Statistical bulletin

# Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 11 to 22 May 2022

Social insights on daily life and events, including impacts on health and well-being, the cost of living, and goods shortages from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

Contact:
Catarina Figueira, Caleb Ogwuru, David Ainslie and Tim Vizard
policy.evidence.analysis@ons.gov.uk
+44 300 0671543

Release date:
27 May 2022

Next release:
10 June 2022

## Notice

### 27 May 2022

This bulletin was previously published in the Coronavirus section of the website. It has a new title and page location from 29 April 2022 onwards. It will continue to present indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, along with other insights into daily life and events, including health and well-being, cost of living and goods shortages. All previous versions of the bulletin can be found on our Coronavirus and the Social impacts on Great Britain previous releases page.

# Table of contents

# 1 . Main points

In the latest period, 11 to 22 May 2022, based on adults in Great Britain:

- around 9 in 10 (88%) adults reported their cost of living had risen over the past month (the same as in the previous period, 27 April to 8 May 2022); when we first started asking this question in the period 3 to 14 November 2021, this proportion was 62%
- the most common reasons given by adults who reported their cost of living had increased in the latest period continued to be an increase in the price of food shopping (93%), an increase in gas or electricity bills (85%), and an increase in the price of fuel (78%)
- over 4 in 10 (44%) adults reported that they were buying less food when food shopping in the past two weeks; this proportion appears to be increasing (41% in the previous period and 18% at the beginning of 2022)
- around a quarter of adults (26%) said they were considering making changes in their home to improve energy efficiency; this was a larger proportion compared with when we last asked in autumn 2021 (19%)
- the most common improvements being considered among adults considering making changes to improve energy efficiency were: improving insulation (42%), switching energy supplier (24%), installing solar panels (21%) or making other improvements (32%)
- the most common reasons reported among the around three-quarters (74%) of adults not considering making changes to improve energy efficiency were: they would cost too much (36%), that they do not own their home (29%) or they felt their home was efficient enough (26%)
- three-quarters (75%) of working adults travelled to work at some point in the past seven days, a slight increase compared with 70% in the previous period

## 2 . Household finances and cost of living

Estimates in this release are based on data collected between 11 and 22 May (the "latest period") and 27 April and 8 May 2022 (the "previous period").

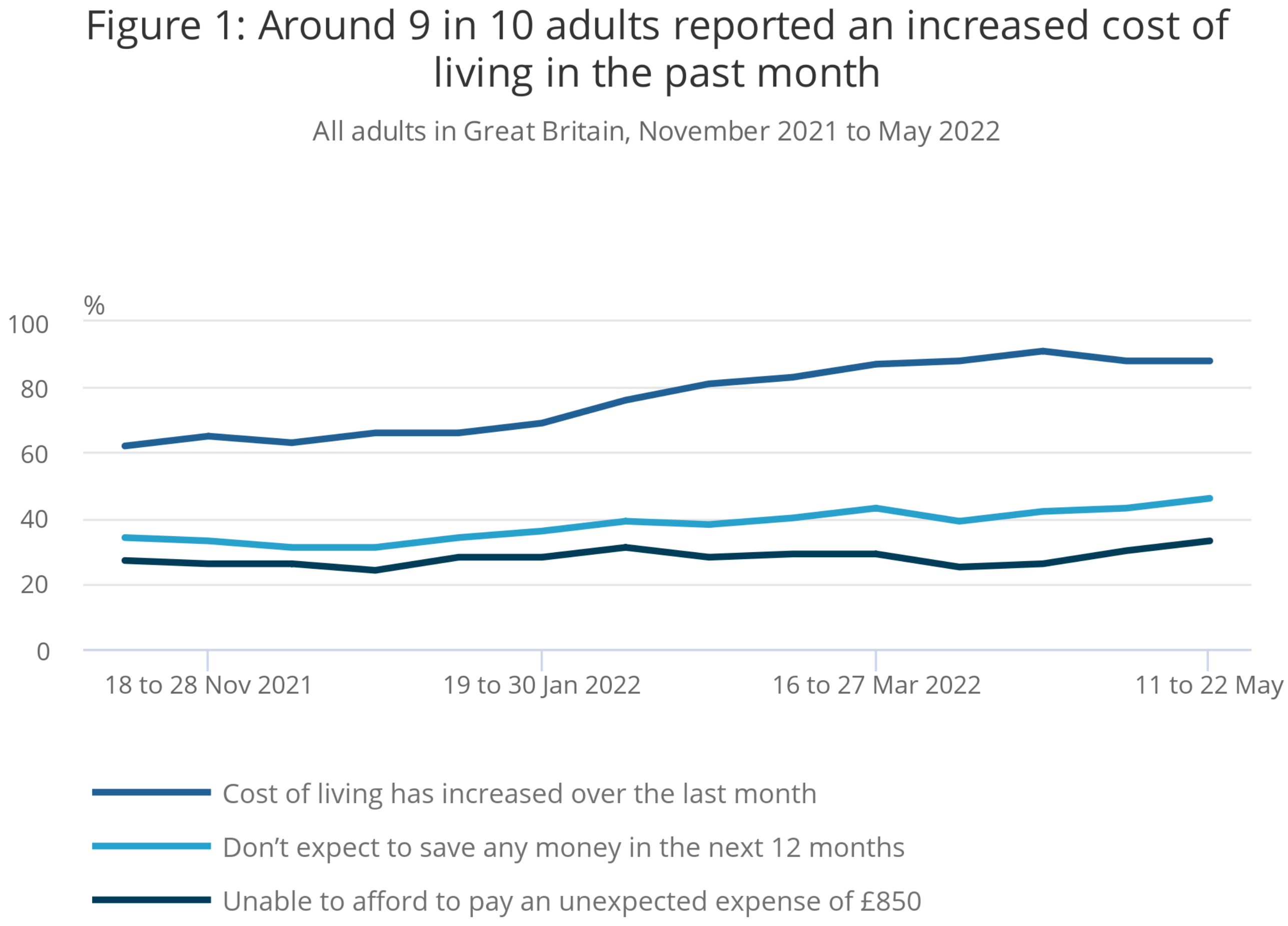
Further demographic breakdowns of these and other estimates in this bulletin are available within our accompanying Public opinions and social trends datasets.

We continued to ask adults about changes in their cost of living over the last month, with around 9 in 10 (88%) reporting it had increased in the latest period (the same as in the previous period). The proportion of adults reporting this has increased since November 2021, when 62% of adults reported this (3 to 14 November 2021).

The proportion of adults who think they would not be able to save any money in the next 12 months (46% in the latest period, 34% in November 2021) or that they could not afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850 (33% in the latest period, 27% in November 2021) has increased more gradually over the same time period (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Around 9 in 10 adults reported an increased cost of living in the past month**

**All adults in Great Britain, November 2021 to May 2022**




**Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)**

**Notes:**

1. Questions included “Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850?”, “In view of the general economic situation, do you think you will be able to save any money in the next 12 months?”, and “Over the last month, has your cost of living changed?".

2. “Unable to afford to pay an unexpected expense of £850” refers to the proportion of people who answered “No” to “Could your household afford to pay an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850?”.

3. “Do not expect to save any money in the next 12 months” refers to the proportion of respondents who answered “No” to “In view of the general economic situation, do you think you will be able to save any money in the next 12 months?”.

The most common reasons reported by adults who said their cost of living had increased in the latest period continued to be:

- an increase in the price of food shopping (93%, compared with 92% in the previous period)
- an increase in gas or electricity bills (85%, the same as in the previous period)
- an increase in the price of fuel (78%, compared with 79% in the previous period)

Of these reasons, almost 6 in 10 (57%) reported being most worried about an increase in gas and electricity bills (58% in the previous period).

### Actions following cost of living increases

The most common actions reported by adults who reported their cost of living had increased continued to be:

- spending less on non-essentials (56%, the same as in the previous period)
- using less fuel such as gas or electricity at home (50%, compared with 51% in the previous period)
- cutting back on non-essential journeys in a vehicle (39%, compared with 40% in the previous period)
- spending less on food shopping and essentials (36%, compared with 35% in the previous period)

When asked about their shopping habits in the past two weeks, over 4 in 10 (44%) adults reported that they were buying less food when food shopping. This proportion appears to be increasing, having been 41% in the previous period and 18% at the beginning of 2022.

Similarly, almost half (46%) of adults reported they had to spend more than usual to get what they normally buy in the latest period (38% in the previous period and 19% at the beginning of 2022).

### Energy bills

The proportion of those who pay energy bills who are finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford them appears to be increasing. Over 4 in 10 (46%) of these adults reported they found it very or somewhat difficult to afford them in the latest period (41% in the previous period, 37% in the period 30 March to 10 April 2022).

In comparison, around 4 in 10 (42%) adults who pay energy bills reported it was very or somewhat easy to afford their energy bills in the latest period (49% in the previous period, 52% in the period 30 March to 10 April 2022).

Among those who reported they have gas or electricity supplied to their home, 4% reported they were behind on these bills (the same as in the previous period). This proportion has appeared to be relatively stable since we first start asking this question in March 2022.

There are strong seasonal spending patterns relating to gas and electricity that may affect the results presented in this section. For more information on this and recent price rises for gas and electricity, please see our latest Consumer price inflation bulletin for April 2022.

For estimates on people's experiences regarding cost of living including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our household finances dataset. For more estimates on people's experiences when shopping specifically, please see our personal experiences of shortages of goods dataset.

## 3 . Attitudes towards improving energy efficiency of homes

This week, we asked respondents about their attitudes towards improving the energy efficiency of their homes. The same questions were asked in autumn 2021 (the period 22 September to 3 October 2021) just before the COP26 meeting in Glasgow, and were published as part of our dataset Opinions and Lifestyle Survey data on domestic energy efficiency in Great Britain.

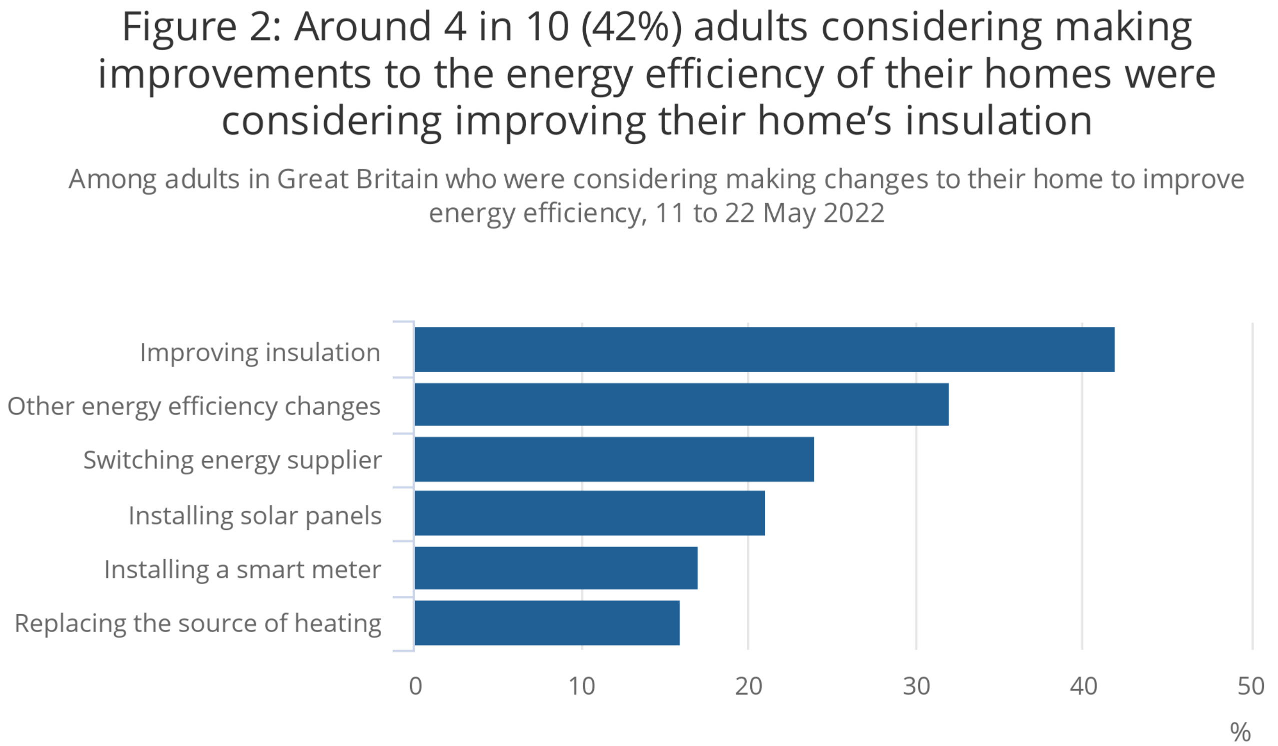
In the latest period, around a quarter of adults (26%) said they were considering making changes in their home to improve energy efficiency. This was a larger proportion compared with when we asked in autumn 2021 (19%).

The most common improvements being considered among these adults in the latest period were:

- improving insulation (42%)
- making other energy efficiency improvements (32%)
- switching energy supplier (24%)
- installing solar panels (21%) (Figure 2)

**Figure 2: Around 4 in 10 (42%) adults considering making improvements to the energy efficiency of their homes were considering improving their home's insulation**

**Among adults in Great Britain who were considering making changes to their home to improve energy efficiency, 11 to 22 May 2022**




**Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)**

**Notes:**

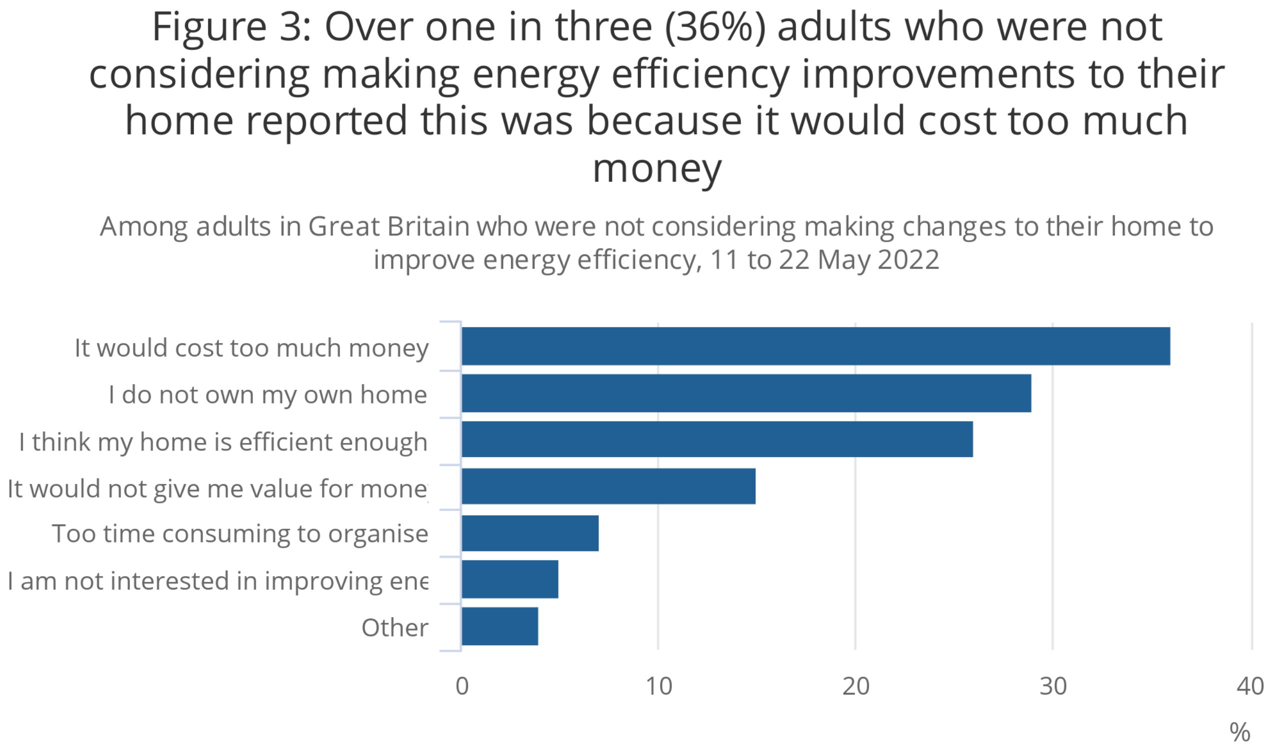
1. Question posed to adults who said they were considering making changes in their home to improve energy efficiency was "Are you considering making any of the following changes?".
2. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

The most common reasons reported among the almost three-quarters of adults (74%) who were not considering making energy efficiency improvements in the latest period were:

- making improvements would cost too much (36%)
- they do not own their home (29%)
- they felt their home was already efficient enough (26%) (Figure 3)

**Figure 3: Over one in three (36%) adults who were not considering making energy efficiency improvements to their home reported this was because it would cost too much money**

**Among adults in Great Britain who were not considering making changes to their home to improve energy efficiency, 11 to 22 May 2022**




**Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) – Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)**

**Notes:**

1. The question posed to those who said they were not considering making changes in their home to improve energy efficiency was "What are the barriers stopping you from improving energy efficiency in your home?"
2. Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

For estimates regarding adults in Great Britain's attitudes towards making energy efficiency improvements in their home, including breakdowns by age and sex, please see Table 5 of our household finances dataset.

## 4 . Shortages of goods

In this period, we continued to ask adults whether they had experienced shortages of any goods at any time in the past two weeks:

- around 1 in 10 (9%) adults reported being unable to buy fuel in the previous two weeks a decrease from 11% in the previous period but still higher than at the start of 2022 (3% in the period 6 to 16 January 2022)
- around 1 in 20 (6%) adults reported being unable to buy medicine (5% in the previous period, 5% at the beginning of 2022)
- around one in six (16%) reported being unable to buy essential food (14% previous period, 16% at the beginning of 2022)
- one in four (25%) reported being unable to buy other non-essential food (23% in the previous period, 20% at the beginning of 2022)

For estimates on people's experiences regarding shortages of goods, including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our [Personal experiences of shortages of goods dataset].

# 5 . Personal well-being and loneliness

## Personal well-being

Average levels of personal well-being were:

- life satisfaction - 6.9 in the latest period and 7.0 in the previous period
- feeling that the things done in life are worthwhile - 7.2 in the latest period and 7.3 in the previous period
- happiness - 6.9 in the latest period and 7.1 in the previous period
- anxiety - 4.0 in the latest period and the previous period

These estimates of personal well-being may differ from those in our [Personal well-being in the UK, quarterly: April 2011 to September 2021 bulletin], based on the Annual Population Survey. To find out more about the difference between these two data sources, you can view our [Data collection changes due to the pandemic and their impact on estimating personal well-being methodology].

### Figure 4: Levels of personal well-being remained relatively stable

**Adults in Great Britain, March 2020 to May 2022**

**Notes:**

1. Questions included "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?", and "Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?".
2. These questions are answered on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
3. Base: all adults.

**Download the data**

.xlsx

### Loneliness

Around 1 in 12 (8%) adults reported feeling lonely always or often in the latest period (6% in the previous period).

This increased to around a quarter of adults (25%) reporting feeling lonely always, often or some of the time in the latest period (the same as in the previous period).

For further estimates on people's personal well-being and loneliness, including breakdowns by age, sex and trends over time, please see our personal well-being and loneliness dataset.

## 6 . Social impacts of COVID-19 and other illnesses

Two in five (40%) adults reported they were very or somewhat worried about the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on their lives right now. This is a slight decrease from 43% in the previous period.

Further estimates regarding the social impacts of COVID-19, including use of face masks, handwashing, social distancing, self-isolation and lateral flow tests, including breakdowns by age and sex, can be found in our Coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses dataset.

## 7 . Location of work

Three-quarters (75%) of working adults travelled to work at some point in the past seven days (70% in the previous period).

This comprised 53% of working adults who only travelled to work (46% in the previous period) and 22% of adults who both worked from home and travelled to work (24% in the previous period).

15% of working adults said they worked from home exclusively in the past seven days (14% in the previous period).

11% neither travelled to work or worked from home (16% in the previous period). Reasons for working adults neither working from home nor travelling to work in the past seven days might include being on annual or sick leave.

Further estimates regarding the location of work, including breakdowns by age and sex and trends over time, can be found in Tables 3, 10 and 11 of our Coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses dataset.

Our Is hybrid working here to stay article provides information on people's future plans regarding their location of work, including examination of the characteristics of those most likely to hybrid work (both work from home and travel to work) .

## 8 . Public opinions and social trends data

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: coronavirus (COVID-19) and other illnesses
Dataset | Released 27 May 2022
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) related to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other illnesses on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal experiences of shortages of goods
Dataset | Released on 27 May 2022
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of whether people experienced shortages of goods such as food, medicine, or fuel when shopping in Great Britain.

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances
Dataset | Released on 27 May 2022
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of people's experiences of changes in their cost of living and household finances in Great Britain.

Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: personal well-being and loneliness
Dataset | Released on 27 May 2022
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) of personal well-being and loneliness in Great Britain.

## 9 . Measuring the data

This release contains data and indicators from a module being undertaken through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS') Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN).

From the period 30 March to 10 April 2022, changes were made to the OPN to enable us to provide ongoing indicators on a wide range of public opinions and societal issues.

Changes were made to the OPN survey design, for example, sample size, the questionnaire, and financial incentives to participate. These changes may result in small changes to the responding sample. We therefore advise caution with comparing estimates from this period onwards with those published prior to this period.

Breakdowns by age and sex, including confidence intervals for the estimates, are contained in our Public opinion and social trends, Great Britain datasets. Breakdowns by region are no longer provided within these datasets because of the smaller responding sample size of the OPN survey.

Where changes in results from previous weeks are presented in this bulletin, associated confidence intervals should be used to assess the statistical significance of the differences.

### Sampling and weighting

In the latest period (11 to 22 May 2022), we sampled 4,981 households. This sample was randomly selected from those that had previously completed the Labour Market Survey (LMS) or OPN. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,245 individuals, representing a 45.1% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on June 2021 population estimates). Further information on the survey design and quality can be found in our Opinions and Lifestyle Survey quality and methodology information (QMI).

## 10 . Related links

[Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain]
Bulletin | Released 1 April 2022
Indicators from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (covering 16 to 27 March 2022) of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on people, households and communities in Great Britain.

[Coronavirus (COVID-19) latest insights]
Web page | Updated as data become available
An interactive tool to explore the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other sources.

[Economic activity and social change in the UK, real-time indicators]
Bulletin | Released weekly
Early experimental data and analysis on economic activity and social change in the UK. These faster indicators are created using rapid response surveys, novel data sources, and experimental methods.

[The rising cost of living and its impact on individuals in Great Britain: November 2021 to March 2022]
Article | Released 25 April 2022
Analysis of how different groups in the population have been affected by an increase in their cost of living, using data from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

[Is hybrid working here to stay?]
Article | Released 23 May 2022
Almost half of working adults were working from home at times during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, but what will business as usual look like with restrictions lifted?

[COVID-19 Question Bank]
Web page | Updated frequently
Government Statistical Service page that provides a bank of questions from multiple Office for National Statistics (ONS) surveys related to COVID-19 to be used in other surveys to further support harmonisation and questionnaire development. This bank also provides users with an understanding of what data the ONS has in relation to the coronavirus pandemic.