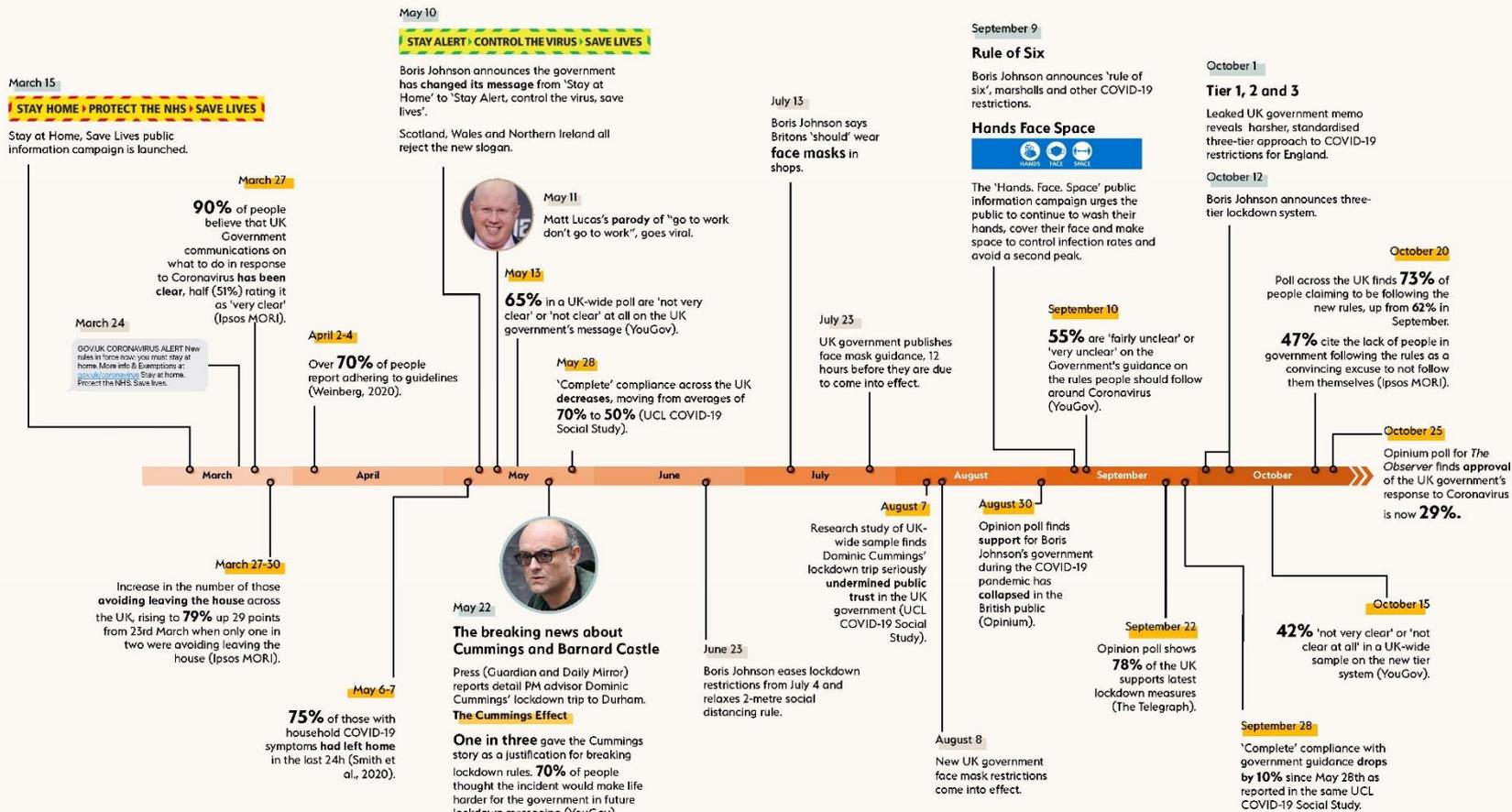
# Average daily contacts in Scotland have reduced since the summer of 2020



Source: Public Health Scotland Scottish Contact Survey, August 2020 to March 2021

# A timeline of COVID-related messaging and key COVID events

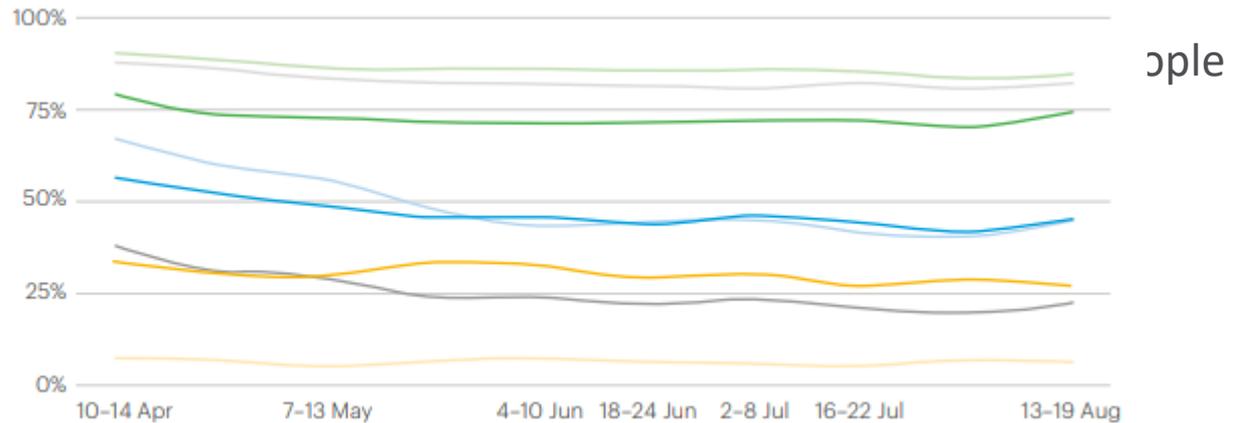
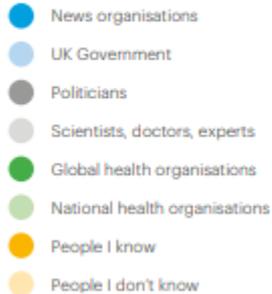
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# Trust and information sources

- Nielsen and colleagues have described the pandemic as a communications crisis as well as a public health emergency.
- From ten online panel surveys with adults in the UK (mid April to mid August 2020) they found that most people were relatively informed but trust in news organisations, the g

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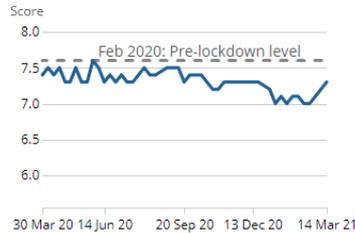
# Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: Life satisfaction and perceptions of the future

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to March 2021

Overall, how **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays?



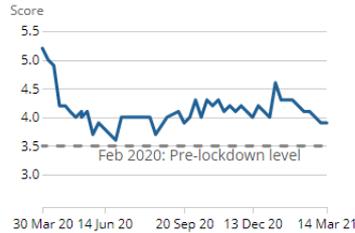
Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are **worthwhile**?



Overall, how **happy** did you feel yesterday?

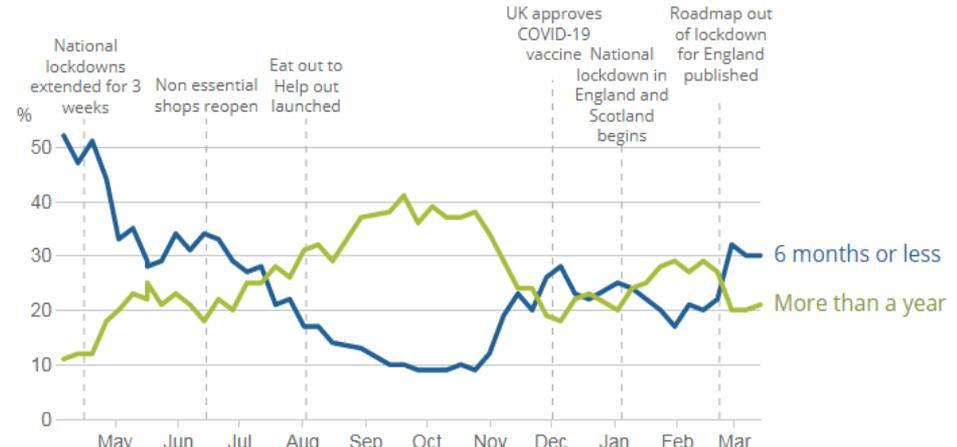


Overall, how **anxious** did you feel yesterday?



- Levels of happiness and feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile is still lower than pre-February 2020 levels but is gradually improving
- 30% of adults in GB currently believe that life will return to normal in 6 months or less and 21%

Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to March 2021



Source: ONS (2021)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/19march2021>

# Looking ahead: New report from the British Academy published this week

## **THE COVID DECADE** Understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19



- 1. Increased importance of local communities**
- 2. Low and unstable levels of trust**
- 3. Widening geographic inequalities**
- 4. Exacerbated structural inequalities**
- 5. Worsened health outcomes and growing health inequalities**
- 6. Greater awareness of the importance of mental health**
- 7. Pressure on revenue streams across the economy**
- 8. Rising unemployment and changing labour markets**
- 9. Renewed awareness of education and skills**

“With the advent of vaccines and the imminent ending of lockdowns, we might think that the impact of COVID-19 is coming to an end. This would be wrong. We are in a COVID decade: the social, economic and cultural effects of the pandemic will cast a long shadow into the future – perhaps longer than a decade – and the sooner we begin to understand, the better placed we will be to address them.”

SO WITH THE DARKEST DAYS BEHIND  
OUR SHIP OF HOPE WILL STEER  
AND WHEN IN DOUBT JUST KEEP IN MIND  
OUR MOTTO PERSEVERE



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Thank you – [Linda.Bauld@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Linda.Bauld@ed.ac.uk)  
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