Imperial College London

Global insights on life satisfaction

Covid-19 Behaviour Tracker

◤**Report** July 2020

Institute of Global Health Innovation

W≡R
World Happiness Report

Covid Data Hub

How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by age?

Typically, life satisfaction reflects a U-shape over the lifespan, with life satisfaction at its lowest point in the 40 to 60 age range. The impact of Covid-19 on the young has apparently been large enough to remove this U shape. In these data life satisfaction is lowest among the youngest age group, more than half a point lower than for the oldest age group.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by age. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means
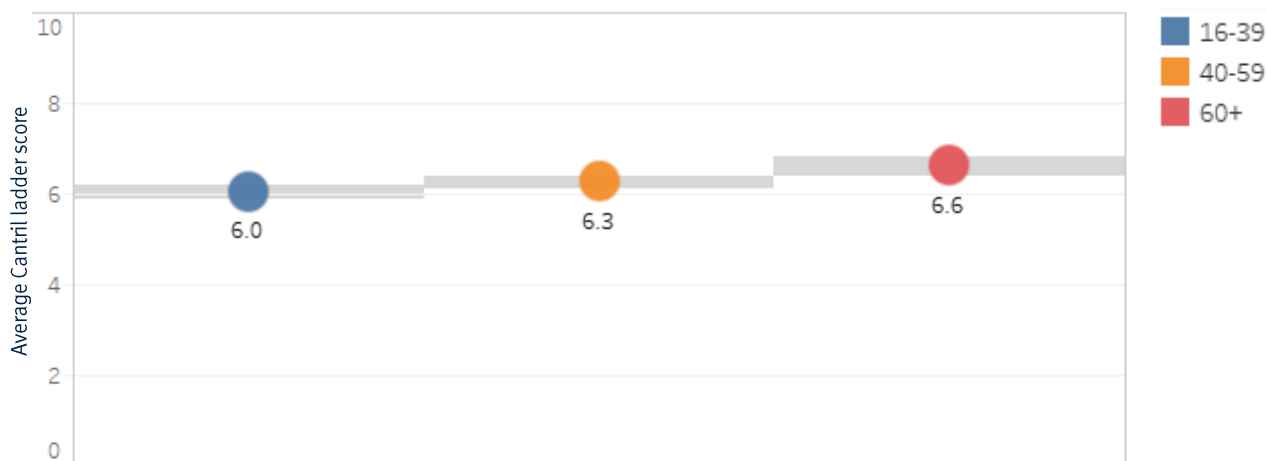
Global three week average distribution of responses[1] by age (bars of the same colour add up to 100%)
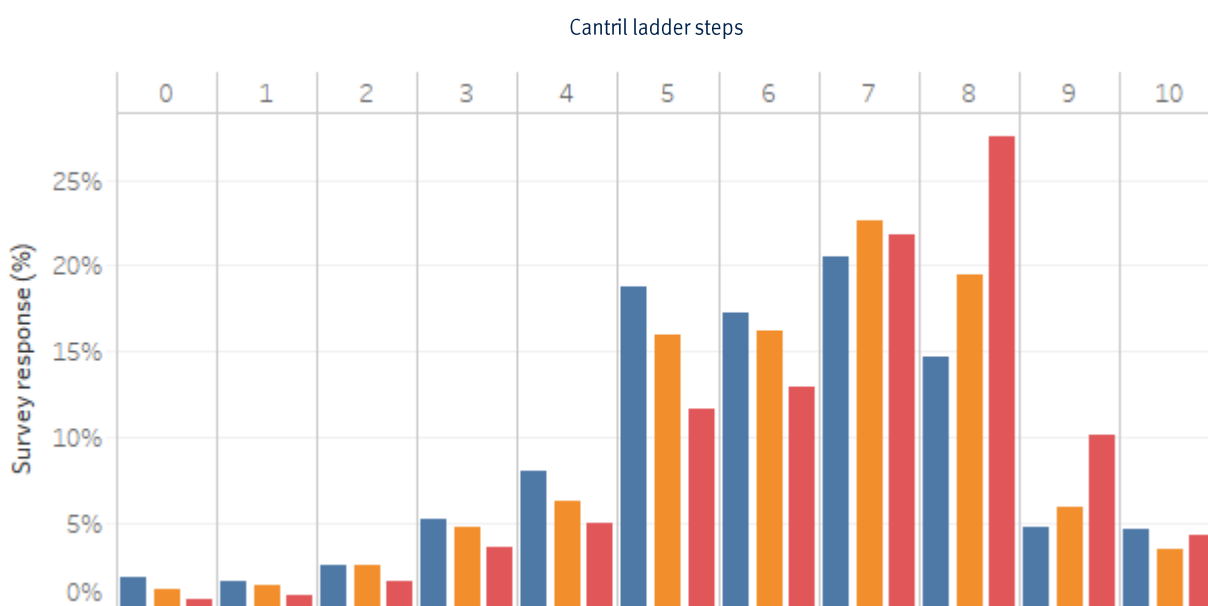
Cantril ladder steps

1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.

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How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by gender?

There are no significant differences in happiness between males and females. The equality is decomposed further in the pages to follow.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by gender. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means

Global three week average distribution of responses[1] by gender (bars of the same colour add up to 100%)

1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.
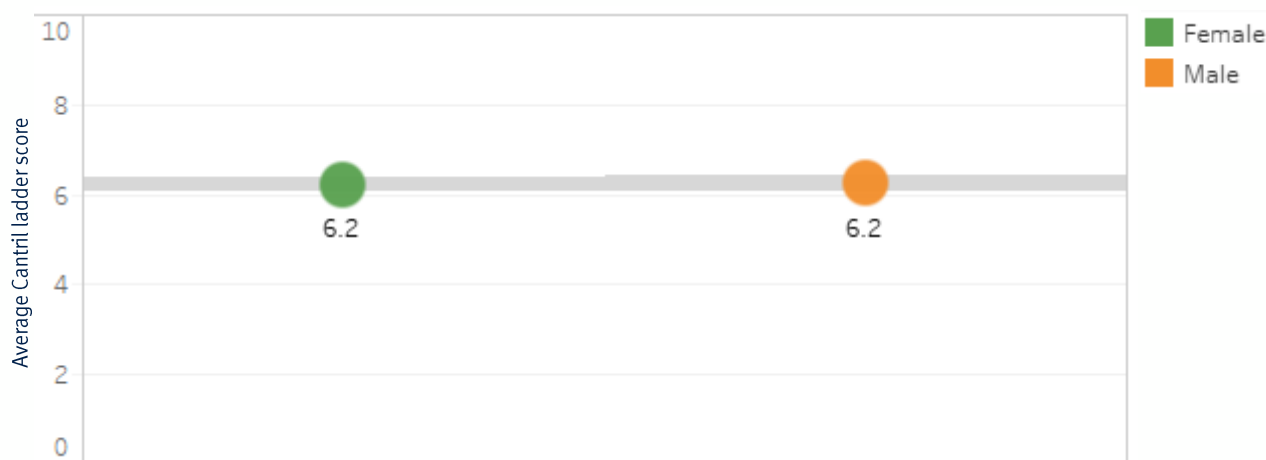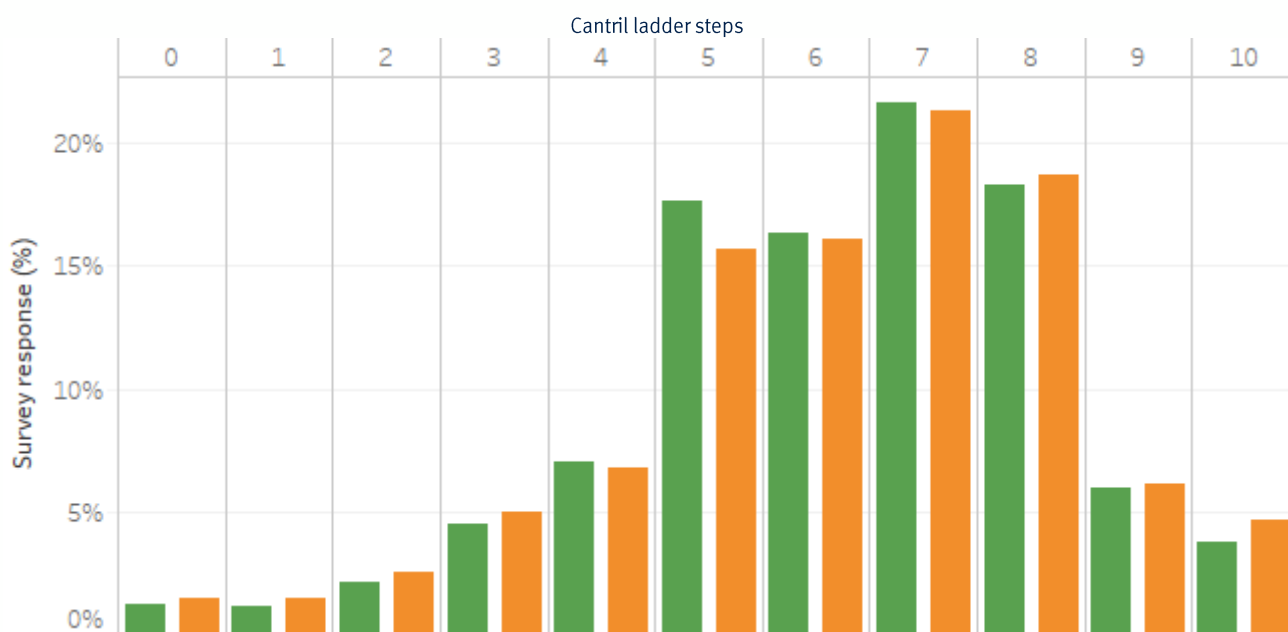
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How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by employment status?

Our global dataset estimates an average unemployment rate of approximately 23%[1]. The unemployed have significantly lower life satisfaction than the employed, by almost a full point, slightly larger than the unemployment effect found in pre-Covid-19 data. With unemployment now so pervasive, this contributes to lower average life satisfaction under Covid-19.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[2] by employment status. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means

Survey respondents (%)

Retired: 9%

Working: 43%

Student: 5%

Unemployed: 13%

NA: 30% (see footnote 2)

Global three week average distribution of responses[2] by employment status (bars of the same colour add up to 100%)

1 The unemployment rate is calculated as those that classified themselves as unemployed divided by the sum of those that classified themselves as unemployed and those that classified themselves as working.

2 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the re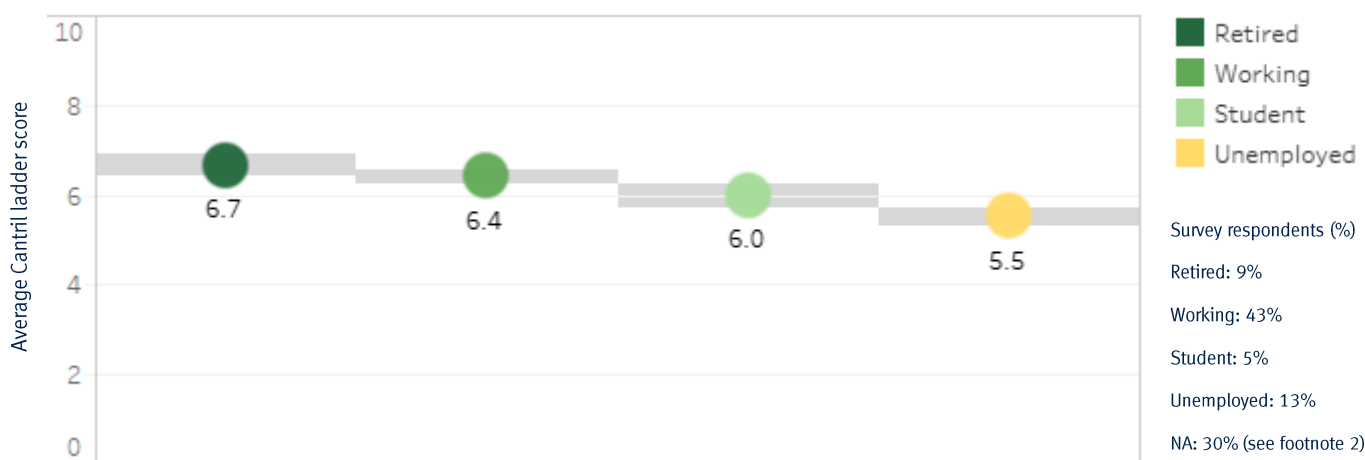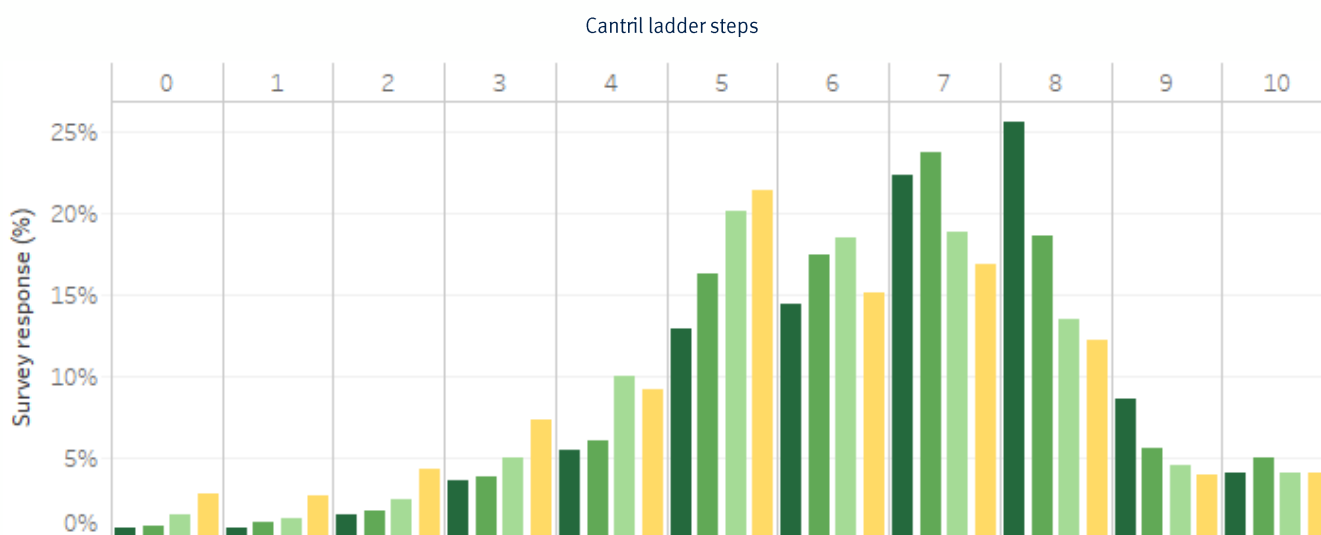sults for each country are shown in page 9. Global 3 week average Cantril ladder score for those with no employment data available was 6.2 (95% CI 5.6- 6.9). These represented 28% of all survey respondents. Global 3 week average Cantril ladder score for those who reported an employment status of "other/not specified" it was 5.4 (95% CI 5.1-5.6). These represented 2% of all survey respondents.
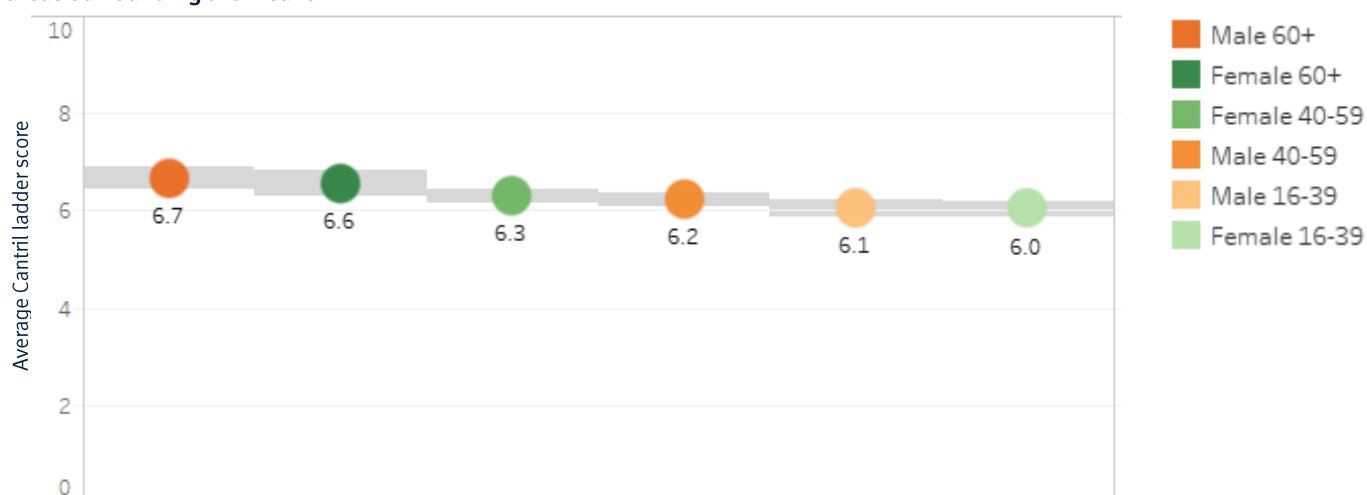
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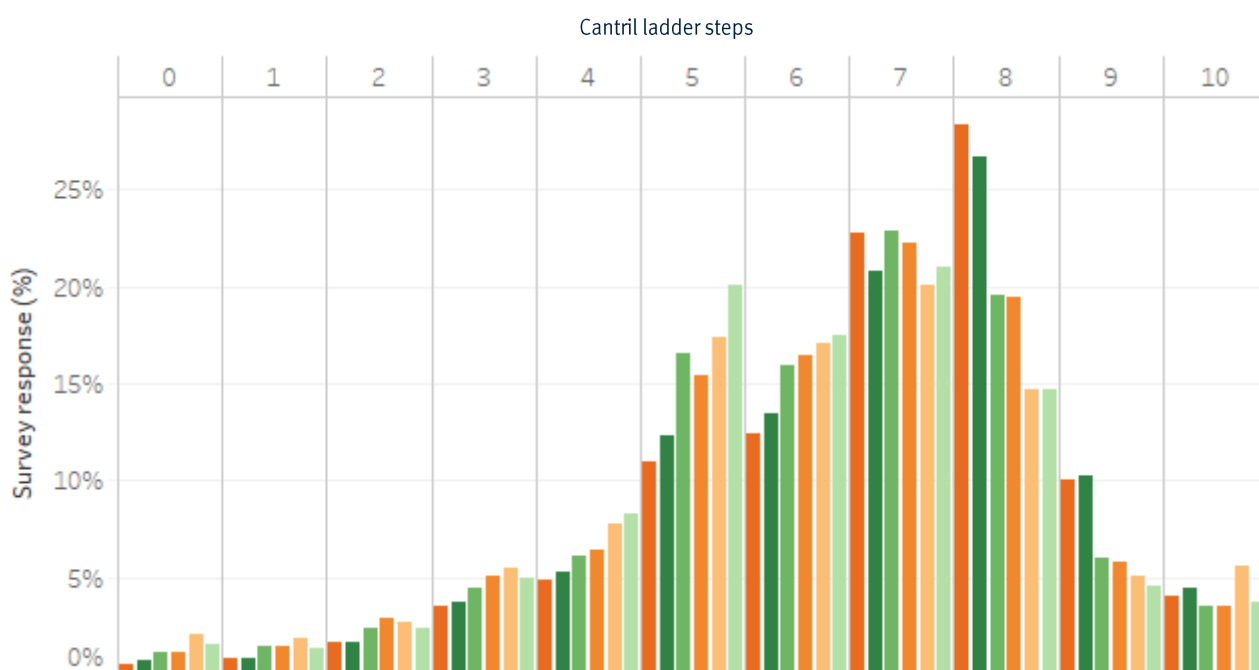
How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by gender and age?

The general equality of male and female life satisfaction holds equally for all age groups, with a slight female advantage in the 40 to 59 age group and a slight male advantage in the 60+ and under 40 age groups. This reflects a similar pattern to that in pre-Covid-19 data, although previous data often showed male life satisfaction slightly higher when averaged over the age groups. As shown below this reflects in part the differential effects of unemployment on the life satisfaction of males and females.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by gender and age. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means

Global three week average distribution of responses[1] by gender and age (bars of the same colour add up to 100%)

1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.

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How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by gender and employment status?

The general equality of male and female life satisfaction varies by employment status, with working employed males and females having comparable life satisfaction, while unemployed males have lower life satisfaction than unemployed females, by half a point. Unemployment rates are very high in this survey, especially for females. The combination is slightly worse for females than males, enough to offset the typical pre-Covid tendency for life satisfaction to be slightly higher for females.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by gender and employment status. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means

Female unemployment rate[2]: 31%

Male unemployment rate[2]: 17%

Global three week average distribution of responses[1] by gender and employment status (bars of the same colour add up to 100% in each chart)

Cantril ladder steps

1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.
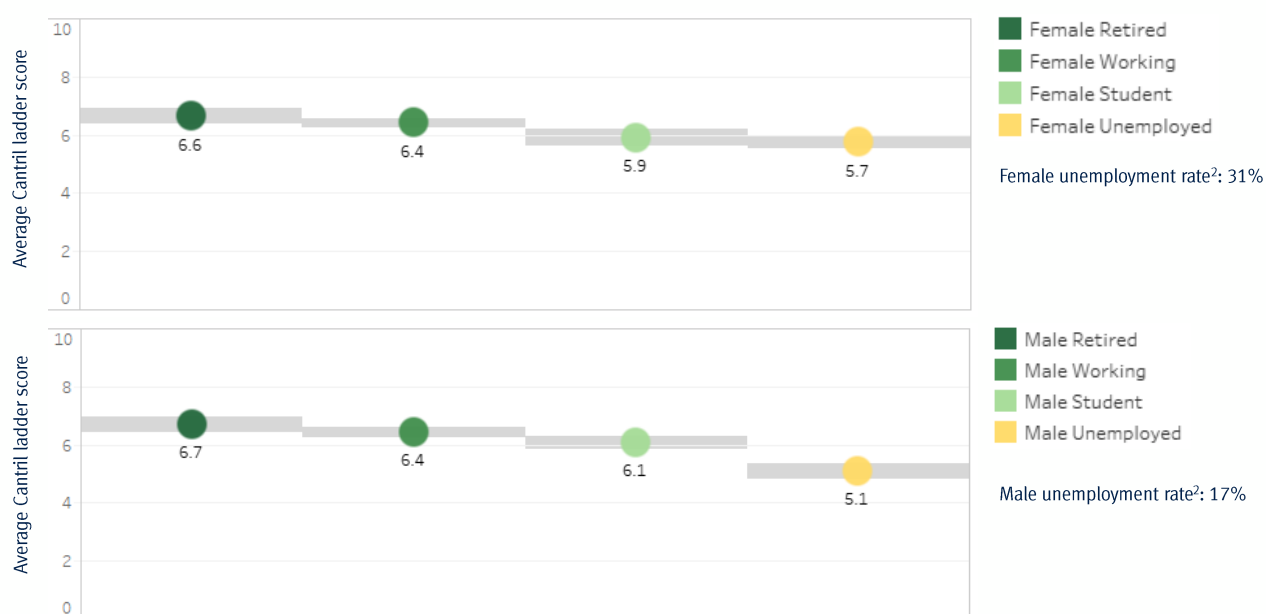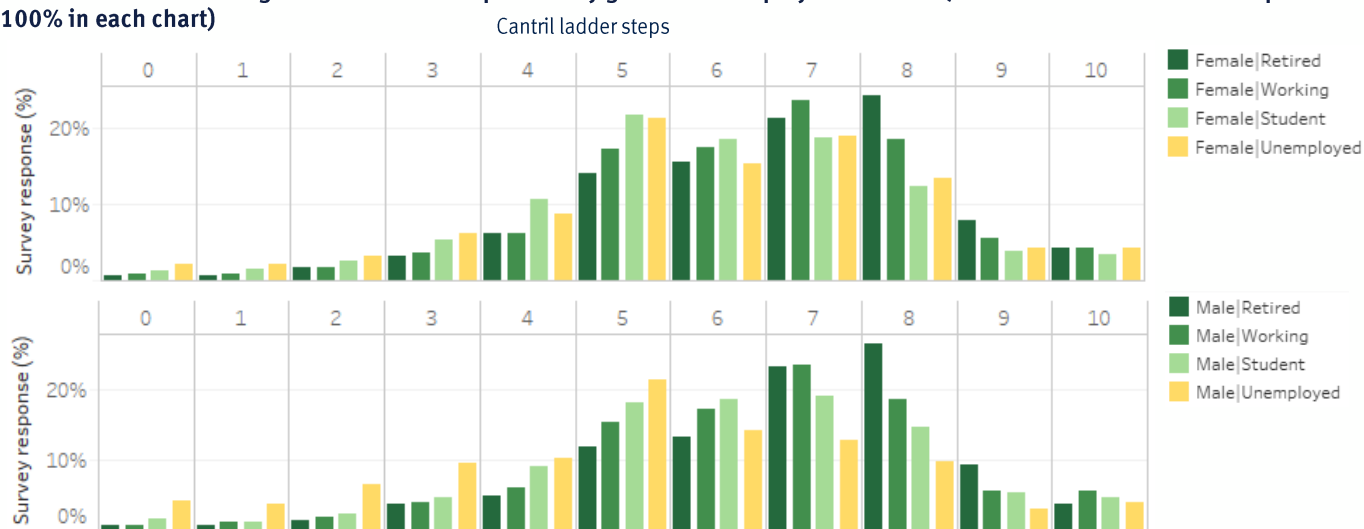
2 The unemployment rate is calculated as those that classified themselves as unemployed divided by the sum of those that classified themselves as unemployed and those that classified themselves as working.

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How does life satisfaction during Covid-19 vary by age and employment status?

For all age groups life satisfaction is much lower for the unemployed than the employed. The gap is 0.8 points for those 60 and older and for those under 40, and rises to a full point for those in age group 40 to 59. But even for those still working life satisfaction does not follow the usual U-shape being 0.2 points lower for the young than for those in the middle age group.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by age and employment status. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means

■ 16-39|Working (45%)[2]
■ 16-39|Unemployed (13%)[2]

Unemployment rate[3] in age group 16-39: 23%

■ 40-59|Working (53%)[2]
■ 40-59|Unemployed (16%)[2]

Unemployment rate[3] in age group 40-59: 22%

■ 60+|Working (19%)[2]
■ 60+|Unemployed (8%)[2]

Unemployment rate[3] in age group 60+: 24%

Global three week average distribution of responses[1] by age and employment status (bars of the same colour add up to 100% in each chart)
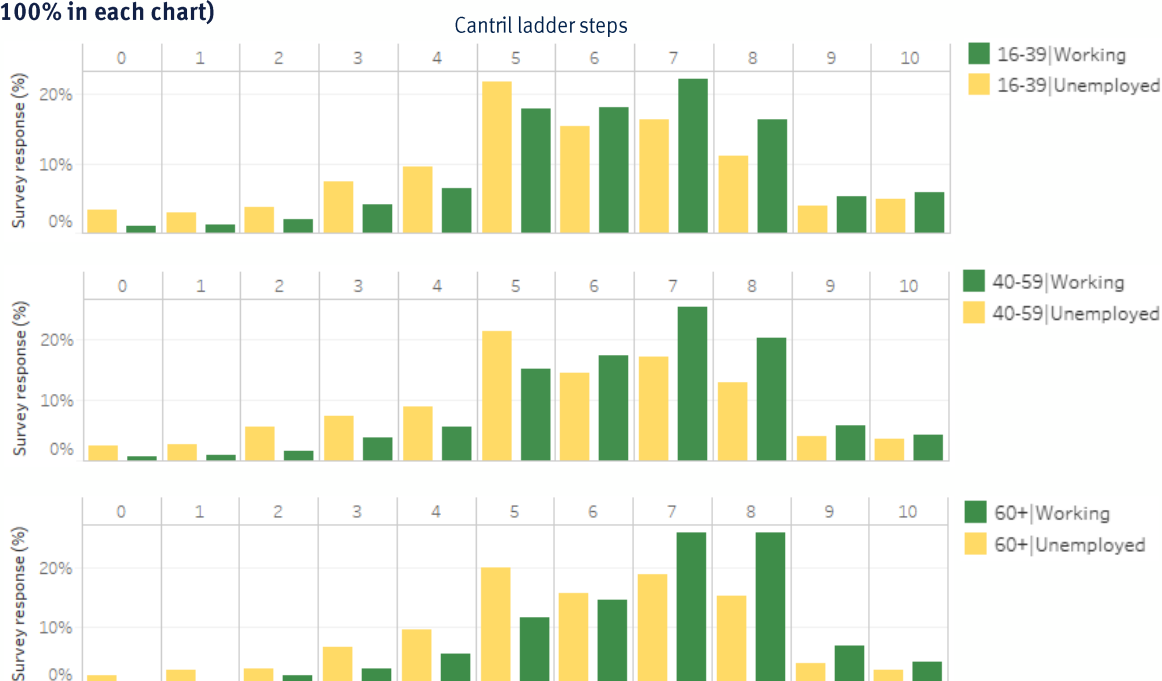
1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.

2 Share of respondents that reported this working status for this age group (total respondents in this age group = 100%)

3 The unemployment rate is calculated as those that classified themselves as unemployed divided by the sum of those that classified themselves as unemployed and those that classified themselves as working.
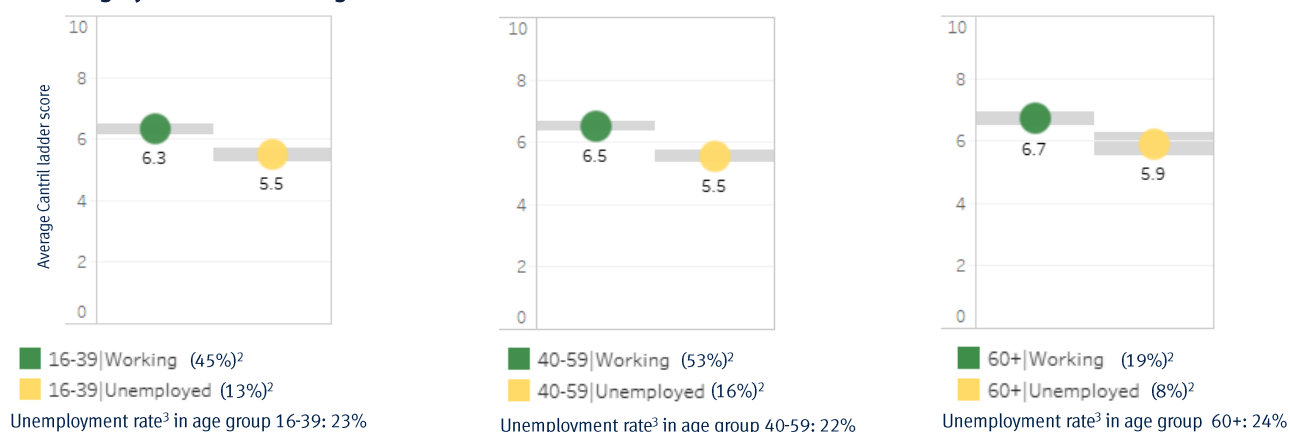
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How does life satisfaction compare to confidence in health authorities?

Respondents were asked "How much confidence do you have in the healthcare system to respond to a coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak in your country?". Those with "a lot of confidence" have a life satisfaction score that is more than one full point higher than those who report no confidence at all. This is even larger than comparably estimated effects in World Happiness Report 2020 for absence of corruption in global Gallup World Poll data and system trust in the European Social Survey.[1]

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[2] by confidence in health authorities. Confidence intervals, at the 95% level, are shown in grey areas surrounding the means
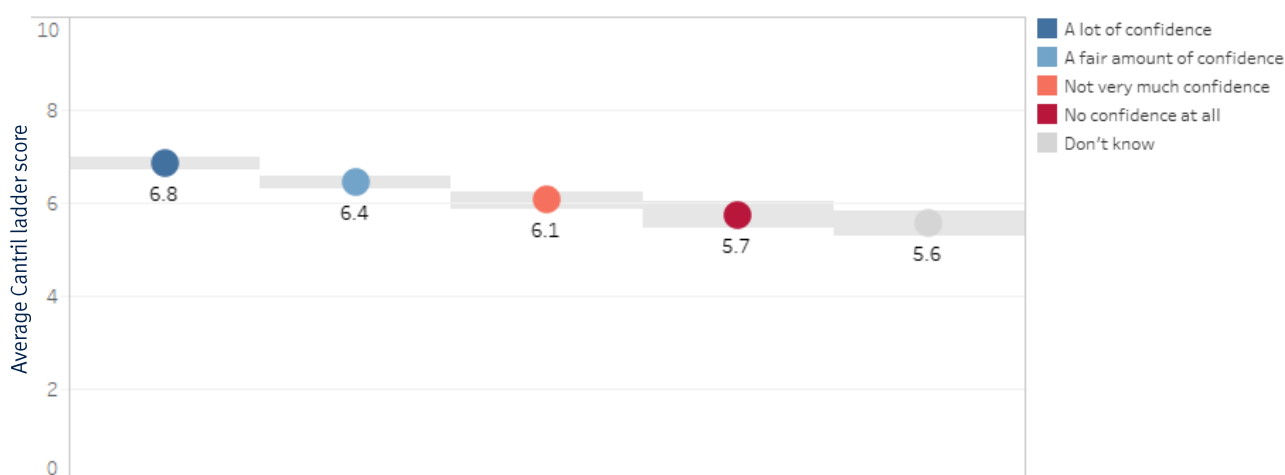
Global three week average distribution of responses[2] by confidence in health authorities (bars of the same colour add up to 100%)
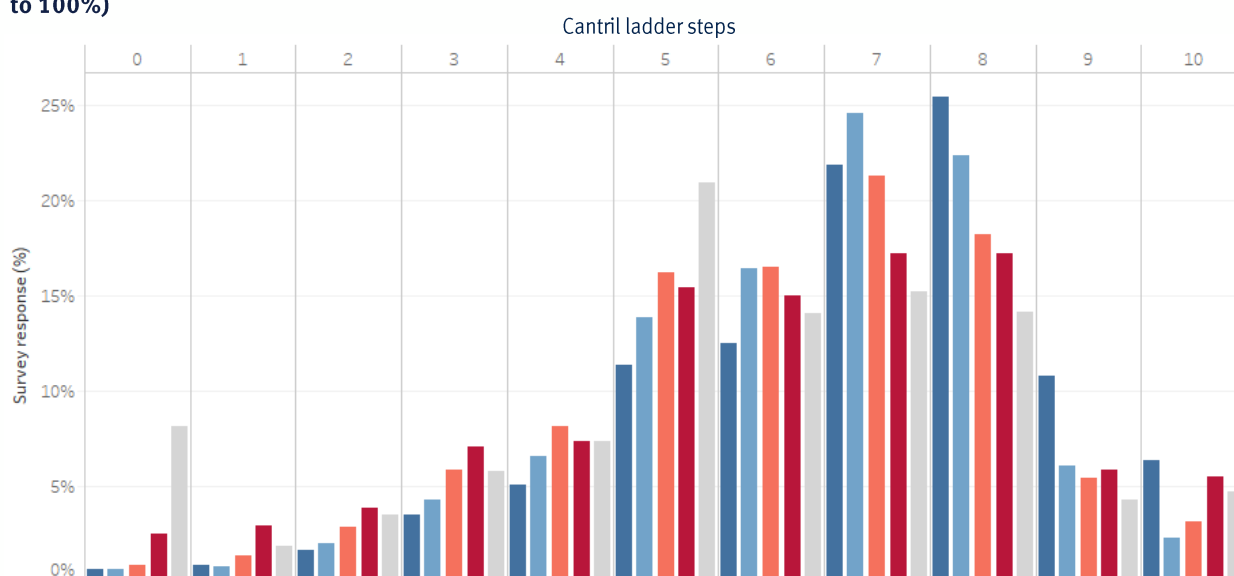
[1]Both results are in online Statistical Appendix 3 of World Happiness Report 2020 (https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2020/WHR20_Ch2_Statistical_Appendix_3.pdf), in Table 5 for the Gallup World Poll and Table 8 for the European Social Survey.

[2] Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 10.

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National average life satisfaction compared to Covid-19 death rates

While Asian countries all have very low death rates and a wide range of happiness, western economies show a negative trend – with higher death rates generally associated with lower life satisfaction. The happiest among the western industrial countries are also generally those with high confidence in their public institutions. If that confidence is matched by health authority expertise and public willingness to follow their advice, then lower fatality rates might well be expected.

Three week average Cantril ladder scores[1] by country and cumulative Covid-19 deaths per 100,000 as of June 14th
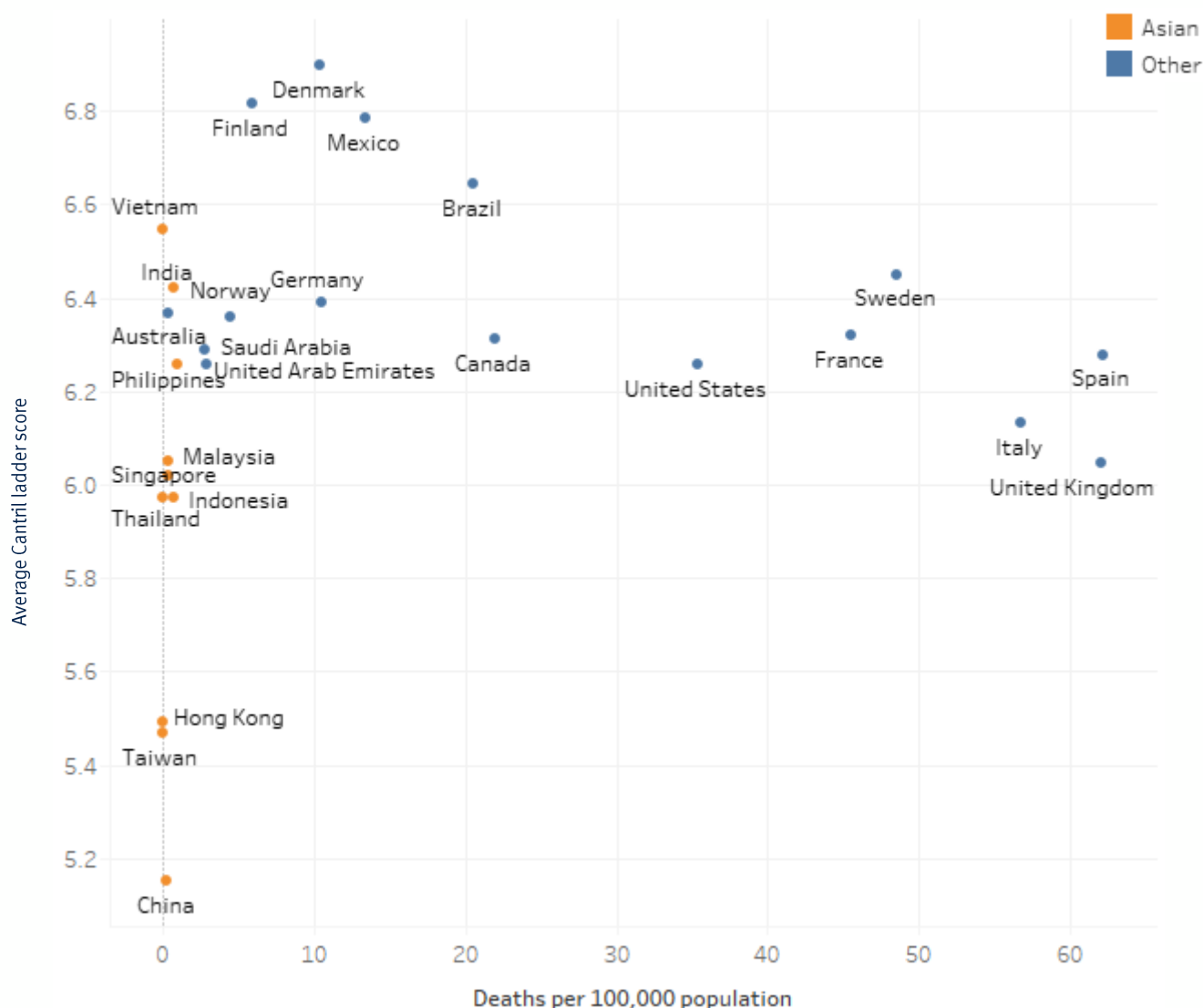
1 Life satisfaction scores on the Cantril ladder are calculated as the average score over 3 weeks of survey results for each country. The last week of survey results is June 8th through 14th. The exact dates for the results for each country are shown in page 9.
NOTE: Survey responses from China are representative of the urban population. Survey responses from India are representative of the urban online population. All other responses are nationally representative.
Covid-19 deaths taken from Johns Hopkins University: https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19
Total country population taken from United Nations: https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/CSV/

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Three weeks of survey results were considered for each country in this report

Analyses including age, gender, employment status and Covid-19 deaths (pages 1-6 and 8)

All survey results considered in pages 1-6 and 8 included the week of June 08th – June 14th. The two previous survey results were used to calculate three week averages. Not all countries had results for every week, hence the exact dates of each survey result varied. The table below shows the survey dates that were used to calculate three week averages in pages 1-6 and 8, as well as the sample sizes for each week of survey results.

Country	Apr 27 - May 03	May 11 - May 17	May 18 - May 24	May 25 - May 31	Jun 01 - Jun 07	Jun 08 - Jun 14
Australia		1,008			1,004	1,005
Brazil	999		896			501
Canada		1,002			1,001	1,001
China		1,001		1,007		998
Denmark		1,005		1,004		1,006
Finland		1,006		1,002		1,011
France		1,009		1,003		1,020
Germany		1,003		1,006		1,002
Hong Kong		786		497		500
India		1,006			1,007	1,016
Indonesia		1,008		1,009		1,015
Italy		1,004		1,000		1,011
Malaysia		1,007		1,014		1,015
Mexico		999		1,016		1,002
Norway		1,004		1,002		1,000
Philippines		1,014		1,002		1,008
Saudi Arabia		892		999		987
Singapore		1,007		1,003		1,004
Spain		1,003		1,000		1,010
Sweden		1,009		1,008		1,004
Taiwan		1,004			1,001	1,000
Thailand		2,021		1,001		1,005
United Arab Emirates		990		1,000		1,003
United Kingdom				1,002	1,160	1,009
United States		1,006		1,002		995
Vietnam		1,005		1,011		1,010

NOTE: Survey responses from China are representative of the urban population. Survey responses from India are representative of the urban online population. All other responses are nationally representative.

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Three weeks of survey results were considered for each country in this report

Analyses including confidence in health authorities (page 7)

Confidence questions were asked in a subset of countries. Additionally, they were not asked in all survey iterations. In order to calculate average responses over 3 weeks the latest 3 weeks of responses available are included for each country. The table below shows the survey dates that were used to calculate three week averages in page 7, as well as the sample sizes for each week of survey results.

Country	Apr 27 - May 03	May 04 - May 10	May 11 - May 17	May 18 - May 24	May 25 - May 31	Jun 01 - Jun 07	Jun 08 - Jun 14
Australia		1,014	1,008			1,004	
Brazil	999			896			501
Canada	1,002		1,002			1,001	
Denmark	1,008		1,005		1,004		
Finland	999		1,006		1,002		
France		1,001	1,009		1,003		
Germany		1,012	1,003		1,006		
India		981	1,006			1,007	
Italy		997	1,004		1,000		
Mexico	986		999		1,016		
Norway	1,005		1,004		1,002		
Spain		1,002	1,003		1,000		
Sweden		981	1,009		1,008		
United Kingdom				1,003	1,002	1,160	
United States		965	1,006		1,002		

NOTE: Survey responses from India are representative of the urban online population. All other responses are nationally representative.

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About this report

This report was produced by Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) and the World Happiness Report team

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This research is made possible by generous support for the public good from YouGov Plc.

The Imperial College London - YouGov team wishes to express their grateful support to Stephan Shakespeare, Marcus Roberts, Gavin Ellison, Alex MacIntosh, Chris Curtis, Eir Nolsoe, Sharon Paculor, Lenny Naar, Alice Blencowe, Steve Adams from Visual DJ Ltd. and volunteers from Made by Many: Rebecca Foy, Anna Pagan, Gareth Cozens, Callum Jefferies, Neethu Mathew, Micha Nicheva, Kristof Goossens

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The Imperial College London - YouGov team gratefully acknowledges the kind support of Edelman Intelligence for their global social listening contribution

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For more behavioural data on a global level, visit coviddatahub.com to explore our interactive charts

The CovidDataHub.com project is a joint collaboration between the Institute of Global Health Innovation (IGHI) at Imperial College London and YouGov Plc to gather global insights on people's behaviors and life satisfaction in response to COVID-19. The research covers 29 countries and surveys are conducted on a regular basis since the first week of April.

This report is designed to provide insights on how different populations are responding to the pandemic, helping public health bodies in their efforts to limit the impact of the disease. Anonymized respondent level data is generously made available for all public health and academic institutions globally by YouGov Plc at our GitHub site.

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