

Opinions and Lifestyle Survey QMI

Quality and Methodology Information for the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), including strengths and limitations, recent improvements and quality characteristics.

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1 . Output information

- Survey name: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)
- Frequency: Monthly
- How compiled: Cross-sectional sample survey
- Geographic coverage: Great Britain
- Sample size: Details on the issued and achieved sample sizes for each wave can be found in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: Sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#)

2 . About this Quality and Methodology Information report

This quality and methodology information report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the European Statistical System's five dimensions of quality) as well as the methods used to create it.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- understand the methods used to create the data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data

3 . Important points

- The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) covers topics relating to people's experience of daily life and events, and currently includes questions about what people feel are important issues, their health, well-being and experiences of increases in the cost of living. It regularly includes questions on a range of other topics such as attitudes towards climate change and artificial intelligence; topics can be requested by government departments.
- The survey covers residents of Great Britain who are aged 16 years and over.
- Data collection is conducted by an online self-completion questionnaire; telephone interviews are available if requested by a respondent, however the predominant mode of collection is online.
- Estimates (including associated confidence intervals) from the OPN are currently published in our monthly [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain bulletin](#); estimates are provided at an all-adults level, by age, sex, and other personal characteristics on a regular basis in this and other ONS releases.
- OPN anonymised datasets are made available in our [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#) and the [UK Data Service](#), where the data are available, without charge, to registered accredited researchers; anonymised data are also made available to sponsors of survey questions.

4 . Quality summary

Overview

This report relates to the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN), which collects data from individuals (aged 16 years or older) in Great Britain.

Uses and users

From June 2024, the OPN has moved to monthly data collection and outputs. Data collection is split over two 12-day collection periods each month. This allows data collection to be spread throughout the whole month (rather than the majority of responses occurring at the start of the month) and continues to allow flexibility in adding new questions to the survey during a month should timely changes be required.

The OPN covers a variety of topics relating to people's experience of daily life and events, including questions about what people feel are important issues, their health, well-being, and experiences of increases in the cost of living. The content on the survey changes regularly to keep pace with changing content requirements from users. It regularly includes questions on a range of other topics, such as attitudes towards climate change and the environment, as well as artificial intelligence; topics can be sponsored by government departments.

From August 2021 to June 2024 the OPN covered roughly fortnightly periods with an issued sample size of around 5,000 adults in each period. From March 2020 to July 2021 the OPN was weekly, to help understand how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting life in Great Britain. Changes to the OPN survey design were made during these periods to reflect an increased demand for more timely data during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since April 2022, the ONS has produced a fortnightly bulletin on [Public opinions and social trends](#) using OPN data on a variety of topics, including what people feel are important issues, their health, well-being, and experiences of increases in the cost of living. From June 2024, this bulletin is published on a monthly basis, a change that is part of our [regular review of our statistics and analysis](#) to meet changing user needs in a sustainable way.

Estimates from the OPN are regularly available broken down by personal characteristics, such as age or sex. From April 2025, key measures from the OPN are published by additional demographics on a quarterly basis, such as country, indices of multiple deprivation and tenure.

Other regularly updated publications from the ONS using OPN data include:

- our [UK measures of national well-being dashboard](#), which is a collection of the latest data on well-being in the UK, as individuals, communities, and a nation. It also considers how sustainable our well-being is for the future
- our [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain articles](#), which cover analysis of the characteristics of those that are affected by increases in the cost of living
- our [Public awareness, opinions and expectations about artificial intelligence article](#), which explores adults' awareness of artificial intelligence (AI) use and attitudes towards the adoption of AI, including benefits and risks
- our [Impact of winter pressures on different population groups in Great Britain articles](#), which provide in-depth analysis on how increases in the cost of living and difficulty accessing NHS services have impacted people's lives during the winter period
- our [Adult smoking habits in the UK bulletins](#), which provide analysis of cigarette smoking habits among adults in the UK, including the proportion of people who smoke, demographic breakdowns, changes over time and use of e-cigarettes

Previously, between March 2020 and March 2022, we published a regular bulletin using OPN data to monitor the [social impacts of coronavirus throughout the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Data and estimates are published on our website, with estimates also shared with government departments. This is to provide indicators to inform policy, and to evaluate existing policies and their effectiveness at driving social and behavioural change.

The survey collects timely data for research and policy analysis. OPN anonymised datasets are made available via our [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#) and [UK Data Service](#). The data are available, without charge, to registered accredited researchers.

More information on user requested data can be found in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: Sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#).

Strengths and limitations

The main strengths of the OPN include that:

- it is flexible and responsive, and collecting monthly data over two 12-day periods allows new questions to be included at pace
- it allows for a quick turnaround of data; estimates and reference tables are published on our website within weeks of survey completion
- it meets data needs; the questionnaire is developed with end-user consultation, and design expertise is applied in the development stages
- it meets users' sampling needs; questions can be run for multiple periods, with the data combined to increase the sample size for examining sub-groups of the population
- questions are designed to be asked of all adults in our sample, however it is also possible to include questions only relevant for sub-samples
- robust methods are adopted for the survey's sampling and weighting strategies to limit the impact of bias
- it is accurate and reliable; the questionnaire is rigorously tested and the data is quality assured

The main limitations of the OPN include that:

- in-depth probing of topic modules is not possible because of the length of the questionnaire, although options are available for separate follow-up surveys from the OPN
- providing estimates from the OPN for smaller sub-groups of the population (for example, by local area) is limited by the sample size of the survey, although periods can be combined to increase sample size

Recent updates

From June 2024, the OPN design was updated to allow a more sustainable survey design. These changes included:

- reducing the frequency of the survey; we now collect data over two 12-day periods each month and provide monthly data, rather than collecting and providing data fortnightly
- reducing the sample size; more information on the issued and achieved sample each month can be found in [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: Sample sizes, response rates and user requested data](#)
- reducing the use of incentives to participate, using non-monetary incentives (for example, stationery) rather than monetary incentives

The OPN before and during the coronavirus pandemic

To understand how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was affecting life in Great Britain, from March 2020 we adapted what was previously a monthly OPN survey, to a weekly survey. The weekly survey was created to collect timely information on people's experiences and opinions related to the pandemic. Each period, some of the survey questions changed to reflect changing circumstances and priorities during the pandemic.

From August 2021 to June 2024, the OPN moved to a fortnightly data collection period, with a sample size of around 5,000 households in each period, achieving an overall response of between approximately 2,500 to 3,500 per fortnightly period. A monetary incentive to participate was frequently provided.

Prior to the changes to the OPN survey during the coronavirus pandemic, there had been ongoing improvements to the OPN. In recent years, work had been undertaken to change the design of the OPN from a face-to-face survey to a mixed mode design (online first with telephone follow-up). Mixed mode collection allows respondents to complete the survey more flexibly and provides a more cost-effective service for customers.

The first phase of transformation was completed in April 2018 when the OPN moved from "face to face" to "telephone" data collection. This phase of transformation included a questionnaire redesign. Specialist research, design and testing has been conducted to inform the transformation of the survey. Three pilot tests were conducted to understand the impact of changing mode and sample frame on data quality, sample representativeness and bias. Findings demonstrated minimal impact on most of the data. Where some differences were found, these were likely due to the redesigned question wording, which was optimised for telephone collection. More information on the pilots and findings is available in our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: mixed mode pilot analysis article](#).

The second phase of transformation was completed in November 2019, with the move from telephone only to mixed mode collection. OPN data are collected using an online self-completion questionnaire with telephone interview available if required.

5 . Quality characteristics of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey

This section provides a range of information that describes the quality and characteristics of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Relevance

Relevance is the degree to which the survey meets users' needs.

From June 2024, the OPN is a monthly survey on topics relating to people's experience of daily life and events, including questions about what people feel are important issues, their health, well-being, and experiences of increases in the cost of living.

The OPN provides rapid answers to questions of immediate policy interest, helping to measure public awareness of new policies.

Topics that have been requested include:

- physical and mental health measures
- loneliness
- experiences of crime
- attitudes to climate change
- people's awareness of green jobs
- people's experiences of increases in the cost of living
- people's experiences of industrial action
- people's attitudes towards artificial intelligence

Accuracy and reliability

Accuracy and reliability are the degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value.

The total error in a survey estimate is made up of two types: sampling error and non-sampling error.

Sampling error

The OPN is a sample survey, so estimates are subject to sampling variability. Sampling variability is dependent on several factors, including the:

- size of the sample
- effects of the sampling method
- effects of weighting

Non-sampling error

The main sources of non-sampling error are:

- frame under-coverage
- non-response
- response errors (such as misleading questions or interviewer bias)
- errors when imputing or processing data

To minimise the effects of non-sampling errors, the questionnaire is carefully designed and tested, several attempts are made to contact respondents and extensive quality control procedures are used throughout. Weighting is also used to compensate for non-response and frame under-coverage.

Uncertainty

Estimates in our publications contain some [uncertainty](#). There are many sources of uncertainty, but the main possible sources for the OPN include:

- respondent bias from self-reported data, and as such, there will be some bias around estimates, which may lead to differences from other data sources. Collecting these data allows us to include analysis by demographics, to understand how different groups within society are affected by an issue
- the data are based on a sample of people rather than the whole population, so there is some statistical uncertainty in the estimates
- potential non-response bias, which may not be fully mitigated by the methods used to adjust for this including weighting

As in any survey, some data can be incorrect or missing. We minimise this during data collection, by ensuring survey questions are as easy to understand as possible.

Communicating uncertainty

To quantify uncertainty in our analyses, we present 95% [confidence intervals](#) in our data.

Confidence intervals give an indication of the degree of uncertainty of an estimate, with a wider interval indicating more uncertainty in the estimate. Overlapping intervals indicate that there may not be a true difference between two estimates.

Representativeness

Ensuring a representative sample of the general population is important for producing survey-based estimates broken down by characteristics such as age, sex, and region. When using this survey, this is important to help us understand trends in different population sub-groups across Great Britain. More information about how the sample is drawn can be found in the Sampling frame sub-section in [Section 6: Methods used to produce the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey \(OPN\) data](#).

Within the OPN sample, considering data responses in April 2025:

- younger age groups (aged 16 to 29 years and 30 to 49 years) are under-represented and older age groups (aged 50 to 69 years and 70 years and over) are over-represented among respondents, when comparing with the general population
- Males and females are similarly represented in the sample as they are in the general population
- Respondents from England, Wales and Scotland are similarly represented in the sample as they are in the general population
- The following tables show the representativeness analysis of the OPN sample; the unweighted response population is the actual number of people taking part in the survey

Table 1a: Actual relevant population and OPN survey response sample by sex, Great Britain

Category	Actual relevant population profile		OPN survey unweighted monthly response sample profile		Difference	
	Number of people	Proportion	Number of people	Proportion	Absolute difference to actual population	Relative difference to actual population (%)
Female	27,757,665	0.51	2,329	0.50	-0.01	-1.9
Male	26,209,102	0.49	2,288	0.50	0.01	2.0

Source: Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Table 1a reflects OPN survey response and population totals in April 2025.
2. Population figures used for the "actual relevant population" are based on projections from mid -2022 population estimates for Great Britain.
3. Absolute difference represents the difference in the unweighted proportion in our sample to the actual population.
4. Relative difference represents the proportion of difference attributed to each group. This is calculated by taking the absolute difference and dividing by the proportion of the actual population.

Table 1b: Actual relevant population and OPN survey response sample by age, Great Britain

Category	Actual relevant population profile		OPN survey unweighted monthly sample profile		Difference	
	Number of people	Proportion	Number of people	Proportion	Absolute difference to actual population	Relative difference to actual population (%)
16 to 29	9,933,335	0.18	261	0.06	-0.13	-69.3
30 to 49	18,148,721	0.34	667	0.14	-0.19	-57.0
50 to 69	16,678,195	0.31	1,715	0.37	0.06	20.2
70 and over	9,206,516	0.17	1,974	0.43	0.26	150.6

Source: Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Table 1b reflects OPN survey response and population totals in April 2025.
2. Population figures used for the "actual relevant population" are based on projections from mid -2022 population estimates for Great Britain.
3. Absolute difference represents the difference in the unweighted proportion in our sample to the actual population.
4. Relative difference represents the proportion of difference attributed to each group. This is calculated by taking the absolute difference and dividing by the proportion of the actual population.

Characteristics

OPN participants are asked to provide information on a variety of other personal characteristics including their health, ethnicity, occupation and employment status (among other things) in the participant questionnaire. This allows for analysis by these characteristics in OPN outputs.

The options provided on the questionnaire for health and ethnicity are [harmonised](#) to allow for consistency and comparability of statistical outputs from different sources.

There are some differences in the way in which OPN captures employment status compared with other ONS Labour Market estimates. For example, an OPN respondent is deemed "in employment" for OPN if their employment status is either employee, self-employed or unpaid family worker. This is different to the definition used in ONS Labour Market estimates, which also includes a small number of people on government training schemes. The Opinions and Lifestyle Survey does not ask whether a person is on a government training scheme. As such, caution should be taken when comparing employment-related estimates from the OPN with those from other labour market sources.

Similarly, the OPN survey collects data on a range of demographics, including Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and income. The purpose of the survey is not to provide an estimate of the percentage of people in each SOC code or income band. These data can instead be used as proxy measures, to understand how different groups of society are affected by an issue.

Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar.

Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain, for example, geographic level.

The demographic data collected and used on the OPN meet [harmonised standards](#) (across Government Statistical Service (GSS) surveys). The questions used on the survey follow the relevant available GSS harmonisation guidance.

In November 2019, the OPN moved to mixed mode collection. This means that OPN data are collected using an online self-completion questionnaire. Alternatively, if required, the interview is conducted by telephone. Currently, around 1% of responses are collected with the help of telephone interviewers, for example when respondents indicate that they are unable to complete the online survey themselves.

Three pilot tests were conducted to understand the impact of changing mode and sample frame on data quality, sample representativeness and bias. For more information on the pilots and findings, please see our [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey: mixed mode pilot analysis article](#).

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we published estimates of personal well-being using both the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the OPN. Our [Quarterly estimates of personal well-being in the UK technical paper](#) considers the impact that the pandemic has had on data collection, to what extent this has influenced estimates of personal well-being and reviews the comparability of these estimates.

Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility is the ease with which users can access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information.

Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice.

Anonymised data are sent to our [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#) and [UK Data Service](#). Data are usually available through these routes with an approximately two-to-three month lag.

Datasets from the OPN that are published in our Public opinions and social trends bulletins meet [GSS accessibility standards](#).

Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between data collection and data delivery.

Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual data delivery dates.

OPN data are currently collected monthly. This comprises two online data collection periods of 12 days each, with questionnaire content agreed approximately one week before data collection begins. After these data collection periods, the data are cleaned, weighted, and analysed.

Anonymised data is sent to government departments who have an agreement to access the survey data, usually within weeks after the data collection period. Data are also currently published on our website, in the form of the monthly [Public opinions and social trends bulletin](#), and its associated aggregated published datasets. More details on related releases are available on the [GOV.UK release calendar](#), which provides advance notice of release dates.

Concepts and definitions (including list of changes to definitions)

Concepts and definitions describe the legislation governing the output, and a description of the classifications used in the output.

Proxy response

The OPN is different from other Office for National Statistics (ONS) social surveys in that it does not, generally, collect proxy responses (responses from another adult on behalf of the selected adult). This is because a large proportion of questions asked on the survey are opinions questions. These are unsuitable for proxy collection because of their subjective nature, which if collected would reduce the accuracy and quality of the data through adding missing or inaccurate responses.

There are some exceptions to this where it is appropriate to collect a proxy response. These questions generally reflect the experiences of the household rather than the individual. For example, questions on household income.

Why you can trust our data

The ONS is the UK's largest independent producer of statistics and its National Statistics Institute. The Data Policies and Information Charter, available on the ONS website, details how data are collected, secured, and used in the publication of statistics. We treat the data that we hold with respect, keeping it secure and confidential, and we use statistical methods that are professional, ethical and transparent. More information about our data policies is available.

The OPN is carefully designed and tested, and extensive quality control procedures are used throughout.

6 . Methods used to produce the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey data

Data for the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) are primarily collected through a self-completion online questionnaire. Alternatively, if required, the interview is conducted by telephone, with approximately 1% of responses currently being collected with the help of telephone interviewers. The population of interest is residents of Great Britain aged 16 years and over.

Sampling frame

From June 2024, the OPN sample is primarily drawn from respondents to the Transformed Labour Market Survey (TLFS), as explained in our [Transformed Labour Force Survey - user guidance methodology](#). The secondary sample source consists of previous respondents to the OPN itself.

From March 2020 to June 2024, respondents who had taken part in a variety of previous Office for National Statistics (ONS) household surveys including the TLFS, (its predecessors the Labour Market Survey and the Labour Force Survey), the Living Costs and Food Survey, the European Health Interview Survey and the OPN itself, had been included in the sample frame for the OPN.

The sampling frame used for the TLFS is the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF) of small users. The PAF is the most comprehensive address database in the UK. It is updated daily and contains approximately 30 million addresses. The sample for the TLFS covers the whole of Great Britain.

Sampling

A two-stage approach is applied to sampling. In the first stage, a sample of households is drawn from the sample frame. In the second stage, one individual from each sampled household is selected. Samples are taken from a range of age groups and geographical regions to ensure that different ages and geographies are represented.

Each month, a stratified (by age, sex and region) random selection of adults are asked to take part in the OPN. The selected respondent (aged 16 years and over) is the only household member who is eligible to participate in the survey. Proxy interviews or responses are not permitted.

Using the TLFS and OPN introduces a potential source of bias as it only includes those who have completed the TLFS or OPN and have not objected to re-contact. However, data collected in the previous TLFS are used in the weighting process to reduce this potential bias. This is achieved by including population controls based on variables collected in the TLFS. Previous data are also used to adjust for non-response bias before weighting the adjusted sampling weights to population estimates.

For more information about sampling, please email omnibus@ons.gov.uk.

How we process the data

The data are validated and cleaned, variables are derived, and weights are applied. As the OPN collects information on a sample of the population, the data are weighted to enable inferences to be made from this sample to the entire population.

Weighting the OPN includes calibrating by factors including age, sex, region, qualification level, and employment status. We produce and publish estimates from the OPN, together with confidence intervals for questions with sample base sizes greater than 10 cases. Where sample base for questions allows, published analysis also includes estimates broken down by various demographics (for example, age and sex).

How we quality assure and validate the data

Quality assurance processes are completed, from the drawing of the sample and development of the questionnaire to publication of the data and estimates. These processes include:

- the accuracy of contact information in the sample is validated
- the questionnaire is tested, both by the research team and telephone operations through test scenarios
- post collection, a series of checks are conducted on the data to identify inconsistencies and invalid responses
- inconsistent or invalid responses are individually reviewed by a researcher before a decision is made about how to deal with them
- estimates are dual run and checked at multiple stages between analysis and final reference tables and publication
- the application of statistical disclosure control, suppressing estimates to avoid any disclosure of personal information

How we disseminate the data

Our monthly [Public opinions and social trends bulletin](#) uses OPN data on a variety of topics. We previously published a fortnightly bulletin to monitor the [social impacts of coronavirus](#) throughout the pandemic.

Data from the OPN have also been used in many other ONS publications including:

- our [UK measures of national well-being dashboard](#), which is a collection of the latest data on well-being in the UK, as individuals, communities, and a nation. It also considers how sustainable our well-being is for the future
- our [Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain articles](#), which cover analysis of the characteristics of those that are affected by increases in the cost of living
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- our [Adult smoking habits in the UK bulletins](#), which provide analysis of cigarette smoking habits among adults in the UK, including the proportion of people who smoke, demographic breakdowns, changes over time and use of e-cigarettes

Additionally, anonymised data are sent to our [Secure Research Service \(SRS\)](#) and [UK Data Service](#). The data are available, without charge, to registered accredited researchers.

7 . Cite this methodology

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