

An abstract network diagram consisting of numerous nodes (represented by circles of varying sizes and colors, including blue, grey, and white) connected by thin, light blue lines. The nodes are distributed across the entire image, with a higher density in the lower half. The background is split horizontally: the top half is white, and the bottom half is dark grey.

Britainthinks

— Insight & Strategy —

Mood of the Nation 2021

Full report | December 2021

This the full-length report of our Mood of the Nation 2021 study.

You can find the summary report, data tables and summary film [here](#).

We put the people that matter most at the heart of our clients' thinking.



Our work for our clients is rooted in an understanding of the wider context

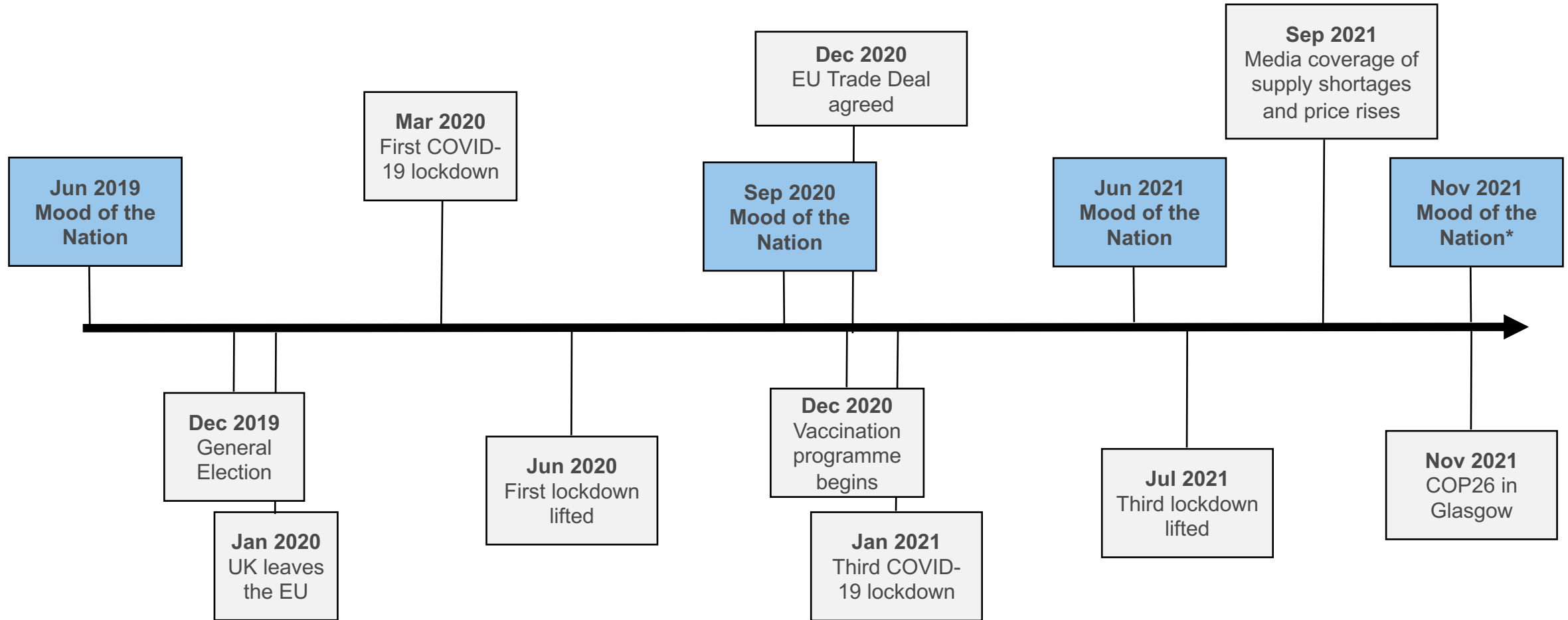


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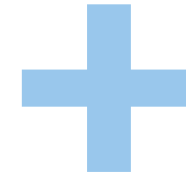
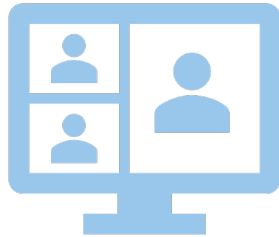
1 Introduction

Since 2019, BritainThinks has set out to understand the national mood – and a lot has happened since then



*Fieldwork was largely completed prior to the detection of the Omicron variant and before the news stories about Downing Street Christmas parties. A high-level update based on fieldwork conducted in mid-December can be found in the appendix.

This year, we conducted a survey, focus groups and depth interviews with members of the public



6 online focus groups

26th October – 4th November*

5-6 participants each

Groups were split by age,
location, socioeconomic group
and voting history

Online survey

12th – 14th November*

Nationally-representative
sample of 2,075 UK adults

11 online follow-up interviews

28th October – 30th November*

1-on-1 interviews with selected
focus group participants

*Fieldwork was largely completed prior to the detection of the Omicron variant and before the news stories about Downing Street Christmas parties. A high-level update based on fieldwork conducted in mid-December can be found in the appendix.

We heard from people across the country to understand their hopes and fears



Yellow dots indicate the six locations where qualitative research participants were drawn from: Glasgow, Greater Manchester, Walsall, South Wales, London and the South East. The quantitative survey was nationally-representative, with respondents drawn from across the UK.

Key findings

1.

After a surge in optimism in the summer as lockdowns lifted, the mood of the nation has turned gloomy again – almost back to the depths of late 2020. Pessimism about the UK has increased, with feelings of apprehensiveness, disappointment and anger widespread. Few expect the UK to be a better place to live in 10 years' time.

2.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to be a prominent driver of concern and uncertainty. Only a minority believe that the worst of the pandemic is behind us and a substantial proportion expect another full national lockdown in the next twelve months.

3.

In addition to the pandemic, there is widespread worry about the cost of living increasing, deep fears about the state of the NHS, and considerable unhappiness at bitter societal divisions. There are some less prominent, underlying concerns about climate change and Brexit that are also darkening the national mood.

4.

There is generally little confidence in the ability of the Government to steer the country through the urgent crises it faces. Perceptions of corruption among the political class are widespread, though the biggest drivers of mistrust are perceived incompetence and a sense that politicians are out-of-touch.

5.

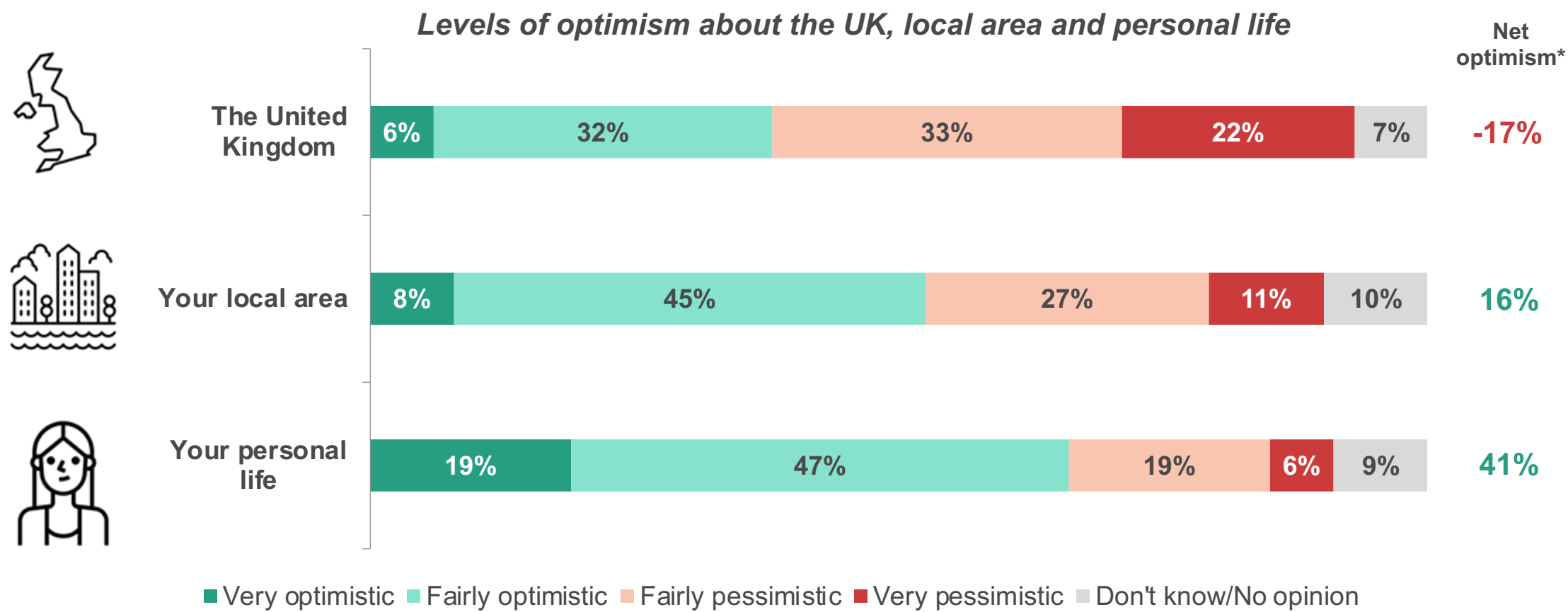
Feelings toward local areas are very mixed, with those living in more rural, affluent areas more optimistic. The return of entertainment opportunities and local businesses drive positivity – though there are prevalent concerns about violent crime, the provision of local healthcare and perceived underinvestment in some parts of the country.

6.

By contrast, feelings of happiness and contentment predominate when thinking about personal lives. Despite a large proportion feeling as though their mental health deteriorated in the past year, fewer people are now concerned about losing their jobs and there is greater optimism about social lives, with many embracing a change of pace.

2 Overview of the national mood

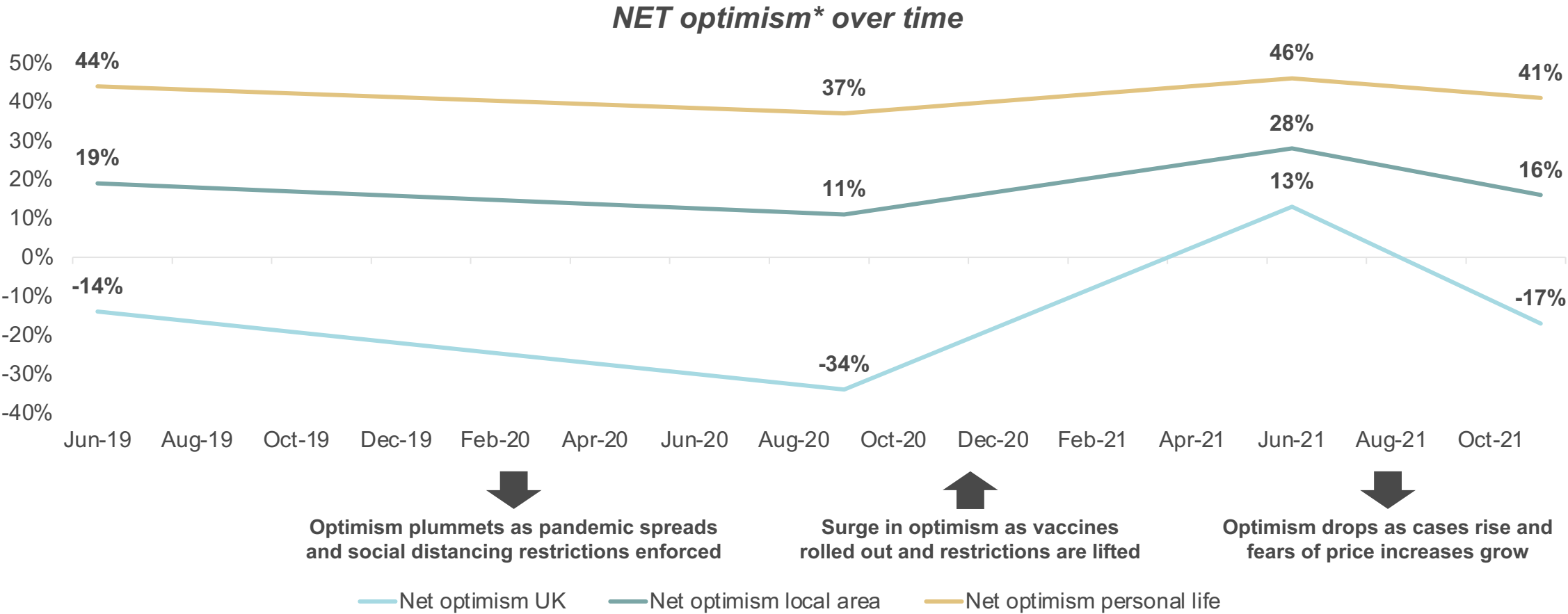
There is still widespread pessimism about the UK – but people feel more optimistic about their local areas and personal lives



Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075). *Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.

Fieldwork was largely completed prior to the detection of the Omicron variant and before the news stories about Downing Street Christmas parties. A high-level update based on fieldwork conducted in mid-December can be found in the appendix.

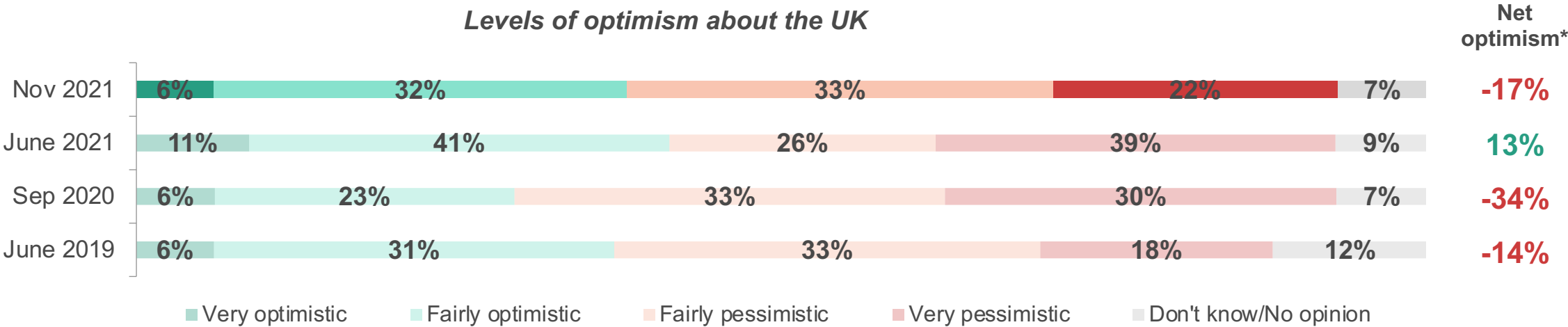
After a surge in optimism in Summer 2021, the mood has turned gloomy again



Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Jun 2021, n=2064), (Nov 2021, n=2075), (Dec 2021, n=2102) *Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.

3 Feelings about the UK

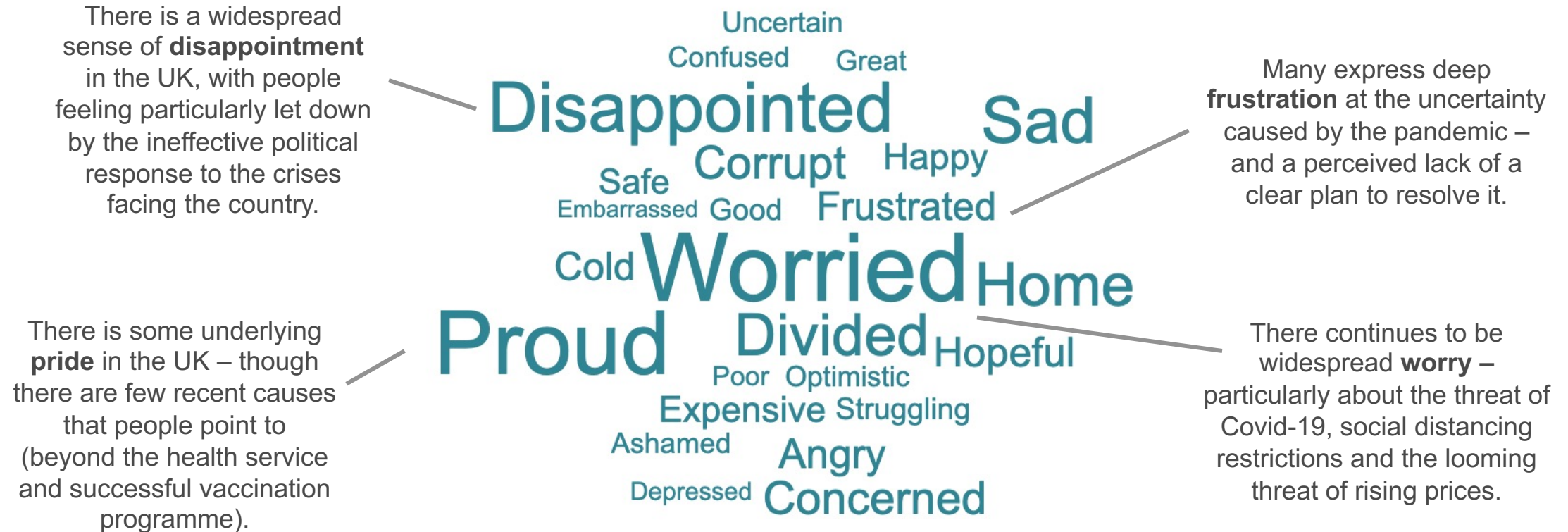
There remains widespread pessimism about the UK, though some groups are less gloomy than others



Gender	Affluence	Voting intention	Ethnicity	Disability
41% of men are optimistic about the UK v 34% of women	36% of those with household incomes up to £21,000 are optimistic about the UK v 26% of those with household incomes of £62,001+	70% of people intending to vote Conservative are optimistic about the UK v 28% of people intending to vote Labour	45% of those from ethnic minority backgrounds are optimistic about the UK v 37% of those from white backgrounds	41% of non-disabled people are optimistic about the UK v 28% of disabled people

Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? (The UK). Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Jun 2021, n=2064), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

Despite some underlying pride, the prevailing feelings toward the UK are apprehension, concern, disappointment and anger



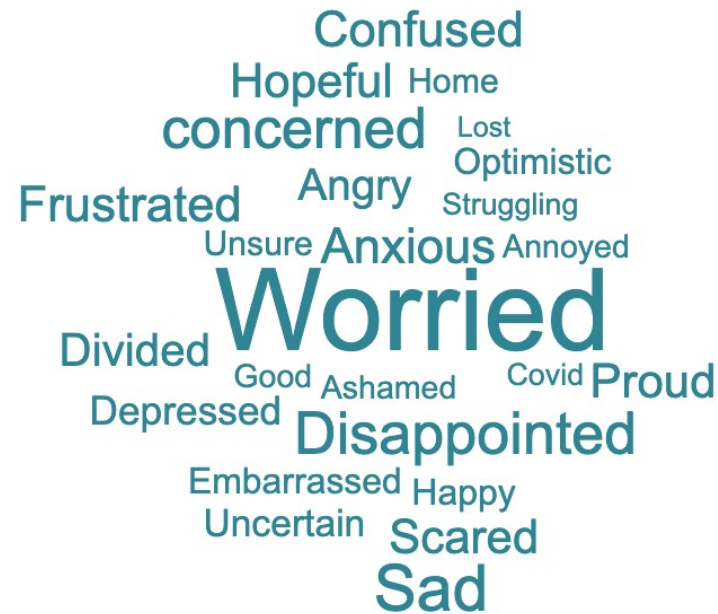
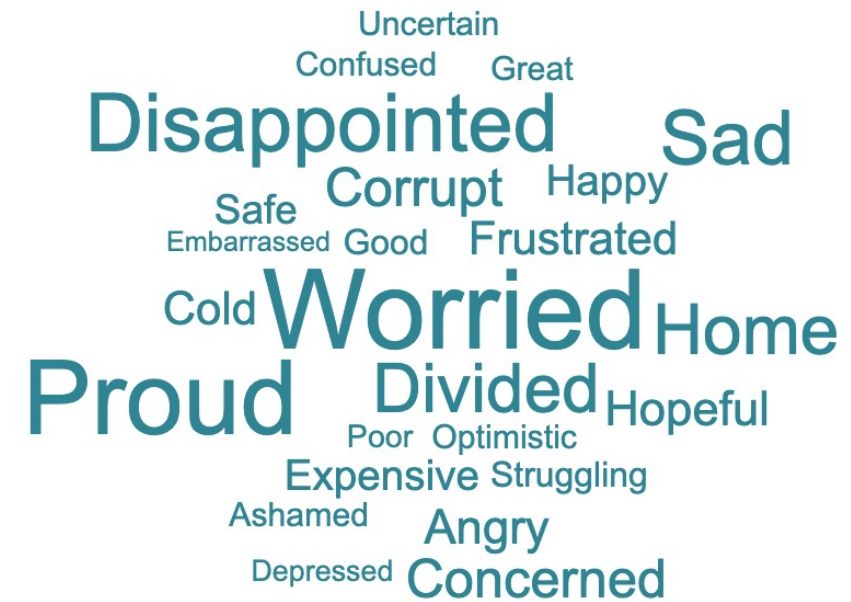
Only **30%** of the public think that, in 10 years' time, the UK will be a better place to live in than it is today.

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (The UK). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075).

NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

Compared to last year's overwhelming sense of worry about the UK, the mood is more mixed this year (albeit still bleak)

September 2020

**November 2021**

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (The UK). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (The UK). (Sep 2020) Base: All respondents (n=2028)

NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

Covid-19, the economy, NHS and ineffective politics are the most front-of-mind drivers of how people feel about the UK

More prominently
mentioned issues



Covid-19



The economy



NHS



Ineffective politics

Less prominently
mentioned issues



Divisions in society



Climate change



Brexit



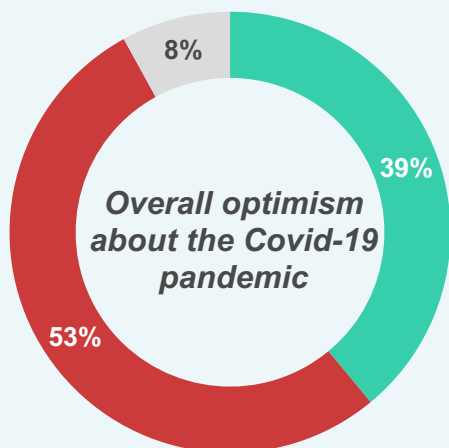
Scottish
independence



Covid-19 continues to be a key driver of worry and uncertainty, particularly for older people

People are still feeling very pessimistic about the Covid-19 pandemic over the next year or so, with the situation still feeling highly uncertain...

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know



*"COVID is still a big part of that uncertainty, there are **rumours of another lockdown coming.**"*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

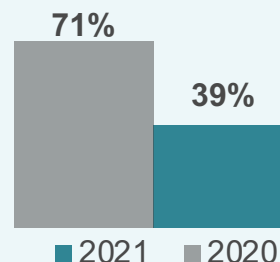
...But the successful vaccination programme and easing of restrictions has led to a sense of relief for some...

"I feel safer because most people are double-jabbed and hopefully we won't have to go through anything like this again."

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

There will be another full national lockdown

- % saying likely to happen in the next year or so



... And a feeling— especially among young people – that it's time to move on.

*"At the beginning I was worried about it but I try not to talk about it anymore, I'm trying to live my life. **We've basically gone back to normal life.**"*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

54%

Of 24-34s agree that 'It feels like we are over the worst of the coronavirus pandemic' compared to 31% of over-65s

Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n= 2075)

Q8 & Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



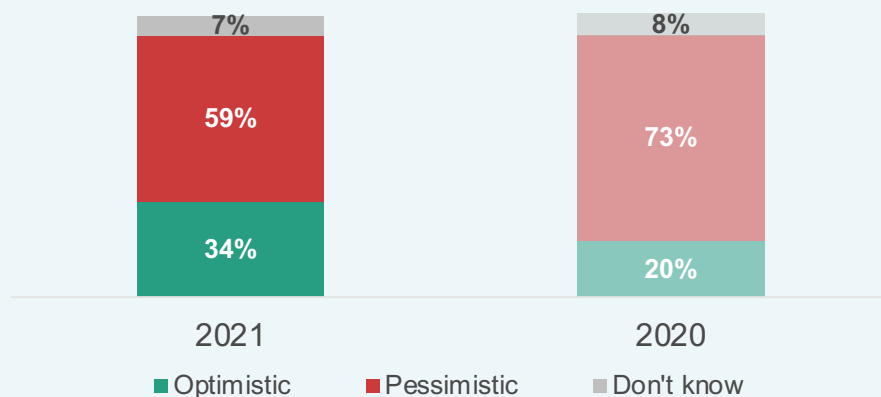
Fewer fear for their jobs, but there remains deep anxiety about the economy (and rising cost of living in particular)

Though people are more optimistic than last year (as fears about jobs have receded), there is still widespread concern about the economy...



... In particular, there is widespread fear about the rising cost of living (and, to a lesser extent, shortages of essentials).

Overall optimism about the economy



*"Hospitality is going to start picking up too. **There are jobs out there** and hopefully **these businesses will start picking up** and everybody will benefit."*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

94%

Of the public **predict the cost of living will go up** in the next year or so

*"Today they said minimum wage is going up in April, but I think **price increases are going to be a lot more than that.**"*

35-54, Manchester, C2DE

*"Electric is going up, **everything's going up, but wages are going down.** How are kids going to afford houses?"*

35-54, Manchester, C2DE

30%

Of the public think **their Christmas plans will be significantly affected by shortages**

Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? Base: All respondents (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



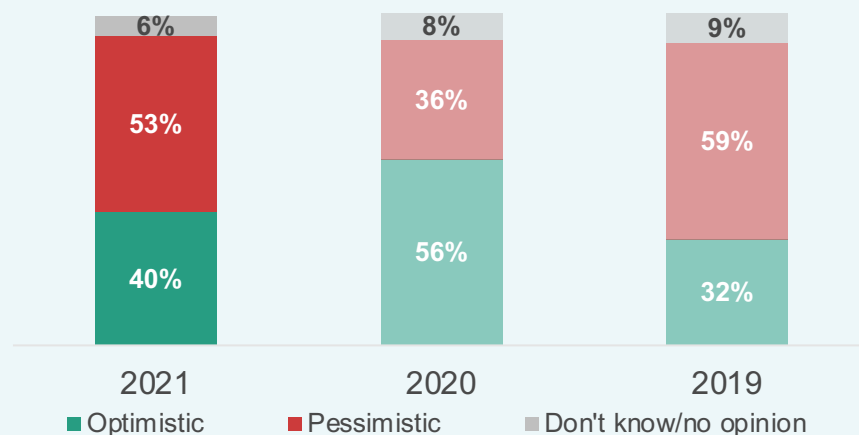
Anxiety about how the NHS will cope with pandemic and longer-term funding pressures is widespread

Whereas hope for the NHS soared last year as it was seen to deal with the initial wave of the pandemic well, pessimism is now almost back to 2019 levels.



There is serious alarm – particularly for those with more complex healthcare needs – about pressures on the NHS, with increasingly visible and tangible signs that standards of care are dropping.

Overall optimism about the NHS



*"I had to use the NHS last year, and I literally owe my life to them. Clap for the NHS! **How about a real pay rise for them? They deserve better.**"*

35-54, London, ABC1

*"If something happens to you, what's access to health services going to be like? **I've never really worried about it in the past but the NHS has never been so bad.** I had a broken filling but they gave me a repair kit to do it myself."*

35-54, Manchester, C2DE

60%

Of disabled people are pessimistic about the NHS over the next year or so, compared to 51% of non-disabled people

*"I have regular dealings with the NHS with my neurological condition. I get treatments every half term and **they've halved the dose of my treatment** I've had for 14, 15 years because of **cutbacks and funding issues.** Seeing the physical impact it's having on me is a big problem."*

35-54, London, ABC1

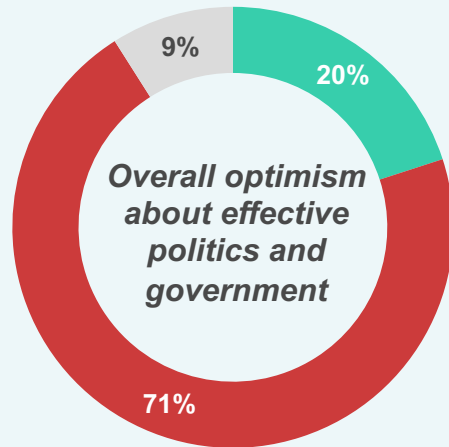
Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Nov 2021, n=2075).



There is still deep mistrust of politicians and significant anger and frustration at the entire political system

The public is largely sceptical about the ability of government to effectively navigate the crises facing the country.

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know



60%

Of the public agree that 'The UK political system is currently not fit for purpose'

There is anger and frustration with perceived corruption and double-standards in political life.

*"I feel like these people are meant to be running the country, but if **they're going out of their way to break the rules**, we're going to lose some respect for them."*

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

60%

Of the public agree that 'Corruption in politics has reached an all-time high'

56%

Of the public agree that 'All of the main political parties are equally corrupt'

...But the bigger drivers of mistrust are perceived incompetence and a sense that politicians are out of touch.

Only
29%

Of the public agree that 'I trust this Government to make the right decisions in relation to the coronavirus pandemic'

Only
10%

Of the public agree that 'UK politicians understand people like me'

*"They don't know what they're doing, they should be leading by example. **I don't see the government leading the way out of this.**"*

35-54, London, ABC1

Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q7. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



There are clear generational, political and regional divides, and concern that society is growing further apart

Many worry about society growing further apart, with perceived divisions leading to a sense of unease and unhappiness...



...And the main dividing lines on a range of topics include age, politics and region

*"Between Brexit, left or right, independence or not, everything is so divisive - **there's no middle ground**. You can't be in the middle or not have an opinion or something."*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

63% **70%**

Of the public are **pessimistic about national unity** over the next year or so

Of the public think it is likely **the UK will become more divided** over the next year or so

'The Black Lives Matter movement will have a lasting positive impact on UK society.'

50% of 2019 Labour voters agree, compared to **26%** of 2019 Conservative voters

'Older people are out of touch with today's society.'

57% of 18-24s agree, compared to **13%** of over-65s

'People in London look down on the rest of the UK.'

79% of people based in the North-East agree, compared to **24%** in London

*"I think **we're rapidly losing our sense of community**, including national, regional and local communities... it's going to take a long time to come back together."*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

*"The way Afghan refugees are getting treated, [...] the government sows seeds of hatred. They're just **trying to turn everyone on each other**, to escape blame."*

35-54, London, ABC1

Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

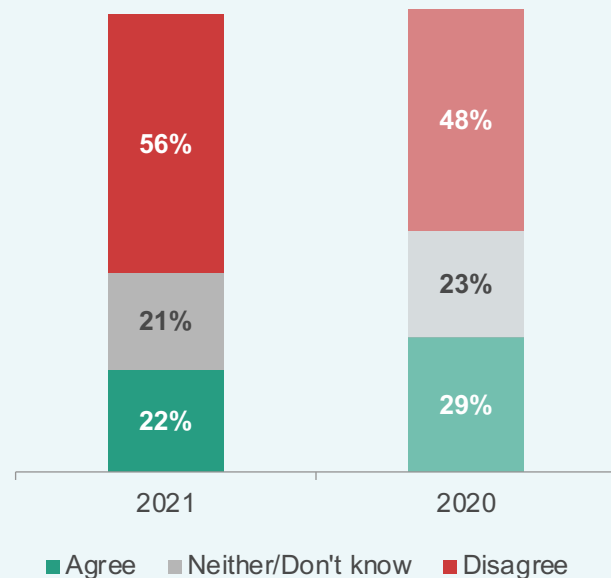
Q7-8. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



The public don't believe sufficient action to prevent climate change will be taken, leading to some resignation

Climate change has become even more of a priority than last year...

'Tackling climate change just isn't a priority right now'



... And many say they will make changes in their own lives to prevent climate change.

53%

Of the public say they will make **significant lifestyle changes to be more environmentally friendly** over the next few years

*"I never thought I would be concerned, but genuinely **with electric and gas going up now, it's starting to make me a bit nervous.** We really need to start being careful about what we're using and being sustainable."*

35-54, Manchester, C2DE

But, ultimately, few believe the Government will take significant action, which drives resignation and apathy.

*"Everyone knows there's things to be done but it's like trying to turn the steering wheel of a car going down a hill with no brakes. **We're too far gone to make a difference.**"*

35-54, London, ABC1

Only
33%

Of the public think it is likely that **'The UK government will take significant action to prevent climate change'** in the next year or so

Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q7. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. Base: All respondents (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

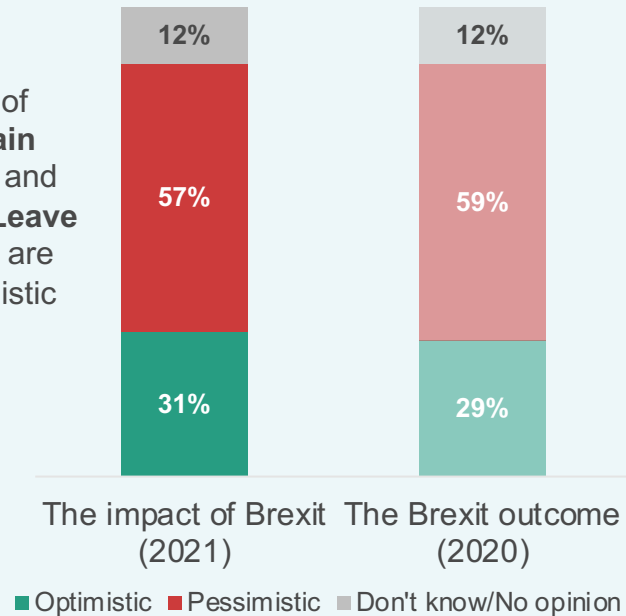


There is real frustration about the economic impacts of Brexit, even from some of those who voted Leave

The majority are pessimistic about the impact of Brexit, including a significant proportion of Leave voters.

Overall optimism about Brexit

80% of Remain voters and 32% of Leave voters are pessimistic



NB. The wording was slightly different this year

There is particular dismay at economic impacts such as shortages of goods and labour that many attribute to Brexit...

45%

Of the public agree that **Brexit is the main cause of current shortages**

68%

Of Remainer voters agree

20%

Of Leave voters agree

"Now we're out [of the EU], we haven't been out a year and we're already struggling. We're not producing enough commodities to support ourselves without going to others for help."

55+, South Wales, C2DE

... Though some are relieved that the issue is settled and want to move on.

"I feel we gotta be positive. Brexit's happening now so we can start cracking on with that, building our economy again."

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

"I think we've moved on, other things have taken over. I'm a staunch Remainer, but we're a democracy and we have to move on."

55+, South East, ABC1

Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? Base: All respondents (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



In the context of deeper pessimism about the future, many Scots see independence as a potential fresh start

There is a growing sense that Scotland is headed toward independence (though only half think it will happen soon).



...The Scottish public tends to be more pessimistic about a wide range of issues than people living in England – and some see the possibility of independence as an opportunity for a ‘fresh start’.

49%

In Scotland think it is **likely** that ‘Scotland will vote to become an independent country’ in the next year or so

57%

In Scotland agree that ‘**People are increasingly in favour of Scottish independence**’

*“There’s a lot of things that people in Scotland disagree with Westminster on. **There’s a lot of people who would rather go for another independence referendum. I’d feel more optimistic.**”*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

*“I think subconsciously **that’s the only thing that’s keeping me hopeful** – that there’ll be another independence referendum. I’m hoping there’s bigger change with the independence referendum.”*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

66%

In **Scotland** are **pessimistic** about the economy over the next year or so, compared to **57%** in **England**

61%

In **Scotland** are **pessimistic** about the Covid-19 pandemic over the next year or so, compared to **52%** in **England**

74%

In **Scotland** are **pessimistic** about climate change and the environment over the next year or so, compared to the **63% UK average**

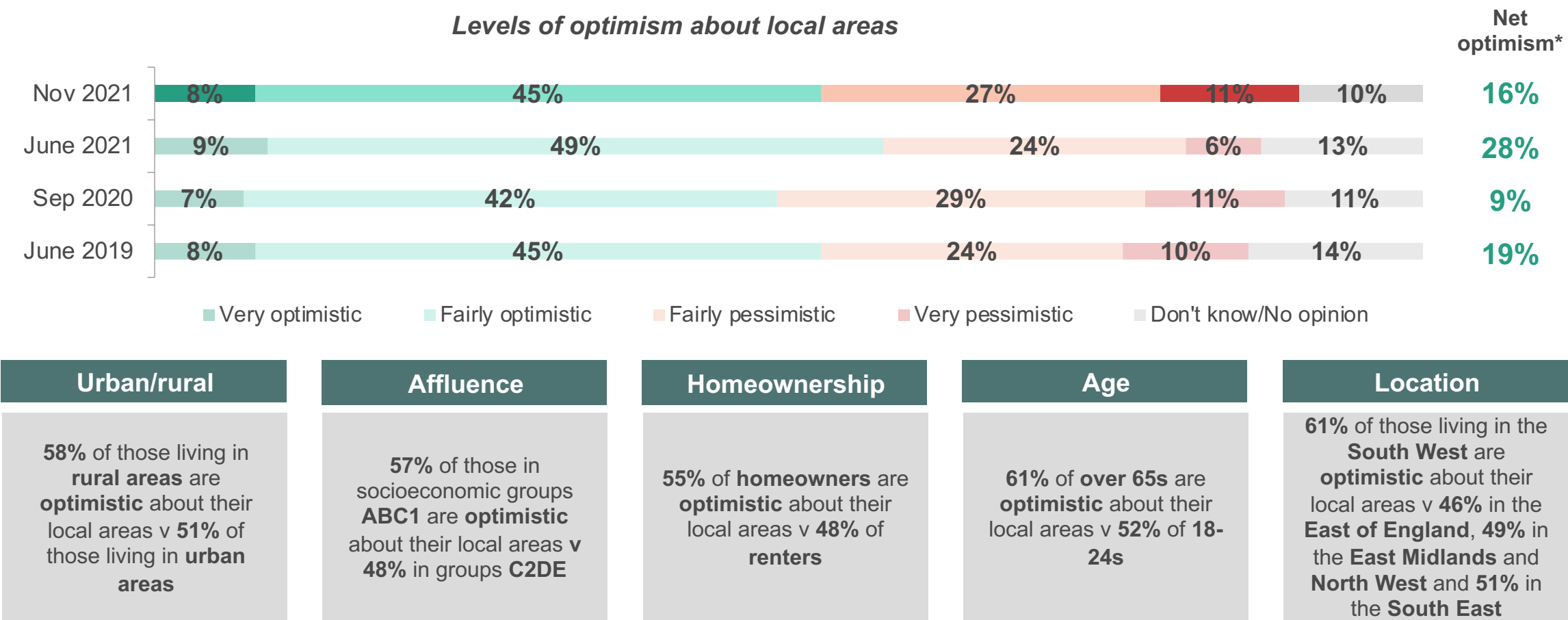
Q5. Thinking now about the UK as a whole, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075), Scottish respondents (n=169)

Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: Scottish respondents (n=169)

Q8. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: Scottish respondents (n=169)

4 Feelings about the local area

The public is divided when it comes to feelings about their local area, including by region, affluence and age



Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? (Your local area). Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Jun 2021, n=2064), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

*Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.

Many feel happy about their safe and friendly local areas – but there is some sadness, dissatisfaction and concern, too

Feeling **safe** in your local area is extremely important, with both those who feel safe and unsafe bringing this up when talking about where they live. Those in rural areas tended to feel safer than those in urban areas, some of whom feel frightened in their areas.

Some are **hopeful** about changes they have seen such as more support for local businesses since Covid lockdowns where people had to stick to their local areas more, or efforts they have seen to make their area more environmentally friendly.



Many are concerned about rising house prices making their area **expensive** to live in.

Those who feel their local areas are **friendly** really value this as it creates a sense of community. This was particularly important during Covid lockdowns as a source of social interaction and support when neighbours needed it.

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (Your local area). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075). NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

Many feel happy about their safe and friendly local areas – but there is some sadness, dissatisfaction and concern, too

*“My local area is **good**, however, I work across London and see big differences.”*

35-54, London, ABC1



*“There’s good **community spirit** here. I just like where I live for the countryside and beach.”*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

*“I’ve noticed a **big change with shopping locally and supporting local businesses**. Even supermarkets are trying to be more sustainable, reducing plastic waste and usage.”*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

*“I think the town centre is run down. **It’s a ghost town, the units are empty**. I imagine it’s very similar to other towns in the UK but I think it’s got potential.”*

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (Your local area). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075). NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

There are six main drivers of feelings about local areas – but they are experienced very differently across the country



Entertainment and leisure



Jobs



Local businesses



Local healthcare



Public services



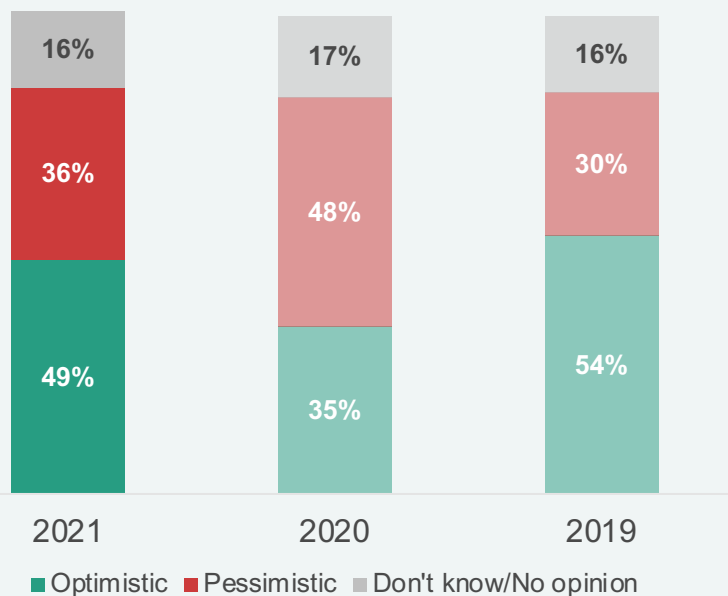
Crime



The return of entertainment since the easing of restrictions is a driver of satisfaction with local areas

After a dip in optimism about entertainment and leisure in local areas in 2020, it has rebounded since social distancing restrictions have eased.

Overall optimism about entertainment and leisure opportunities



Being able to do things in the local area is an important driver of satisfaction...

"Big events opening up were important to me because of football. If you don't go to football you don't see your mates."
18-34, Walsall, C2DE

"I'm optimistic about it all opening up, but it looks like we're headed for more Covid restrictions - that's what I'm bothered about."
35-54, Manchester, C2DE

...But those who are less affluent do not always have the same opportunities, with many noting closures around them.

"There's no nice restaurants, no nice places to go... three places have already closed down and now it's just empty shops again."
18-34, Walsall, C2DE

44%

Of those in socioeconomic group **C2DE** are optimistic about entertainment and leisure opportunities, compared to **53%** of ABC1s

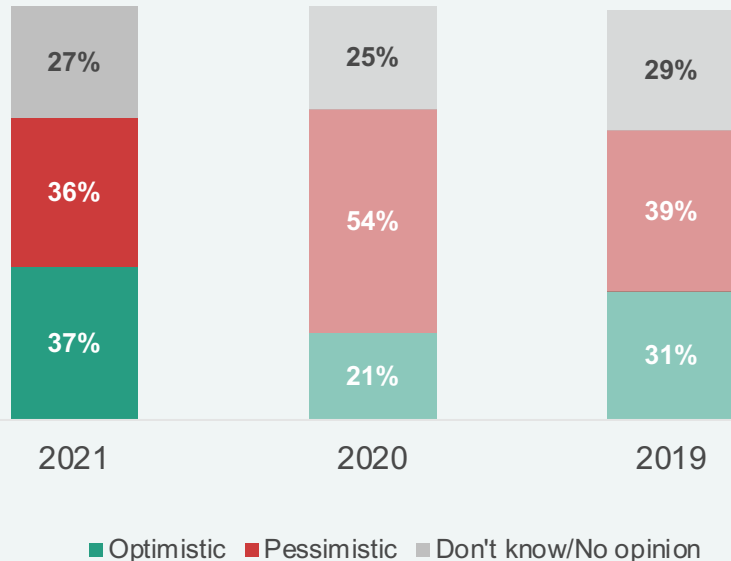
"In my hometown, pre-Covid there were eight pubs and now there are four."
55+, South Wales, C2DE

Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

People are now more hopeful about local job opportunities, though there is still plenty of pessimism

Optimism about job opportunities in local areas has increased significantly since last year, when many were concerned about the possibility of unemployment caused by local businesses closing.

Overall optimism about job opportunities in local area



However, some groups are more pessimistic about local job opportunities...

25%

Of disabled people are **optimistic**, compared to **42%** of non-disabled people

40%

Of those in socioeconomic groups **ABC1** are **optimistic**, compared to **34%** in **C2DE**

44%

Of those living in the **South West** are **optimistic**, compared to **33%** of those living in **London**

...And there is some concern about the *quality* of jobs available.

*"There's plenty of driving jobs because **they're so stressful and no one wants to do them.**"*
35-54, Manchester, C2DE

*"I think there are jobs **but the wages are really low** and people aren't getting paid what they need."*
35-54, London, ABC1

Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



There appears to be greater appreciation of local businesses – but also some concern about their future

Many feel hopeful that the businesses in their local area will thrive, having grown to value them during the pandemic when spending more time in their local areas...

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know/No opinion



*"People here tend to support local businesses - **the pandemic made you think about where you went because it was the only thing you did that day!**"*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

...With those in rural areas more optimistic than those in urban areas.

56% 54%

Of those in rural areas feel optimistic, compared to **48%** in urban areas

Of those living in the **West Midlands** or **South West** feel optimistic, compared to **44%** in **London**

But there is some apprehension about the future of local businesses, particularly due to the possibility of new Covid restrictions.

***"I don't think [shops] can stay open.** There was a group of shops with restaurants, they were open for like maybe 3-4 months and they've just shut. I think it's quite hard to stay hopeful when independent shops open and then close months after."*

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

*"You've only got to travel around local town and see closed shops galore. **This is a natural consequence of the pandemic...** Retail shops are closing all the time. It isn't great at the moment."*

55+, South East, ABC1

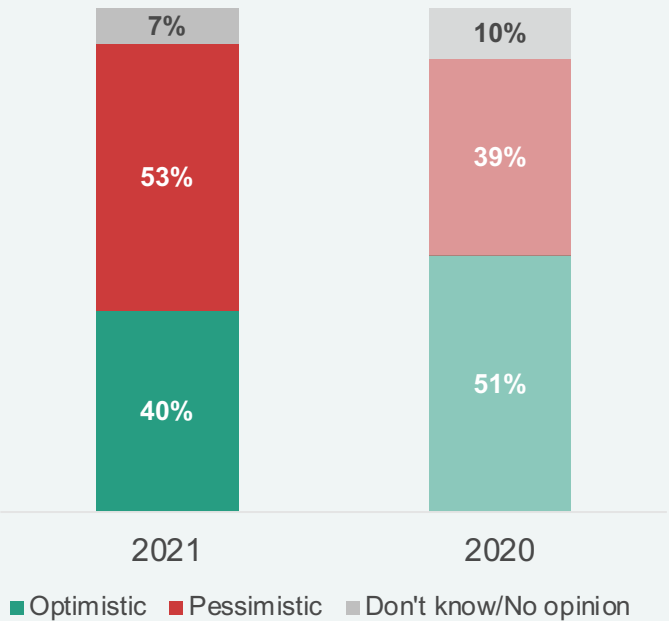
Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



There is growing concern about the provision of healthcare locally, with visible signs of deterioration

The public is increasingly worried about the provision of local healthcare, with a significant spike in pessimism since last year.

Overall optimism about the provision of local healthcare



Concerns are driven by long waiting lists and difficulties getting seen by a doctor...

*"It's difficult to get to your GP, even online. For small operations, anything not severe or major, **waiting lists are god knows how long.**"*

35-54, Manchester, C2DE

*"I don't know what the GPs are doing, it seems to be absolutely bizarre. I've had to take an elderly gentleman to A&E in the last few months, **you can't get anybody.**"*

55+, South East, ABC1

...And, as with the NHS overall, those with more complex healthcare needs are most concerned.

64% 58%

Of disabled people are pessimistic, compared to 50% of non-disabled people

Of over 55s are pessimistic, compared to 40% of 18-24s

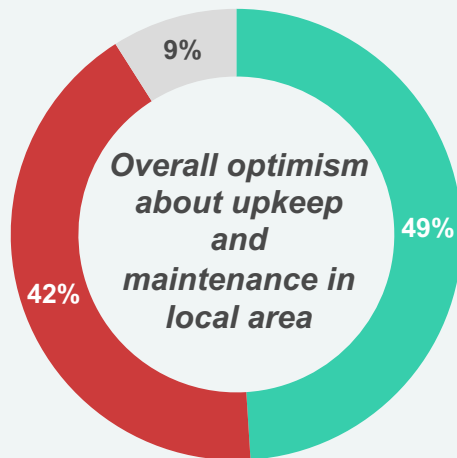
Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



There is a widespread sense of underinvestment in local areas – but this is felt much more keenly in certain areas

The public is evenly split on how optimistic they feel about upkeep and maintenance in their local area...

Optimistic Pessimistic Don't know/No opinion



*"I think **the roads are horrendous**, there are more potholes and road signs are terrible."*

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

...with those who are more affluent and people in rural areas more likely to feel satisfied.

52%

Of those in socioeconomic groups **ABC1** feel **optimistic**, compared to **46%** in groups **C2DE**

58%

Of those in **rural areas** feel **optimistic**, compared to **48%** in **urban areas**

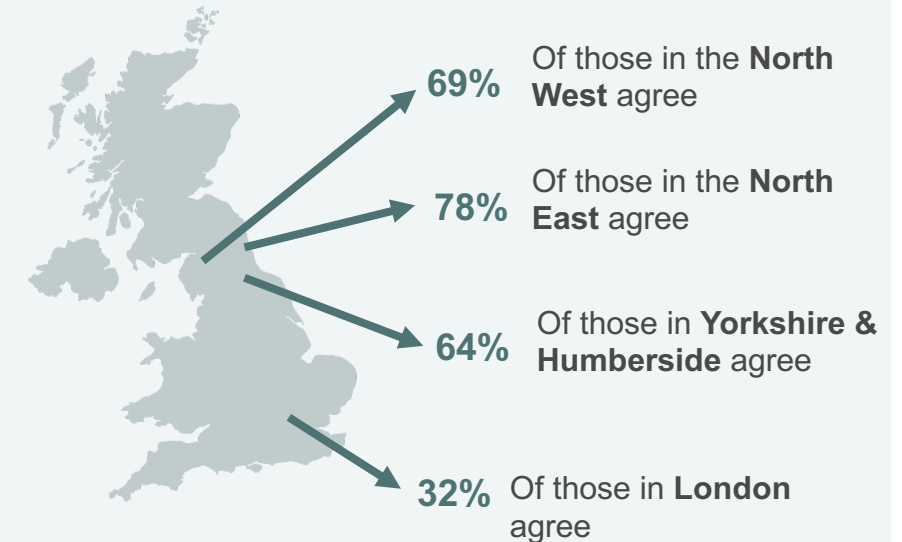
*"I still like my area but **the local government aren't doing much**. It's a mess, there's rubbish everywhere. I sometimes go and clean it myself!"*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

But there are very stark regional differences: many feel that other areas receive more funding than theirs, which drives a sense of resentment.

52%

Of the public agree that **'Other areas in the UK receive more funding and investment than my own area'**



Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

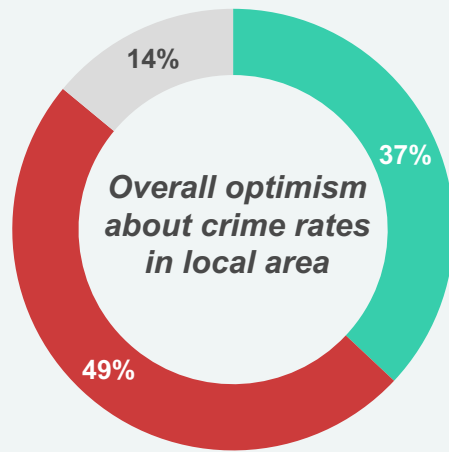
Q8. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



Crime continues to be frightening for many, particularly for those living in urban areas and less affluent groups

There is widespread concern about local crime rates (and around half think this is likely to get worse).

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know/No opinion



"I feel less safe than I did a year ago in town."

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

There is particular fear of violent crime (including burglaries), exacerbated by a perceived lack of police presence.

*"I am hearing more about **burglaries and violent crime** around here - I do think that's getting worse."*

35-54, London, ABC1

*"Police are short staffed [...] if you don't have **police presence** you have more **criminal activity**."*

55+, South Wales, C2DE

The most pessimistic about crime in the local area are those who are less affluent, renters, and people living in urban areas.

51%

Of those living in **urban areas** are **pessimistic**, compared to **39%** living in rural areas

54%

Of those in socioeconomic group **C2DE** are **pessimistic**, compared to **45%** of those in **ABC1**

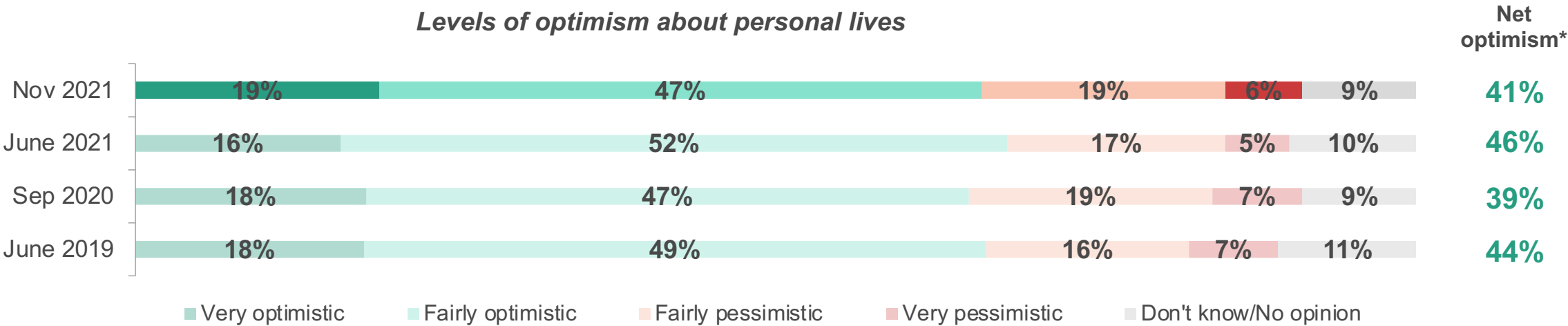
54%

Of **renters** are **pessimistic**, compared to **47%** of **homeowners**

Q4. Thinking now about your local area, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

5 Feelings about personal life

People continue to feel largely optimistic about their personal lives – though there is a ‘pessimistic minority’



Age	Affluence	Voting intention	Disability	Tenure
71% of 18-24s are optimistic about their personal lives vs 56% of 45-54s	70% of people in socioeconomic groups ABC1 are optimistic about their personal lives v 62% of those in C2DE	79% of those intending to vote Conservative are optimistic about their personal life v 63% of those intending to vote Labour	72% of non-disabled people are optimistic about their personal lives v 50% of disabled people	69% of homeowners are optimistic about their personal lives v 61% of renters

Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? (Your personal life). Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Jun 2021, n=2064), (Nov 2021, n=2075).

*Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.

Most are feeling happy and content about their personal lives, though there are feelings of worry, stress and loneliness too

Many express feelings of **happiness** and **contentment** in relation to their personal lives. This is typically attributed to relationships, family life and financial security.

Affordability of energy, petrol and basic goods are a significant sources of **stress** for some, with cost of living perceived to be increasing without corresponding wage increases.



Many feel **optimistic** about their personal lives, with less concern about job losses and the health of loved ones than last year.

There is growing awareness and understanding of **mental health issues** – and a substantial minority of the public are worried about their own.

Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (Your personal life). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075). NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

Most are feeling happy and content about their personal lives, though there are feelings of worry, stress and loneliness too



Q1. What three words would you use to describe how you currently feel about... (Your personal life). (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075). NB. Only 25 most common words shown.

Feelings about one's personal life are largely shaped by social life, personal finances, careers and (mental) health



Personal finances



Health



Professional life



Social life



Personal finances are a significant concern for many, particularly the young, less affluent and renters



Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q3. Thinking now about your personal life, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? Being able to afford the luxuries in life. Base: All respondents (n=2075)



The pandemic appears to have increased the public's awareness of their health – and particularly mental health

There is increasing awareness of (and empathy with those who experience) mental health issues.

"The pandemic probably made people more aware of their mental health and of seeking help should they need it."

18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

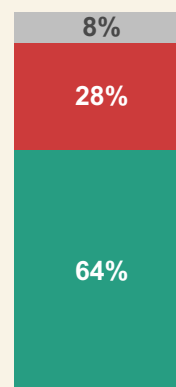
*"I've never really struggled with mental health... **lockdown** was the first time I could really empathise with people who have."*

18-34, Walsall, C2DE

Though overall optimism is high, young people are much less confident about their mental health than older people.

Overall optimism about mental health

78% of people aged 65+ are optimistic, compared to 55% of 18-24s



My mental health

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know/No opinion

A significant proportion of the population agree that their mental health worsened in 2021 – especially parents, young people and people with disabilities.

48% Of 18-24s agree, compared to 21% of over 65s

41% Of those with children at home agree, compared to 35% of those without

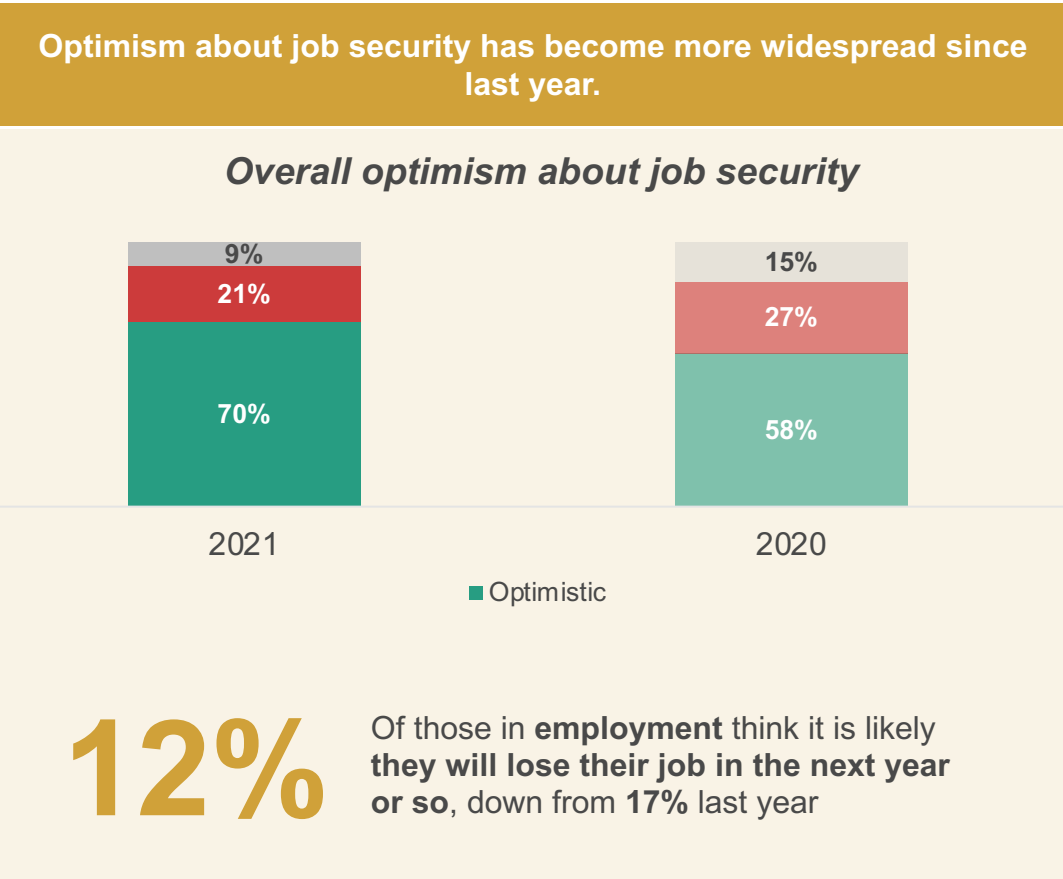
52% Of disabled people agree, compared to 31% of non-disabled people

Q3. Thinking now about your personal life, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (My mental health) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (My mental health worsened in 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)



People are feeling more secure in their jobs and some have seen improvements in working conditions



Some workers have noticed an improvement in their working conditions, often attributed to hybrid working arrangements.

28% Of those in employment **agree** that ‘I have experienced an improvement in my working conditions since the coronavirus pandemic’, compared to 32% of those in employment who **disagree**

“My workplace have been extremely supportive during the whole pandemic, allowing people to work from home.”
35-54, London, ABC1

“We started working from home in March 2020....we’re finding it’s such a better way of working, the pandemic has given our organisation a kick up the backside.”
55+, South Wales, C2DE

Q3. Thinking now about your personal life, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (My job security). Base: All who work (2021, n=1217, (2020, n=1123)

Q9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (I have experienced an improvement in my working conditions since the coronavirus pandemic). Base: All respondents (n=2075).

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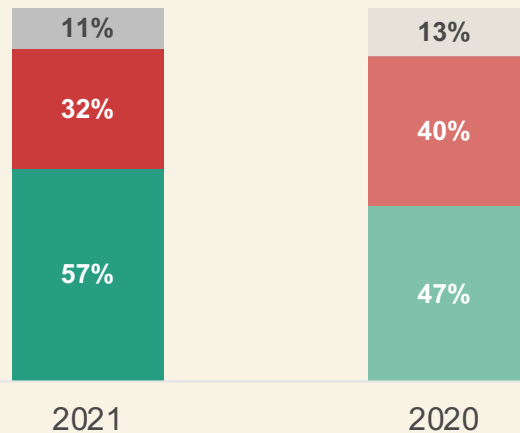


People are feeling better about their social lives than last year, even if many are still relishing a slower pace

As restrictions have eased, overall optimism about social lives has increased compared to last year...

Overall optimism about social life

■ Optimistic ■ Pessimistic ■ Don't know/No opinion



... Though there are stark demographic differences, with many remaining downbeat about their social lives.

63%

Of non-disabled people are optimistic compared to 42% of non-disabled people

61%

Of those in socioeconomic group ABC1 are optimistic compared to 52% in C2DE

After the experience of lockdown, many claim to have re-evaluated their priorities and now favour a slower pace of life.

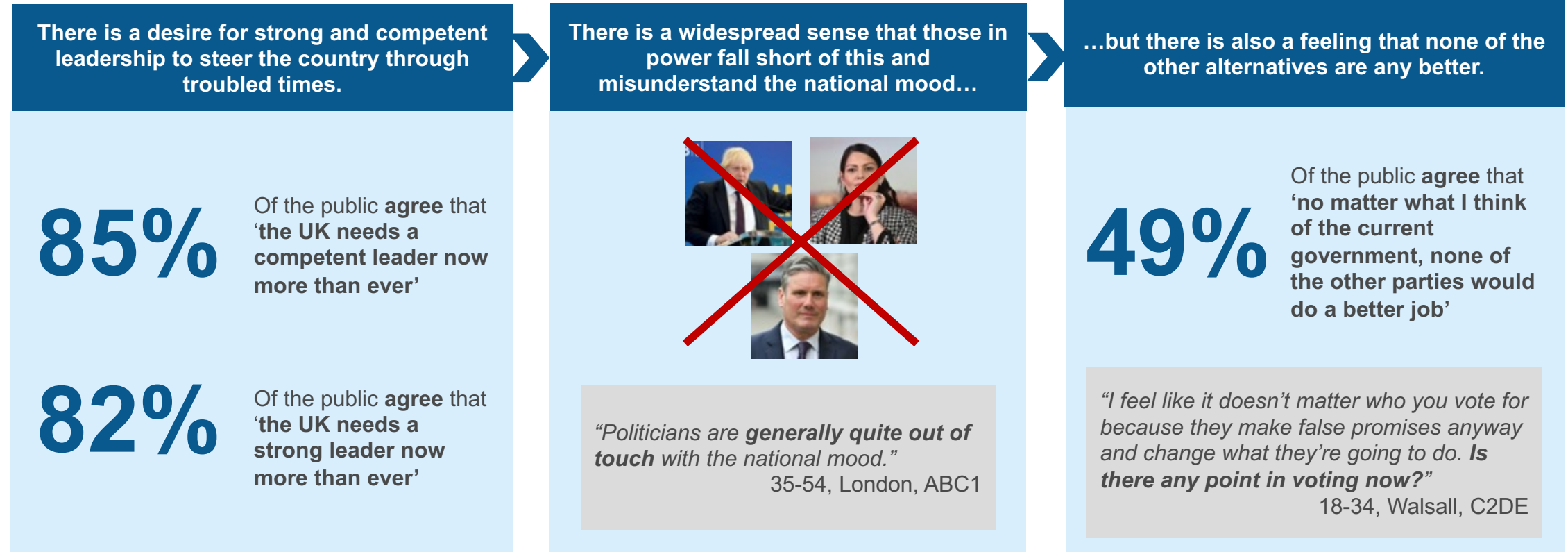
"Lockdown made me realise you don't have to be doing something every weekend. I now like just taking time to chill, relax, centre myself."
18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

"Normally I'd be the first one texting my friends but now at 8 o'clock I'm happy to stay at home. Going out is more of a hassle. I can't imagine being out at 1am in Birmingham anymore. Now I just want to be tucked up in bed."
18-34, Walsall, C2DE

Q3. Thinking now about your personal life, to what extent are you feeling optimistic or pessimistic about the following over the next year or so? (My social life). Base: All respondents (2021, n=2075), (2020, n=2028).

6 Who gets the national mood?

Despite difficult times calling for strong leadership, the political class is seen to be out of touch with the mood



Q7-9. For each of the statements below, please state whether you agree or disagree. (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075).

The few who are seen to 'get' the mood of the nation are those who lead through their actions – or make light of the situation

Marcus Rashford is praised for taking action to tackle an urgent challenge.



"He was **actually taking action**, helping feed children when the government had completely abdicated responsibility."
18-34, Glasgow, ABC1

Nicola Sturgeon is cited as an example of someone providing clear leadership when needed.



"She gave clear, concise, direct guidance to the nation. And that's what the people needed: **they needed leadership, no wishy-washy business.**"
35-54, London, ABC1

Essential workers (e.g. supermarket and NHS staff) are lauded for their perseverance.



"They get every credit. [...] **They were on the frontline like the nurses...** their staff were dedicated to helping people."
55+, South Wales, C2DE

Comedians who make light of the situation (and the political response) are believed to 'get' the mood.

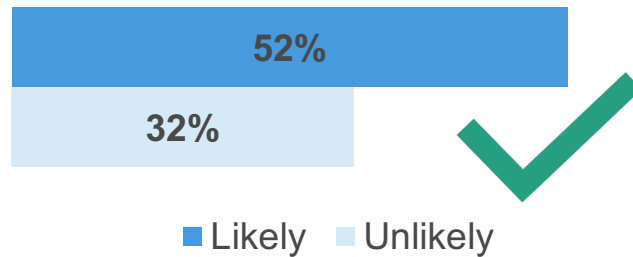


"Comedians usually have got their fingers on the pulse...they're constantly observing. **They have a black humour.**"
55+, South Wales, C2DE

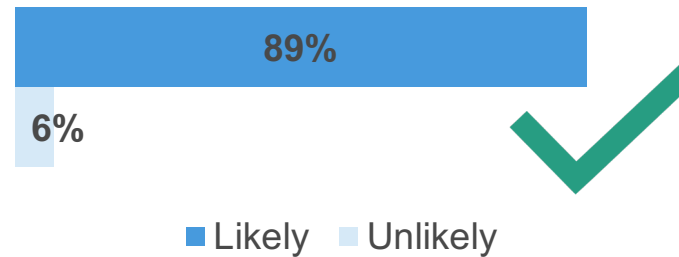
7 What next?

The public had mixed success making predictions for the year ahead in September 2020

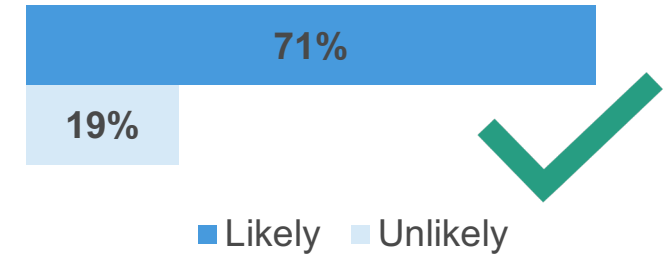
An effective COVID-19 vaccine will be available



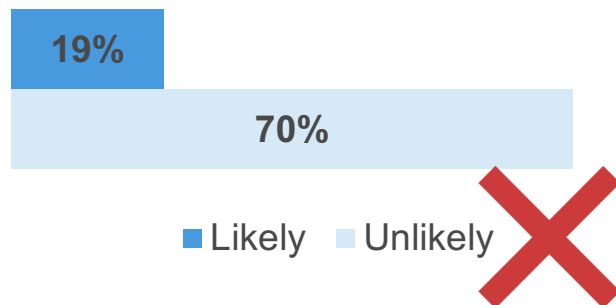
The cost of living will go up



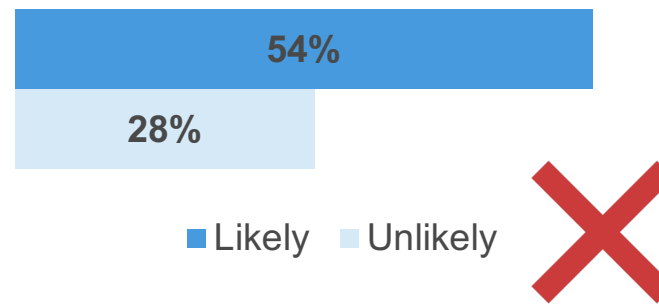
There will be another full national lockdown



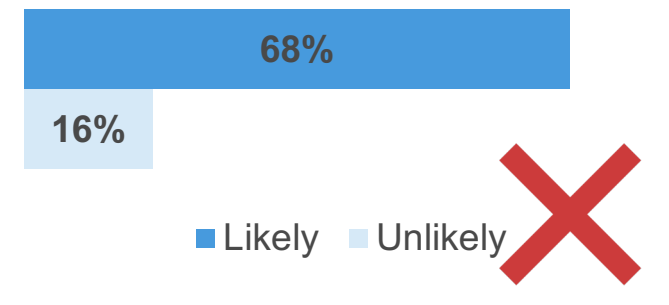
Social distancing requirements in public spaces will be removed entirely



Scotland will vote to become an independent country



The EU and the UK will fail to agree a trade deal



Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Sep 2020) Base: All respondents (n=2028)

What do the public predict will happen in the next year or so?

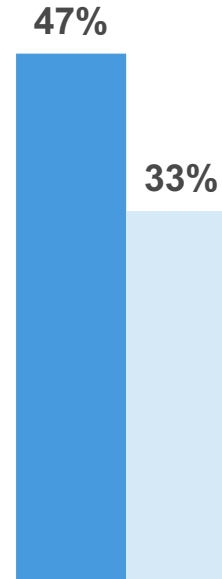
Boris Johnson will be replaced as Prime Minister



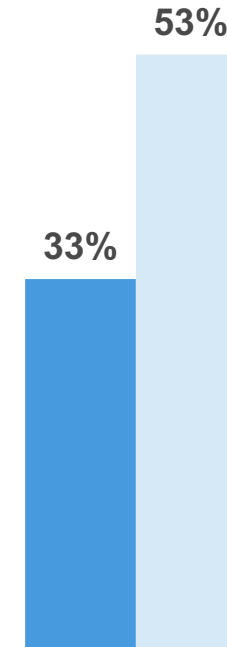
There will be a General Election in the UK



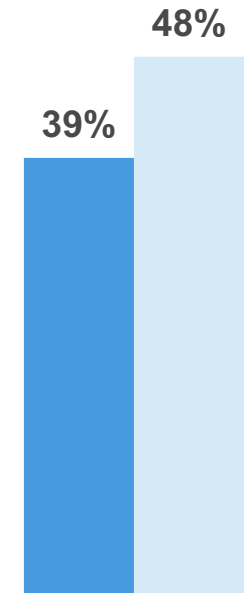
Scotland will vote to become an independent country



The UK government will take significant action to prevent climate change



There will be another full national lockdown



■ Likely ■ Unlikely

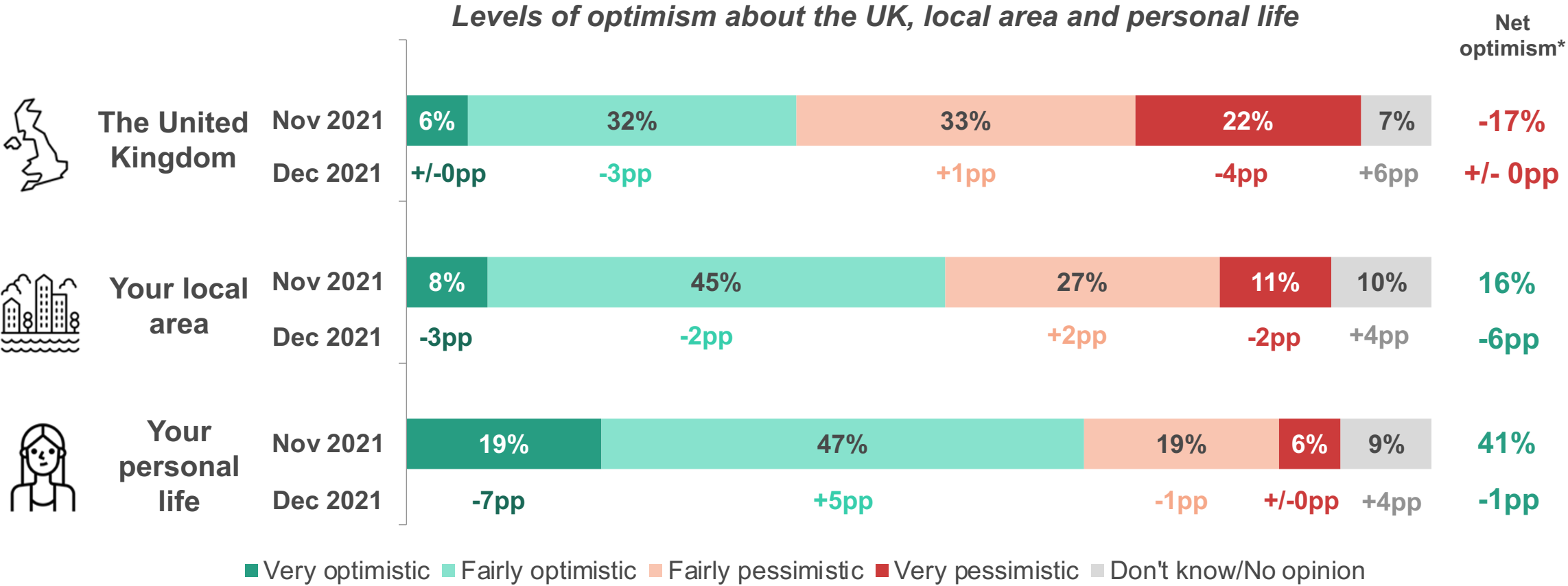
Q6. How likely or unlikely do you feel it is that each of the following will happen in the next year or so? (Nov 2021) Base: All respondents (n=2075)

Appendix

The fieldwork for the November 2021 edition of the Mood of the Nation study was completed prior to the spread of the Omicron variant and the news coverage of Downing Street Christmas parties in 2020.

In light of these developments, we conducted a short survey in mid-December to update our headline optimism index.

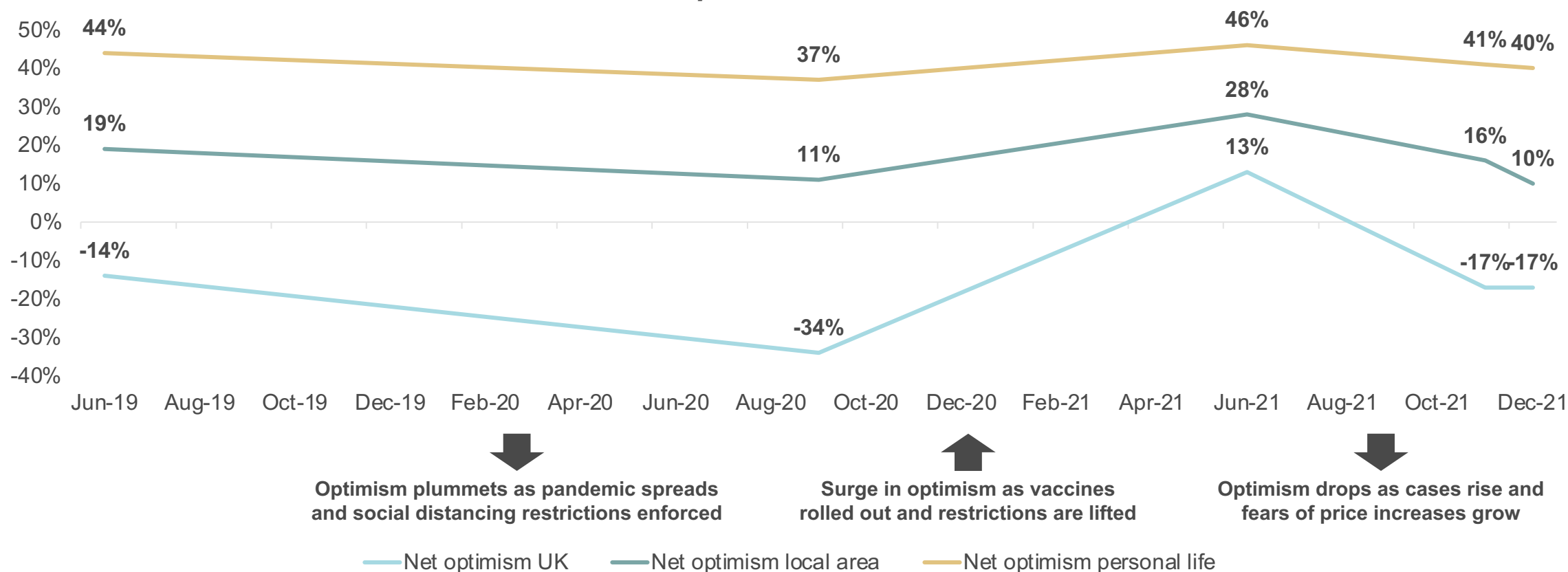
There has been a drop in optimism about local areas since last month, and an increase in uncertainty across the board



Q1/Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? Base: All respondents (Nov 2021, n=2075), (Dec 2021, n=2102). *Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.

The spread of Omicron and coverage of politicians' Christmas parties has not had a significant impact on net optimism

NET optimism over time*



Q2. Thinking about the next year or so, how optimistic or pessimistic do you feel about each of the following? Base: All respondents (Jun 2019, n=2017), (Sep 2020, n=2028), (Jun 2021, n=2064), (Nov 2021, n=2075), (Dec 2021, n=2102) *Net optimism was calculated by subtracting the proportion of the public that feels pessimistic from the proportion that feels optimistic.



Thank you

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