



# Impact of Covid-19 on Wellbeing in Scotland: Wave 3



Fieldwork 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## Context and method

These findings are based on an Ipsos MORI telephone survey of 1,000 adults in Scotland aged 16+, conducted 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This was the third wave of the survey. A first wave was conducted 27<sup>th</sup> April-3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020, during the initial lockdown (which began on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020), and a second 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> December 2020, at which point different areas of Scotland were subject to different restrictions depending on their 'tier'.

At the time Wave 3 fieldwork was conducted, the whole of Scotland was in Level 4 lockdown. The First Minister had announced some elements of a 'deliberately cautious' framework for moving out of lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. However, fieldwork preceded the more detailed announcements made on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 around plans for more substantial re-opening. At the same time, the vaccination programme, which had only just started at the time of the December survey, was well underway. By March 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, when fieldwork started, over 1.7 million people in Scotland had received at their first dose of vaccination against COVID-19.

Quotas for each wave were set based on gender, age, working status and Scottish Parliament region. At each wave, the data was weighted to ensure the final sample was representative of the Scottish population as a whole. All samples have a margin of error around them. For a sample of around 1,000, this is +/- 3 percentage points. Findings based on sub-groups are subject to a wider margin of error.

# Key findings

The third wave of this survey took place at a point when Scotland was in another national lockdown. However, at the same time the vaccine roll out was continuing at pace. The combination of ongoing strict restrictions and the hope that the vaccine programme will bring the pandemic to an end is reflected in the findings on the changing impact of the pandemic on people's wellbeing.

In March 2021, people in Scotland were, on average, significantly less anxious compared with May 2020. The fact that average anxiety scores have fallen most among those aged 70+, the vast majority of whom were vaccinated by mid-February 2021, suggests that the vaccine programme may have contributed to this decline in anxiety. Compared with both May and December 2020, fewer people reported being worried about either themselves or their family or friends becoming seriously ill with COVID-19 – again, this may reflect the progress of the vaccine roll-out.

However, compared with the December 2020 wave of the survey (which took place prior to announcements of a new lockdown): more people reported feeling lonely at least some of the time; around a quarter remain concerned about their mental health (unchanged on earlier waves); more people reported feeling a lack of sense of purpose; and more reported feeling cut off from family and friends. The proportion saying they were finding the current restrictions hard to cope with was also higher than in either December or May 2020. These findings point to the challenges people may have experienced in coping with the new lockdown.

Compared with the first national lockdown, we appear to have become much less likely to check-in on one another, although most people say that they do not feel in need of any additional help that they are not receiving.

## Key findings (continued)

As in the previous waves, different groups of people reported very different experiences: it is clear that while we may all be in the same storm, we are not necessarily in the same boat when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on wellbeing.

Groups that reported more negative experiences include:

- **Younger people** – who reported higher anxiety and loneliness than older people, were more likely to be worried about their own and other people's mental health and about financial and job security, and were less likely to report they are managing well financially
- **Women** – who reported higher anxiety than men, and were more likely to say they are finding current restrictions on socialising difficult to live with
- **People on low incomes** – who reported higher anxiety than those on higher incomes, were less likely to say they are managing well financially, and were more likely to say they had lost a job or had their pay or hours cut since March 2020
- **People with limiting long-term physical or mental health conditions** – who reported higher anxiety and loneliness and were more likely to say they feel cut off from friends and family
- **Those living alone** were also more likely to report feeling lonely at this wave (household type was not significant in December).

Of course, we are all members of more than one group, and the impact of the pandemic may be more pronounced for those who are members of more than one of these groups.

# GENERAL WELLBEING

# 1

# Key findings

THE MEAN HAPPINESS SCORE HAS REMAINED CONSTANT SINCE MAY 2020, WHILE ANXIETY HAS, ON AVERAGE, DECREASED OVER TIME.

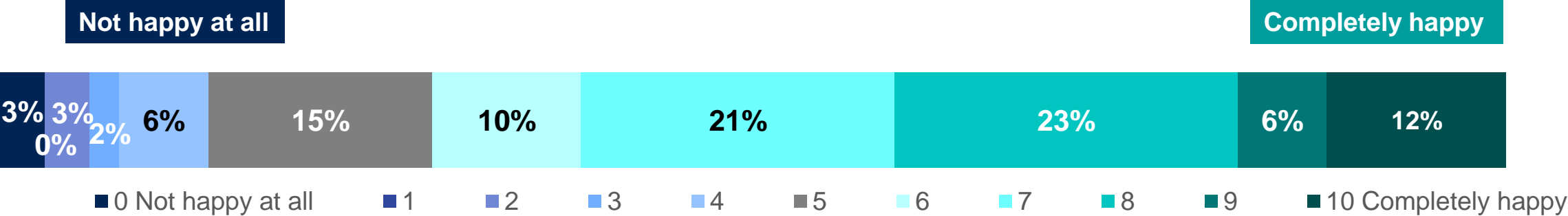
REPORTED LONELINESS HAS INCREASED SINCE DECEMBER 2020 – BACK TO MAY 2020 LEVELS.

THE PROPORTION WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT THEMSELVES OR OTHERS BECOMING SERIOUSLY ILL WITH COVID-19 HAS CONTINUED TO FALL.

# The mean 'happiness' score on a scale of 0-10 was 6.7

This is identical to December 2020, and very similar to May 2020 (6.6). However, it is lower than ONS's mean happiness score for the UK as a whole for Q3 2020 (7.42 based on the same question).<sup>1</sup>

Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday, on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all happy and 10 is completely happy?



Base: W3 (1,000) All

W1 (May 20) mean score: 6.6  
 W2 (Dec 20) mean score: 6.7  
 W3 (Mar 21) mean score: 6.7

<sup>1</sup> - ONS estimates are based on Annual Population Survey data, collected via telephone since March 2020. ONS estimates are seasonally adjusted to remove the estimated variations as a result of the time of year and calendar arrangement. Q3 was the most recent data available at the time of writing.

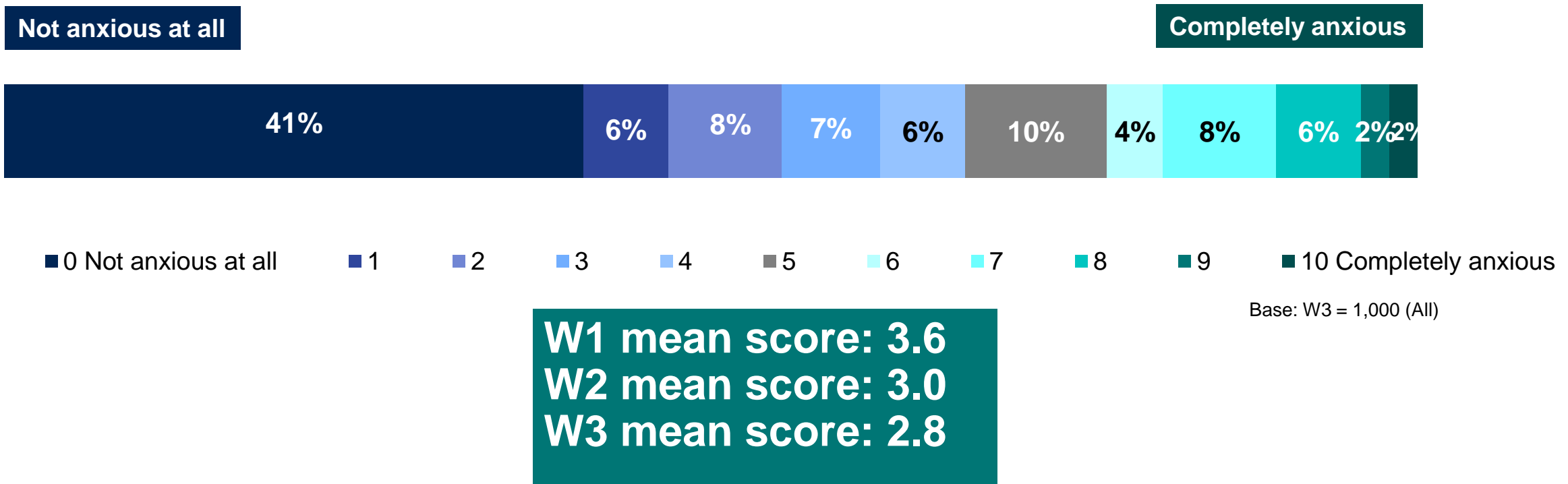
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/quarterlypersonalwellbeingestimatesseasonallyadjusted>



# Average anxiety levels were lower compared with May 2020

The mean score was also lower – indicating that people were less anxious – than ONS’s mean anxiety score for people across the UK as a whole in Q3 2020 (3.23 based on the same question).<sup>1</sup>

Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday, on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all anxious and 10 is completely anxious?

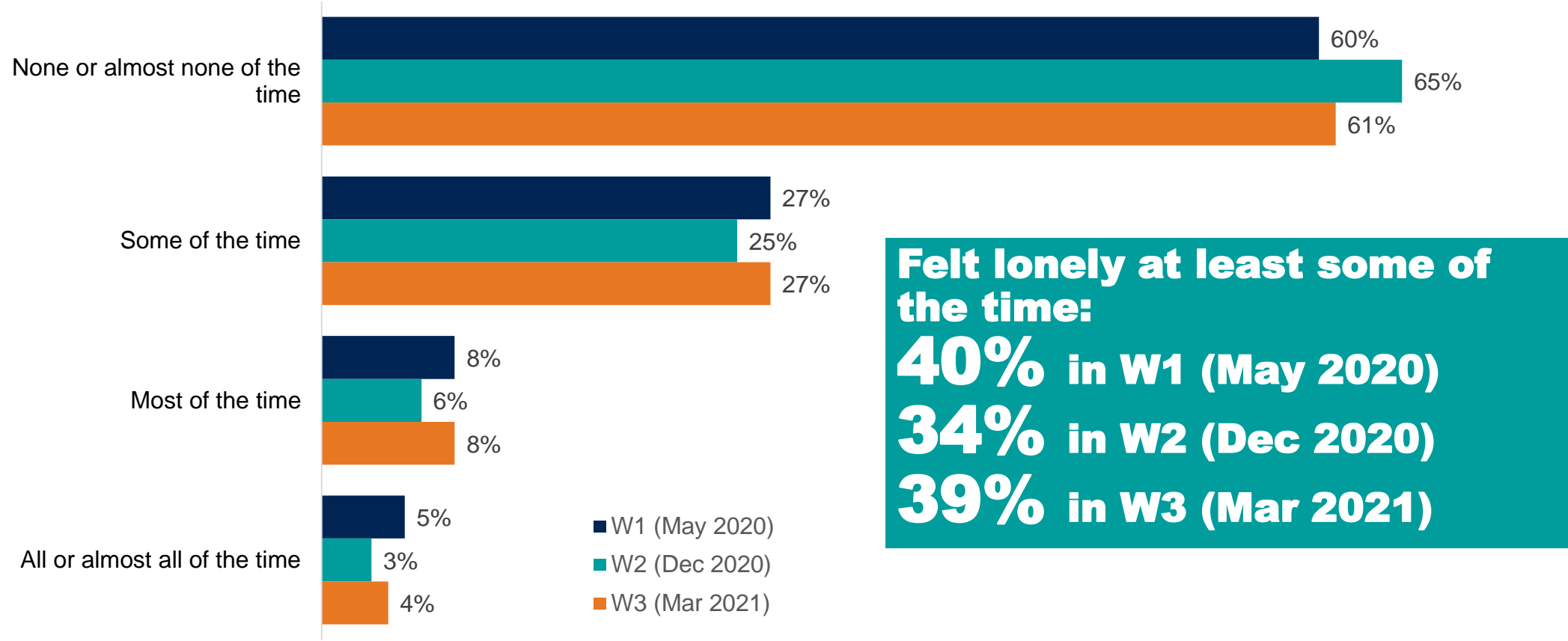


1 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/quarterlypersonalwellbeingestimatesseasonallyadjusted>



# The proportion saying they felt lonely at least some of the time was higher than in December, and similar to May 2020 levels

How much of the time during the last week have you felt lonely?



Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000), All



# Anxiety continues to be unevenly distributed

**There is, however, some tentative evidence that vaccines may be starting to reduce anxiety levels among the oldest age group**

- Mean anxiety (2.8 overall) was higher among:
  - younger people (3.4 among 16-34 year-olds, 2.8 among 35-54 year-olds, 2.5 among those 55-69, and 2.0 among those aged 70+) – while the small sample sizes for sub-groups mean comparisons over time require some caution, it is worth noting that the biggest fall in anxiety scores from Wave 2 to Wave 3 was among those aged 70+, to whom the vaccine had been fully rolled out by Wave 3.
  - women (3.3 vs. 2.3 of men)
  - those on lower incomes (3.7 among those with incomes under £15,600, compared with 2.3 for those with incomes of £52,000 or more) (note: there were no significant differences in anxiety by area deprivation at Wave 3)
  - those with a limiting health condition (4.4, vs 2.4 among those without).

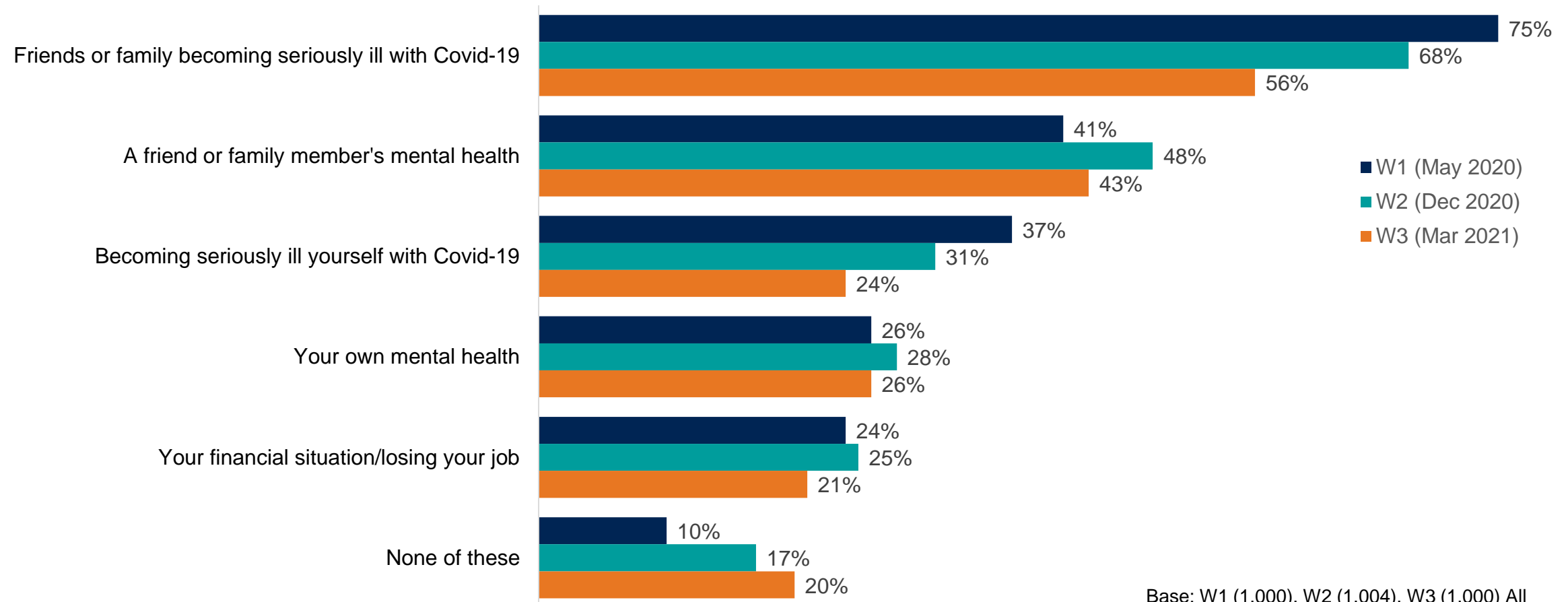
# Loneliness is particularly affecting younger people, those living alone, those on low incomes, and those with health conditions

- Loneliness was higher among:
  - Younger people (20% of those aged 16-24 said they were lonely most or all of the time, compared with 9-12% of other age groups)
  - Those living alone (22% of those in single adult households, and 21% of single older households were lonely most or all of the time, compared with 12% overall). (Note: household type was not significant at Wave 2 – it is possible that loneliness has particularly increased since December among these groups as a result of the national lockdown).
  - Those on lower incomes (28% of those with incomes under £15,600, compared with 5-9% of those in higher income groups)
  - Those with a limiting physical or mental health condition (26% of this group, compared with 8% of those with no limiting conditions, felt lonely most or all of the time).

# Compared with earlier waves, fewer people are worried about themselves or others becoming seriously ill with COVID

The proportions who are concerned about their own/others mental health and financial situation have changed less and remain similar to levels recorded in May 2020.

Which, if any, of the following things, are major worries for you at the moment?

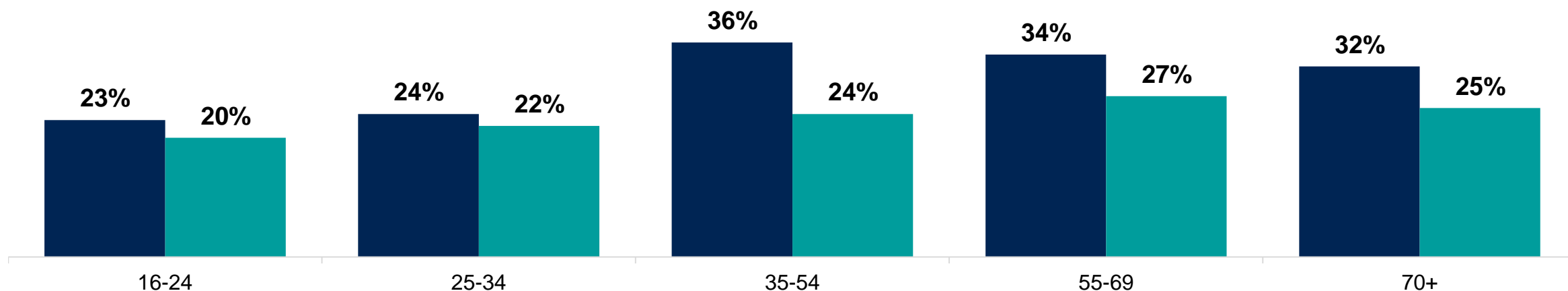


Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

# Compared with December 2020, those 35 and over are less likely to feel worried about becoming seriously ill themselves with COVID-19

% who said 'Becoming seriously ill yourself with COVID-19' is a major worry for them at the moment

■ W2 (Dec 2020) ■ W3 (Mar 2021)



Base: W3: 16-24 = 102; 25-34 = 164; 35-54 = 314; 55-69 = 277; 70+ = 143  
W2: 16-24 = 111; 25-34 = 157; 35-54 = 333; 55-69 = 263; 70+ = 140

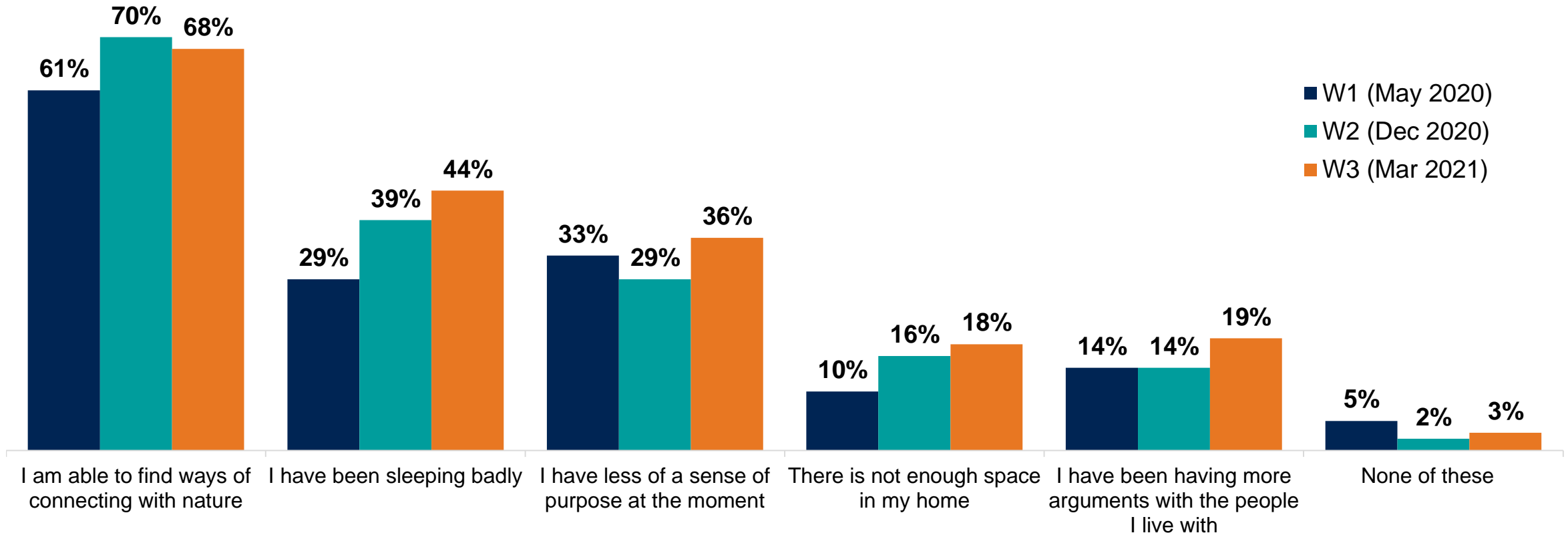
# Worries about finances and mental health were more common among younger age groups

- 30% of 16-24 year-olds and 34% of those aged 25-34 said their financial situation or losing their job was a major worry for them at the moment, compared with 24% of those aged 35-54, 13% of those aged 55-69 and just 3% of those aged 70+
- 38% of those aged under 35 said their own mental health was a major worry, compared with 28% of those aged 35-54, 18% of those aged 55-69, and 7% of those aged 70+
- Younger people were also more likely to be worried about other people's mental health – 58% of 16-24 year-olds, 53% of 25-34 year-olds, and 48% of those aged 35-54 said they were worried about a friend or family member's mental health, compared with 31% of 55-69 year-olds and 24% of those aged 70+.

# Compared with December 2020, more people reported a loss of sense of purpose

The proportion sleeping badly was 15 points higher in March 2021 compared with May 2020, while the proportion having arguments with people they live with had increased since December 2020. Compared with May 2020, more felt that there was not enough space in their home.

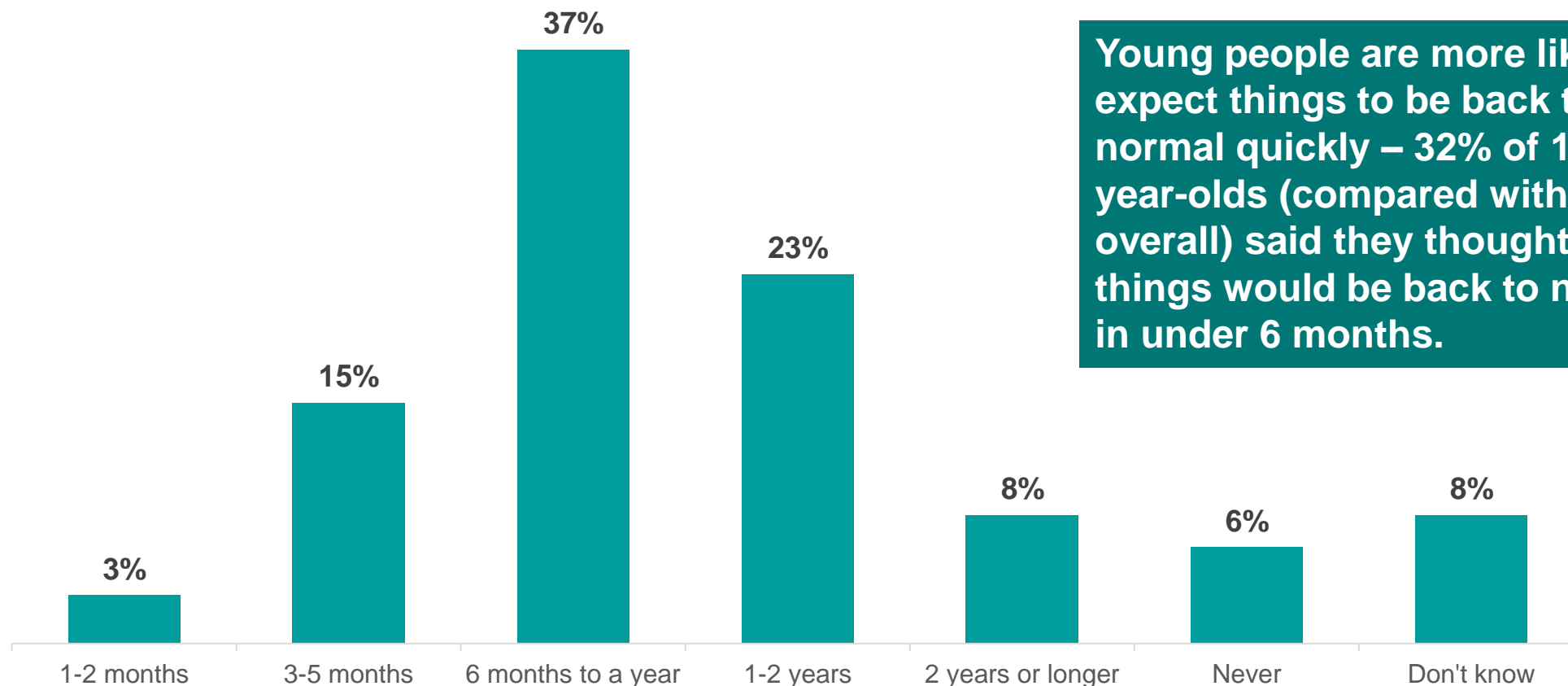
Which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?



Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

# People vary in their expectations about how long it will take to get back to normal – but most (60%) say somewhere between 6 months and two years

Thinking about the current situation with Coronavirus, how long do you think it will take before things feel like they are getting back to normal in Scotland?



Young people are more likely to expect things to be back to normal quickly – 32% of 16-24 year-olds (compared with 18% overall) said they thought things would be back to normal in under 6 months.



# IMPACTS ON WORK AND FINANCES

# 2

# Key findings

WORK HAS CHANGED IN DIFFERENT WAYS FOR THOSE ON HIGH INCOMES (MORE LIKELY TO BE WFH) AND ON LOW INCOMES (MORE LIKELY TO HAVE LOST THEIR JOB OR HAD PAY/HOURS CUT).

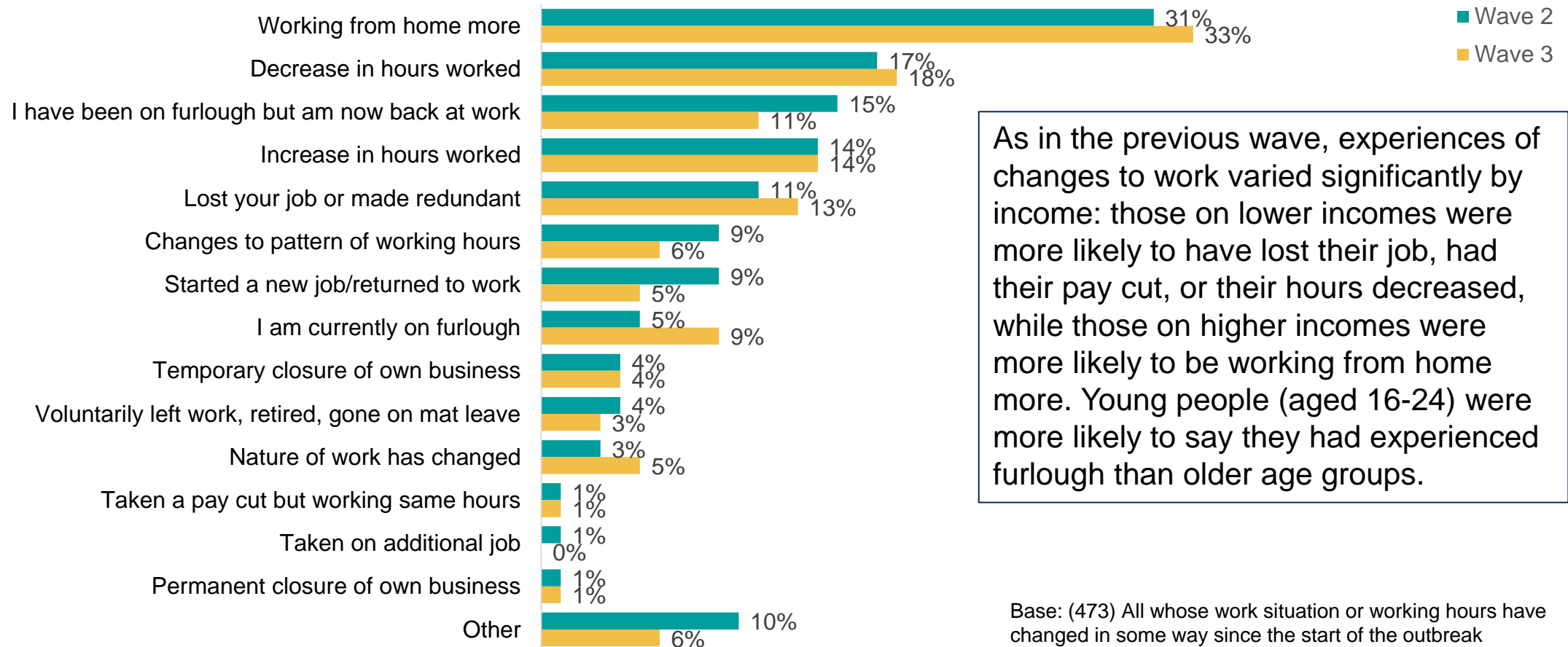
A QUARTER SAID THEIR INCOME WAS LOWER THAN IT HAD BEEN AT THE START OF MARCH 2020 (SIMILAR TO THE PROPORTION WHO SAID THIS IN DECEMBER 2020).

YOUNGER PEOPLE, THOSE ON LOW INCOMES, AND THOSE WHO HAD LOST THEIR JOB OR HAD THEIR PAY OR HOURS CUT WERE ALL LESS LIKELY TO SAY THEY WERE MANAGING WELL FINANCIALLY.

# The most common change to people's working lives has been working at home more (33%)

However, almost the same proportion (31%) had either lost their job, had their pay cut, or experienced a decrease in their working hours

How has your working situation or working hours changed?



As in the previous wave, experiences of changes to work varied significantly by income: those on lower incomes were more likely to have lost their job, had their pay cut, or their hours decreased, while those on higher incomes were more likely to be working from home more. Young people (aged 16-24) were more likely to say they had experienced furlough than older age groups.

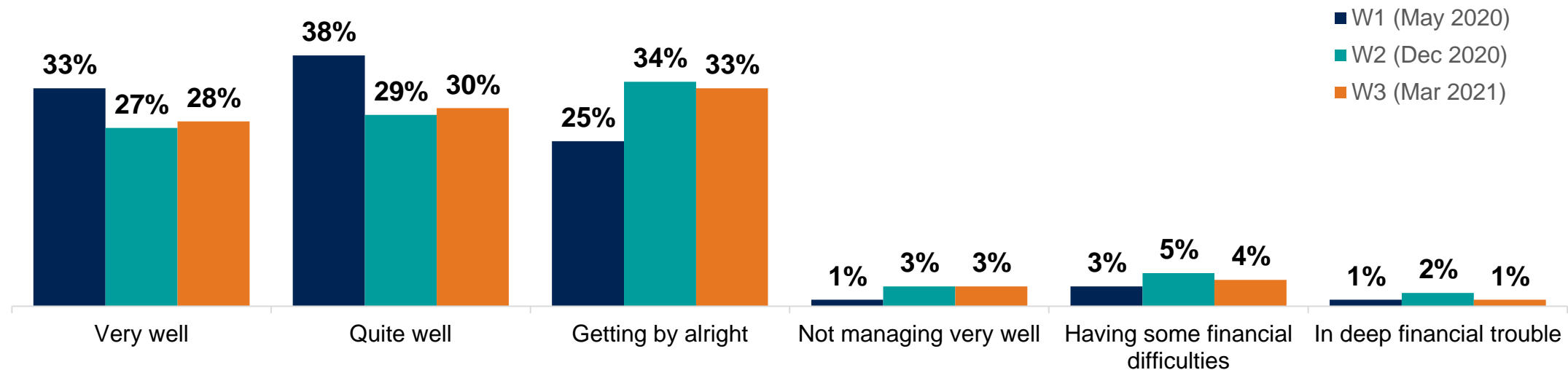
Base: (473) All whose work situation or working hours have changed in some way since the start of the outbreak

# People's views on how they were managing financially were very similar to December

8% said they were not managing well or having some difficulties, while 33% felt they were getting by alright, and 58% that they were managing very or quite well.

Wave 1: Thinking back to the start of March this year, before the Coronavirus lockdown, which of the following best describes how you and your household were managing financially?

Wave 2: How well would you say you are managing financially these days?



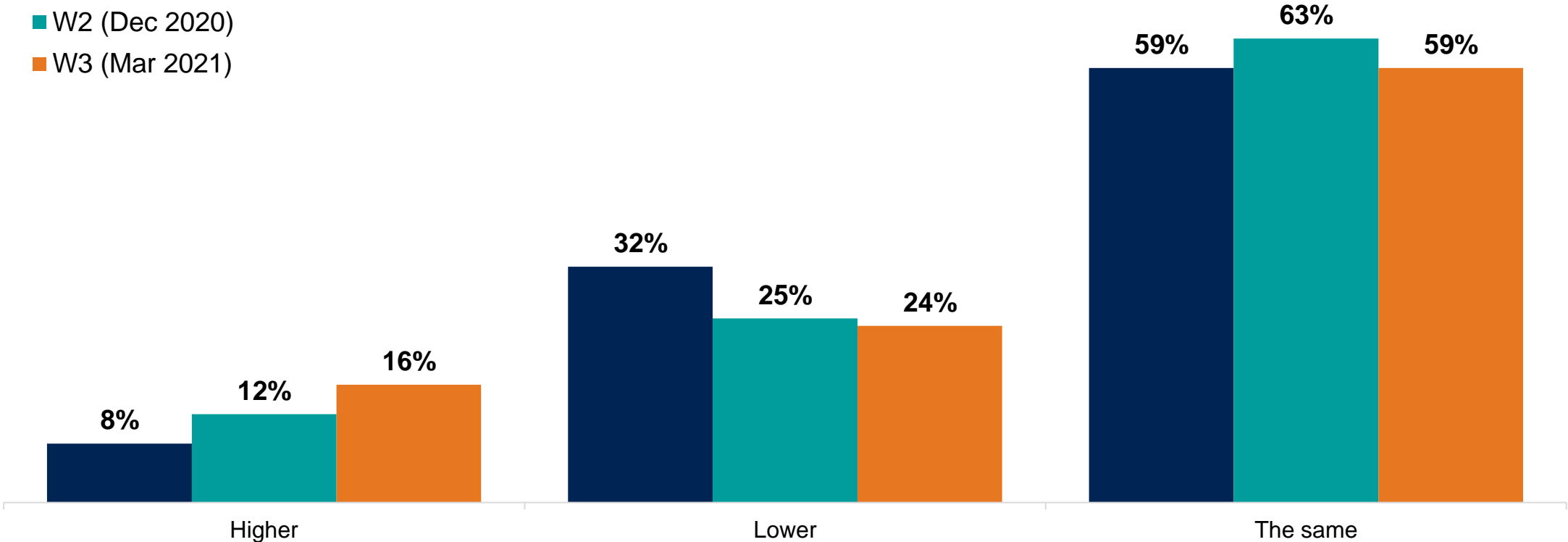
Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

# A quarter said their income was lower compared to the start of March 2020 (similar to the findings in December 2020)

Compared with May 2020, twice as many said their income was now higher compared with before the start of the coronavirus crisis

Compared to the start of March 2020, is your total household income now higher, lower or about the same as usual?

- W1 (May 2020)
- W2 (Dec 2020)
- W3 (Mar 2021)



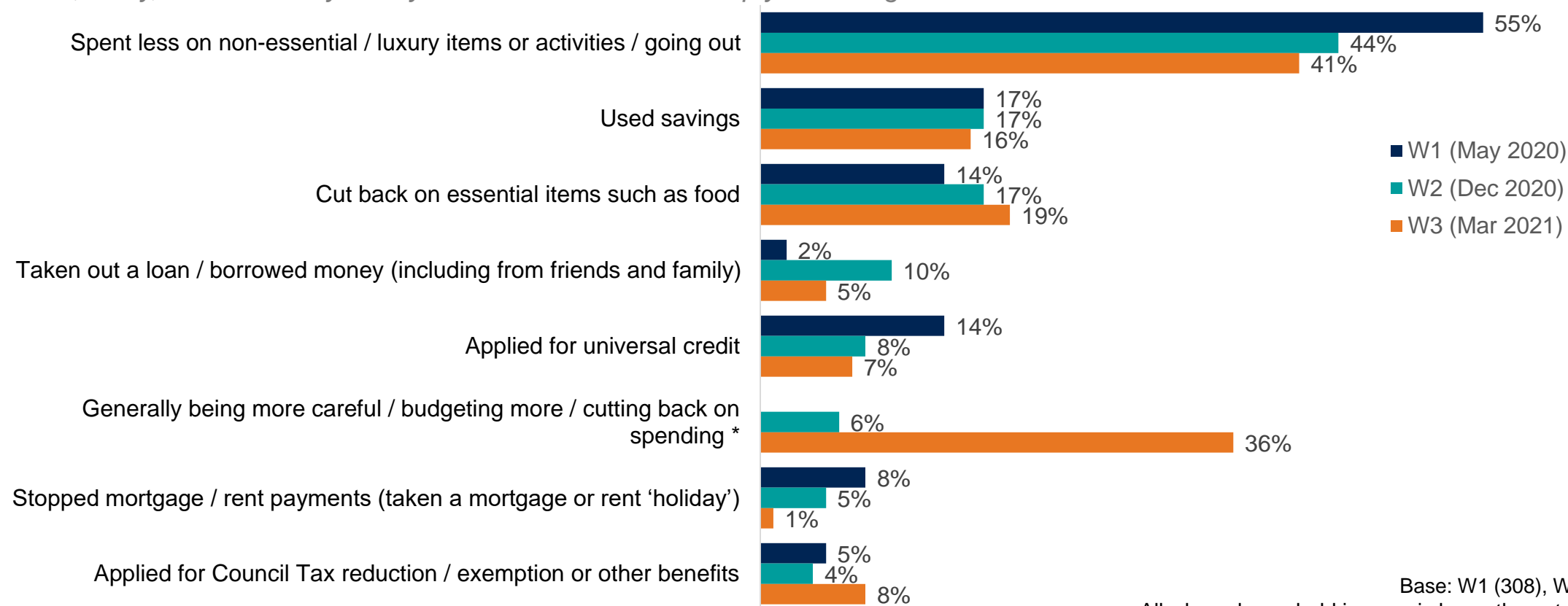
# Key subgroup differences

- The proportion of people saying they were managing very or quite well financially increased with age – from 48% of 16-24 year-olds, to 74% of those aged 70+.
  - 25-34 year-olds were the age group most likely to report that their income was lower than usual compared with pre-pandemic – 36% of 25-34 year-olds said this, compared with 24% overall.
- Similarly, the proportion who felt they were managing well increased with income, from 36% of those with household incomes under £15,600 to 79% of those with incomes of £52,000 or more.
  - Those on the highest incomes were also more likely to say their income had increased since March 2020 – 23% of those on £52,000 or more said this, compared with 16% overall
- Those who had lost their job or experienced cuts to their hours or pay since the start of the pandemic were less likely to say they were managing well financially (34%, compared with 58% overall).
  - They were also much more likely to say their income was lower compared with March 2020 (62%, compared with 24% overall)

# The most common action to manage on a lower income was to spend less on non-essential items/going out

Although fewer reported stopping mortgage/rent payments, compared with May 2020 more reported cutting back on essential items such as food

What, if any, actions have you or your household taken to help you manage with a lower income?

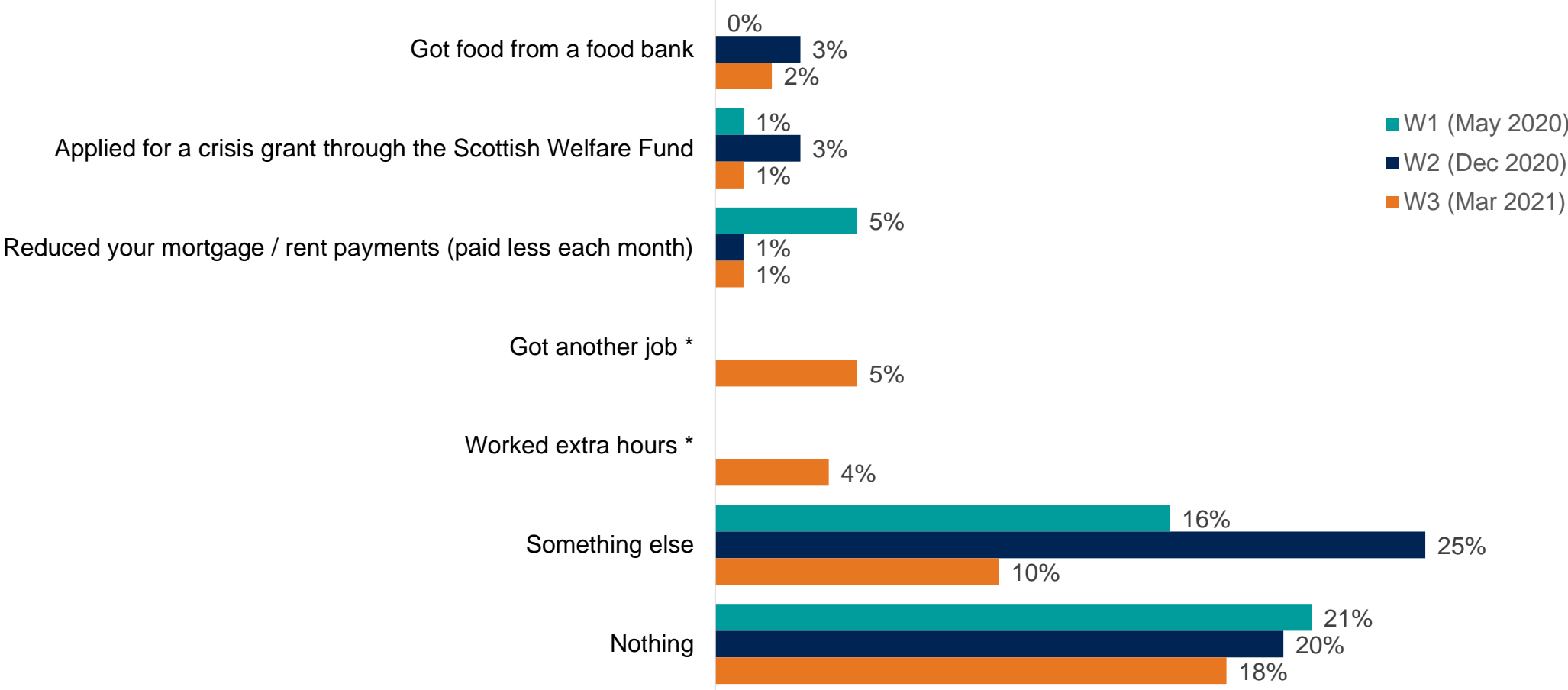


Base: W1 (308), W2 (238), W3 (223)  
All whose household income is lower than at the start of March 2020

\* Code only added to the questionnaire for Wave 3 (as mentioned in 'other' responses at Wave 2)

# Other actions taken to manage with a lower income

What, if any, actions have you or your household taken to help you manage with a lower income?



Base: W1 (308), W2 (238), W3 (223)

All whose household income is lower than at the start of March

\* Added through coding of 'other' responses at Wave 3



# **SOCIAL CONTACT AND SUPPORT**

# 3

# Key findings

SOCIAL CONTACT APPEARS TO HAVE SHIFTED ONLINE FOR MANY – 50% MET OTHERS IN PERSON LESS OFTEN THAN ONCE A WEEK.

COMPARED WITH MAY AND DECEMBER 2020, MORE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FINDING RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIALISING WITH OTHERS HARD TO COPE WITH

COMPARED WITH THE FIRST LOCK DOWN, PEOPLE WERE FAR LESS LIKELY TO REPORT THAT OTHERS WERE CHECKING IN TO SEE IF THEY WERE OK

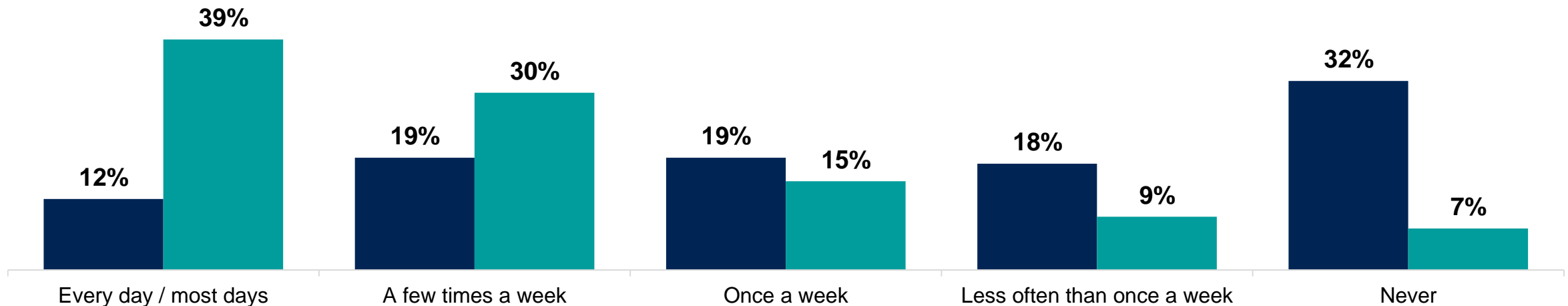
# Social contact had shifted to phone and videocalls for many

While most were having phone or videocalls with others at least once a week, 50% met others in person less often than this.

*In the last month, how often, if at all have you ....*

- Met up in person with friends, relatives or work colleagues, for exercise or any other reason?
- Had phone or videocalls with friends, relatives, neighbours or work colleagues?

Combining responses to these two questions confirms that 65% of people were having contact with others more often by phone or videocall than in person. 11% said they only had contact of either sort less often than once a week.

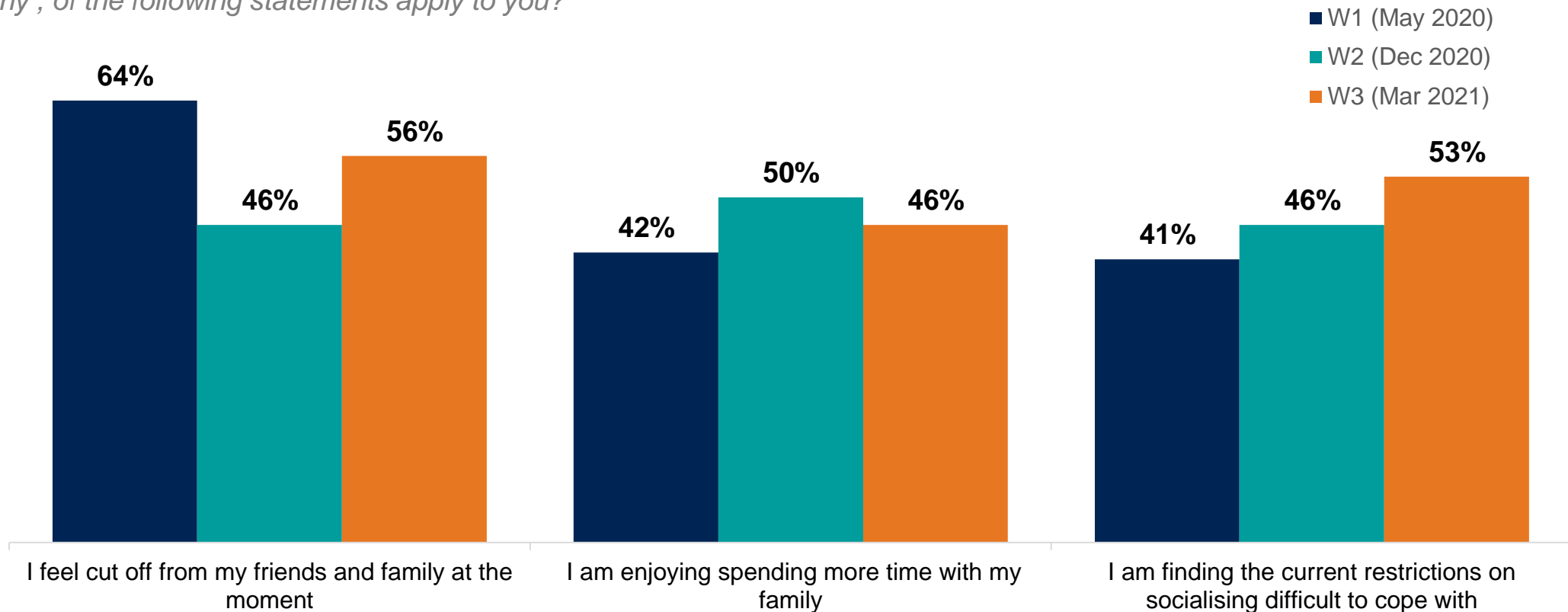


Base: All W3 (1,000)

# Compared with earlier waves, more people have been finding restrictions on socialising difficult to cope with

And compared with December, more people felt cut off from friends and family

Which, if any, of the following statements apply to you?



Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

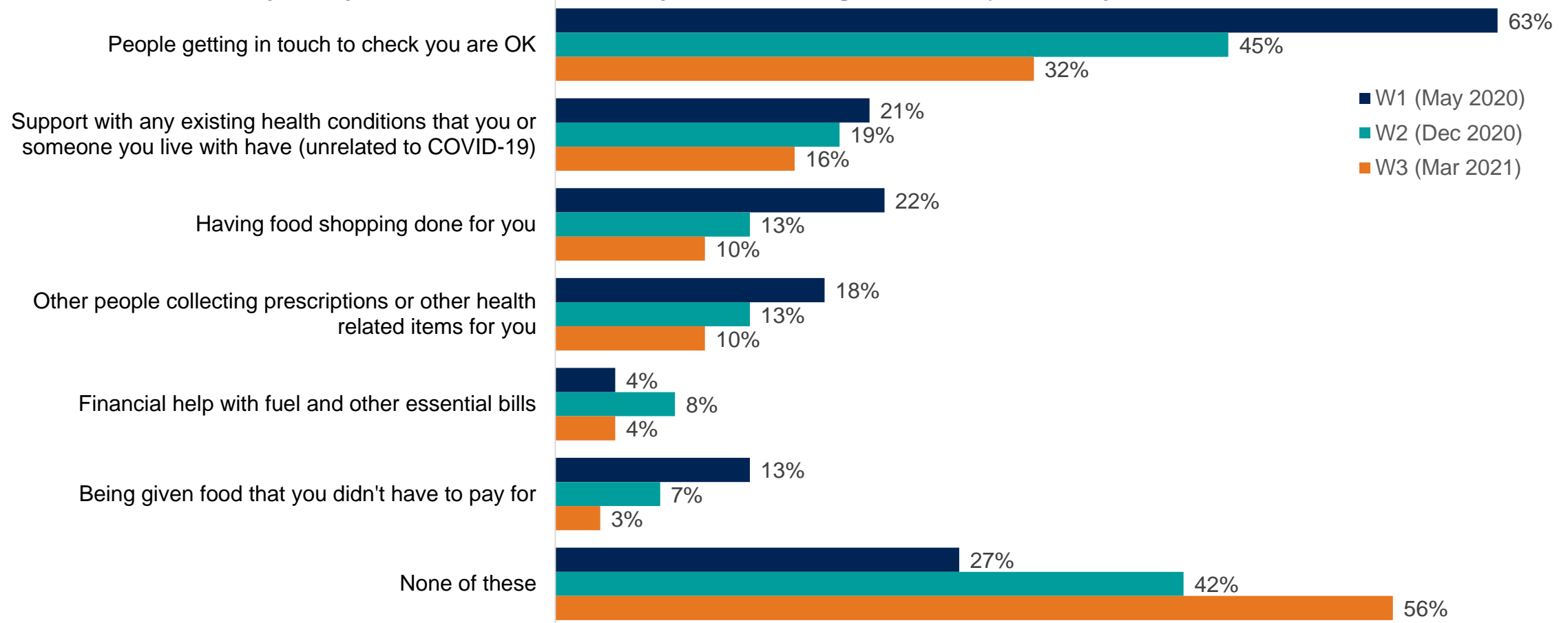
# Key subgroup differences

- Younger people under 25 were more likely to have met up in person with others more than once a week (41% of 16-24 year-olds, compared with 25% of those aged 70+), while those aged 70+ were the age group most likely to say they kept in touch with others by video or phonecall more than once a week (77%, compared with 69% overall).
- People with a limiting health condition were more likely to say they felt cut off from friends and family (65%, compared with 54% of those without a limiting condition). They were also more likely to report meeting up with others in person less than once a week or never (60%, compared with 46% of those without a limiting condition).
- Women were more likely to say they were finding restrictions on socialising difficult (57% vs 47% of men).

# People were far less likely to report receiving help from others than during the first lockdown

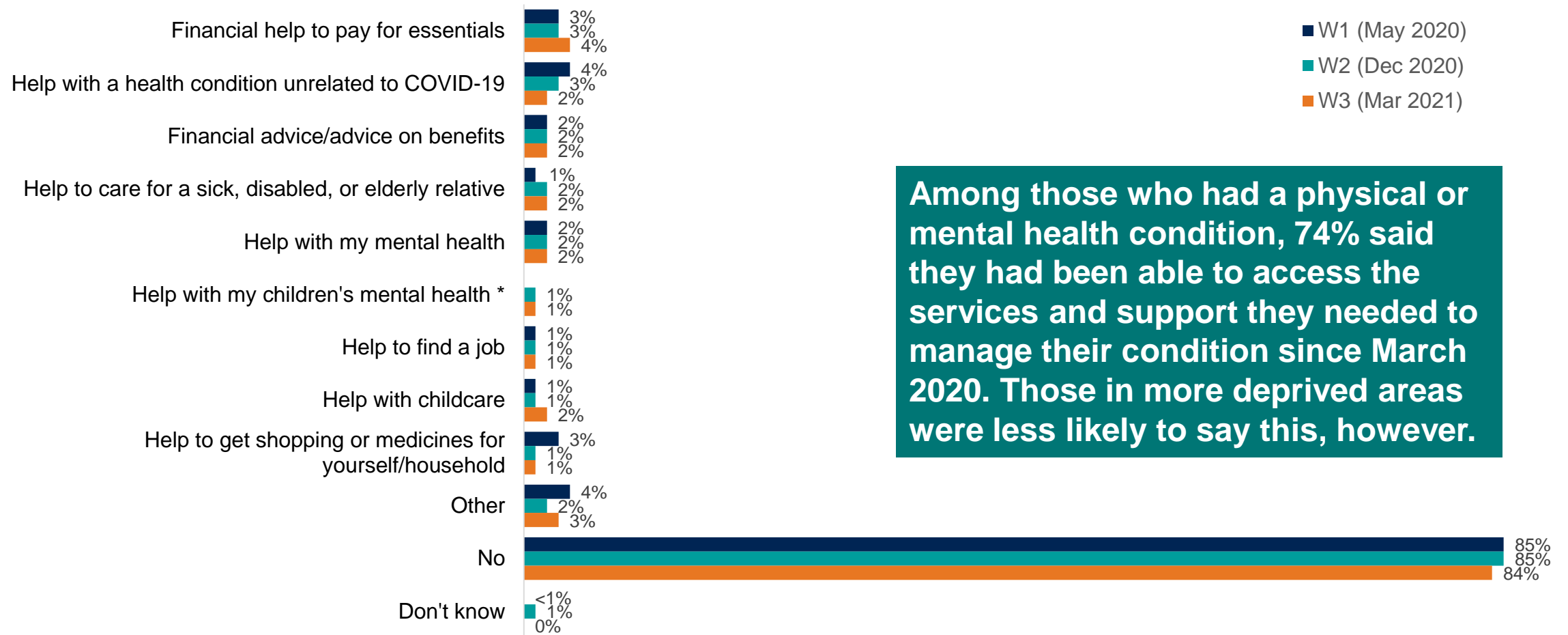
Half as many people said others were getting in touch to check they were OK (32%, down from 63% in May 2020), and half as many said others were doing food shopping for them (10%, down from 22%)

*In the last month, have you or your household received any of the following kinds of help, from any source?*



# However, the vast majority (85%) said they were not in need of any help that they were not receiving (identical to May)

Is there any other help with anything, that you feel you currently need but you are not receiving?



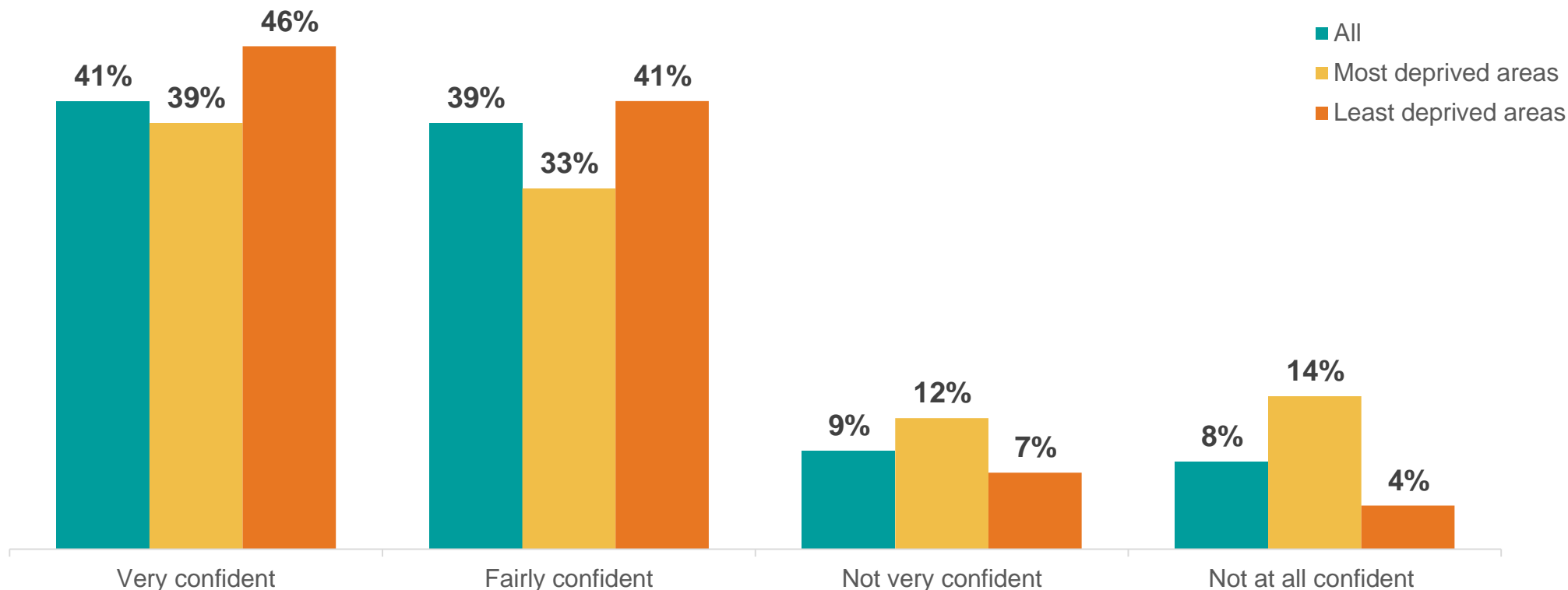
Among those who had a physical or mental health condition, 74% said they had been able to access the services and support they needed to manage their condition since March 2020. Those in more deprived areas were less likely to say this, however.

\* Category not included in Wave 1

Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

# Most people are at least fairly confident about accessing public services online – but those living in the most deprived areas are less likely to feel confident

*How confident would you say you would feel about accessing public services online, if you needed to - for example, booking a doctor's appointment or accessing government advice about taxes or benefits?*



Bases: All = 1,000; Most deprived = 139; Least deprived = 213



# BEHAVIOURS DURING THE CRISIS

# 4

## Key findings

THERE IS NO CONSISTENT PATTERN IN WHETHER PEOPLE ARE ENGAGING IN HEALTHY/ UNHEALTHY BEHAVIOURS MORE OR LESS OFTEN.

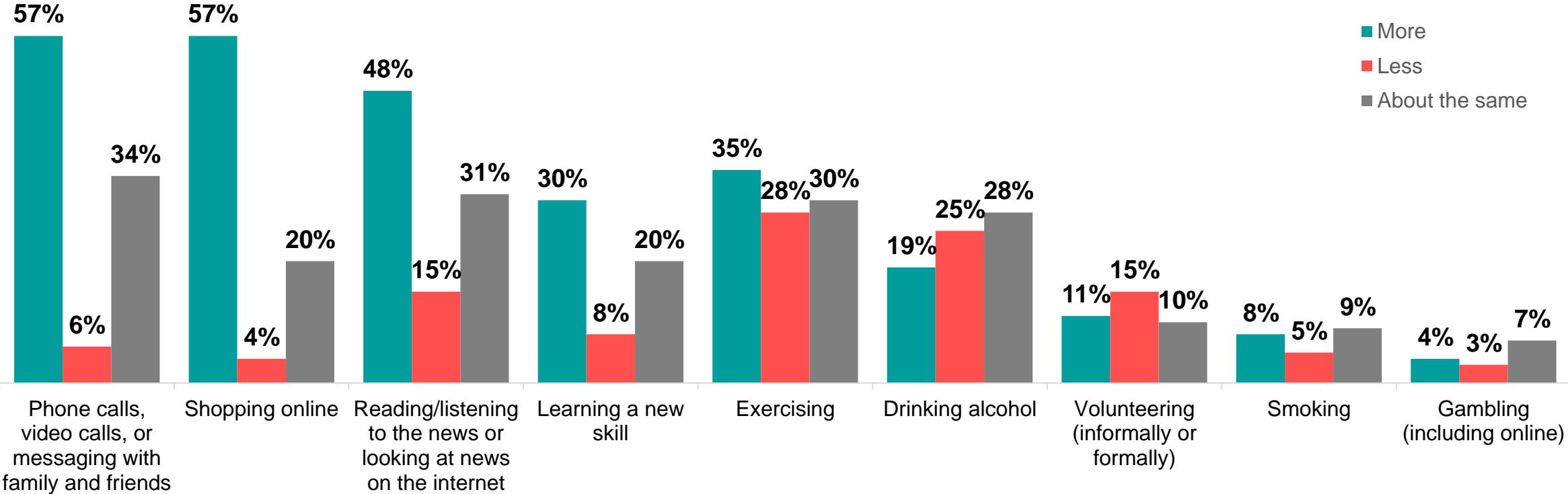
FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE 35% SAY THEY ARE EXERCISING MORE THAN PRE-PANDEMIC, 28% SAY THEY ARE EXERCISING LESS.

THE PROPORTIONS REPORTING DOING THINGS 'MORE' THAN PRE-PANDEMIC WERE GENERALLY SIMILAR IN DECEMBER 2020 AND MARCH 2021.

# There is no consistent pattern in whether people are engaging in healthy/unhealthy behaviours more or less often

For example, while 35% say they are exercising more, 28% are exercising less.

Compared to how often you did them before the Coronavirus outbreak started in the start of March 2020, are you doing the following things more, less, or the same amount these days - or did you not do them anyway?



Note: the % who said they did not do these things anyway is not shown

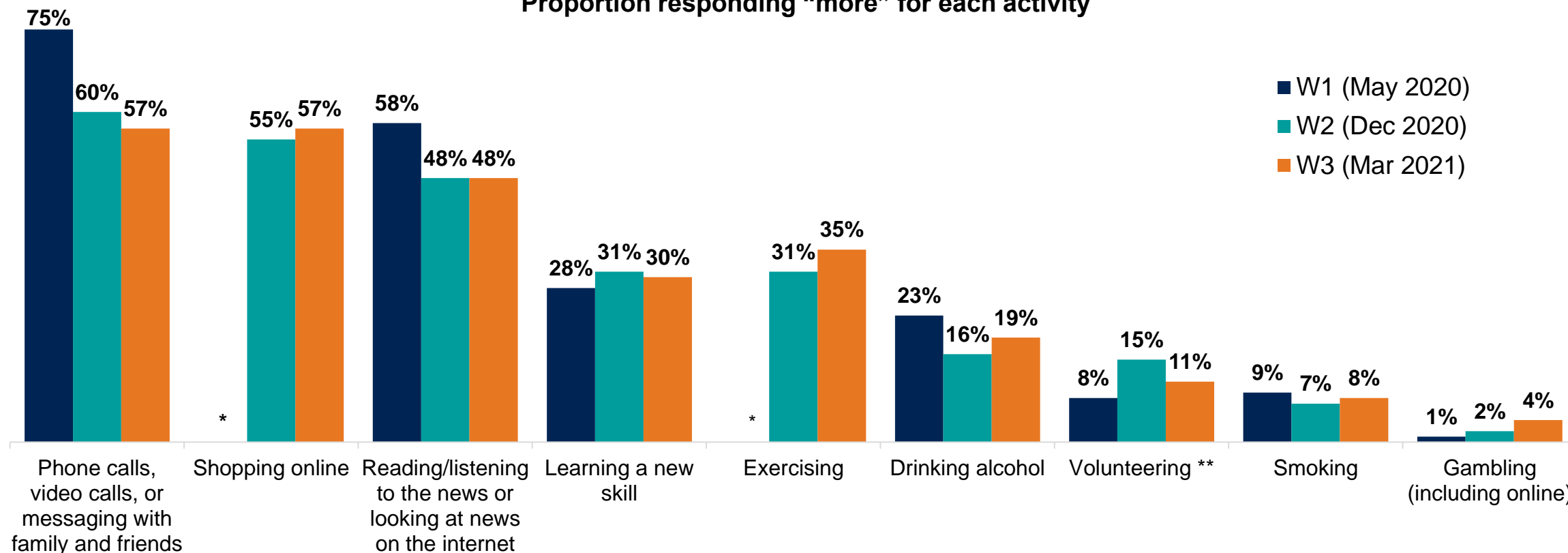
Base: (1,000) All Wave 3 (March 2021)



# The proportion reporting doing various things more was very similar to December 2020

There was a slight fall in the proportion saying they were volunteering more often, however.

Proportion responding “more” for each activity



\*not asked in Wave 1 \*\* NB in Wave 2, ‘formally or informally’ was added to ‘volunteering’. This could partly explain the increase from wave 1 to wave 2 – people may be including a wider range of informal activities

Base: W1 (1,000), W2 (1,004), W3 (1,000) All

# THANK YOU.

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