

Northern Ireland High Street Scheme Survey October 2021 to March 2022 Report

Findings from the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey

This report presents key findings on the Northern Ireland (NI) High Street Scheme from questions asked in the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey. It follows the previously published 'Northern Ireland High Street Scheme Survey August to November 2021 Report' and is the final report on the NI High Street Scheme from the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey.

The Department for the Economy (DfE) commissioned questions in the survey relating to the Scheme and this report summarises responses from 2,207 individuals aged 18 or over interviewed from 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The survey findings presented in this report relate to respondents' experiences of the application process and using the Spend Local card, following closure of the application process on 25 October 2021.

Note the unweighted base is the number of respondents to each question. The base may vary from one question to another due to some respondents not answering certain questions. Also, only seven questions were asked during the entire period 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Most of the questions (15) were asked during one phase of the survey and two questions were asked during two phases.

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Key Points

During 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, following closure of the application process:

- The majority (94%) of respondents said they applied for a Spend Local £100 card via the online portal, 4% said using the telephone service, whilst 3% said they did not apply.
- Of those who said they had applied via the online portal themselves or with assistance, the majority (95%) said they had found the online application process very easy/easy.
- Of those who said they had received and activated their Spend Local card, the majority (87%) said they had used their card to buy something.
- 56% of respondents said they intend to spend/ have spent all of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway, whilst similar proportions (11%) said they intend to spend/ have spent most or some of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway.
- Of those who said they intend to spend or have spent all or most of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway, the majority (71%) said this had “freed up” money in their budget.
- Of those who said they had “freed up” money in their budget, over a third (37%) said they intend to spend or have spent the “freed up” money on paying bills or reducing debt, under a third (30%) said on something they would not have bought in the absence of the Scheme, whilst an eighth (13%) said to increase their savings.
- Of those who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card, just over half (51%) said their participation in the Scheme has encouraged them a little or a lot to consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future, whilst under half (48%) said their participation in the Scheme has made no difference.
- Of those who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something, the majority (70%) said they had used their Spend Local card in local retail or shops, just over a fifth (21%) said in chain retail or shops, a seventh (14%) said in hospitality, 7% said in service providers, 4% said ‘Other’, whilst 2% said in arts and entertainment.
- Of those who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something, the majority (92%) said they had spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card.
- Of those who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card, over a third (35%) said their participation in the Scheme has given them a little or a lot more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic, whilst under two thirds (65%) said their participation in the Scheme has made no difference.

Introduction

In early 2020, Northern Ireland (NI) experienced its first wave of Coronavirus (COVID-19), leading to unexpected changes to peoples' lives, lifestyles and behaviours. The NI Executive introduced a range of schemes and initiatives to support local people and businesses due to the negative impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. One such scheme was the NI High Street Scheme, implemented by DfE, with the aim of stimulating economic recovery by providing businesses with a financial boost.

NI High Street Scheme

The Scheme was launched on 27 September 2021 and invited each eligible person aged 18 or over in NI to apply for a Spend Local £100 prepaid card to spend in local businesses over a short period. Applications could be made through the online portal via NI Direct or by telephone until close of the application process on 25 October 2021. Once applications were verified, prepaid cards were posted to the applicant's home address.

The Spend Local prepaid card was to be used in any business in NI that accepts card transactions to purchase goods and services. The cards could be used for multiple transactions, limited to a maximum spend of £100, however could not be used for online purchases, withdrawing money, gambling, legal or financial payments. More information on the Scheme is detailed in [Annex A](#).

An Official Statistics Publication

The statistics within this report have been compiled in accordance with Official Statistics guidelines. They aim to meet identified user needs; are accessible and explained; are produced in accordance with sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest. Further information on the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) is available on the UK Statistics Authority website. Further information on the [DfE Statement of Compliance](#) in relation to the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 is available on the DfE website.

Survey Findings

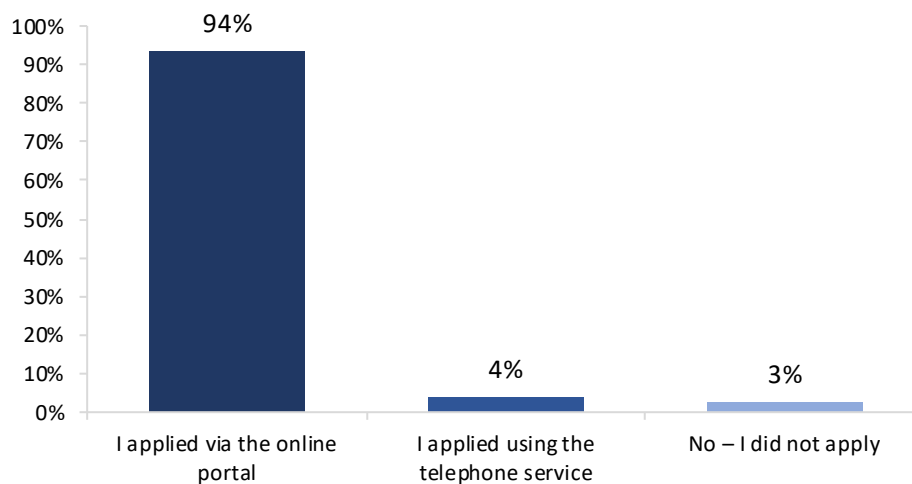
These findings summarise responses to questions about the NI High Street Scheme from persons aged 18 or over interviewed during 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, following closure of the application process on 25 October 2021. Note, not all questions were asked during this entire period. The Scheme closed on 19 December 2021, though reopened for a two-week period for a limited number of individuals on 24 December 2021.

COV_HSSB1_New

Did you apply for a Spend Local £100 card?

Of the 2,207 respondents, the majority (94%) said they applied for a Spend Local £100 card via the online portal, 4% said using the telephone service, whilst 3% said they did not apply (Figure 1)¹.

Figure 1. Did you apply for a Spend Local £100 card?



Base = 2,207

Respondents aged 65 or over, those with a limiting longstanding illness and those not in paid employment were less likely to say they applied via the online portal and more likely to say they applied using the telephone service. Male respondents and those not in paid employment were more likely to say they did not apply for a Spend Local £100 card.

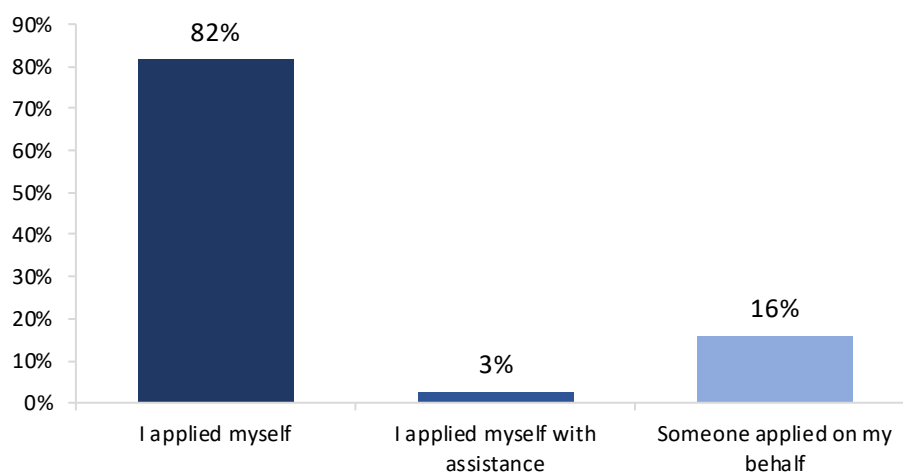
COV_HSSB1a

Did you apply to the Scheme yourself or ask someone else to apply on your behalf?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card via the online portal were asked this question. Of the 748 respondents, over four fifths (82%) said 'I applied myself', a sixth (16%) said 'Someone applied on my behalf', whilst 3% said 'I applied myself with assistance' (Figure 2).

¹ [DfE published verified applications data](#) showed that 98% of verified applicants applied online.

Figure 2. Did you apply to the Scheme yourself or ask someone else to apply on your behalf?



Base = 748

Respondents aged 50 to 64 and 65 or over, those with a limiting longstanding illness and those not in paid employment were less likely to say they had applied to the Scheme themselves and more likely to say someone had applied on their behalf.

Respondents aged 65 or over were more likely than those aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 to say they had applied themselves with assistance. Similarly, those with a limiting longstanding illness and those not in paid employment were more likely to say they had applied themselves with assistance.

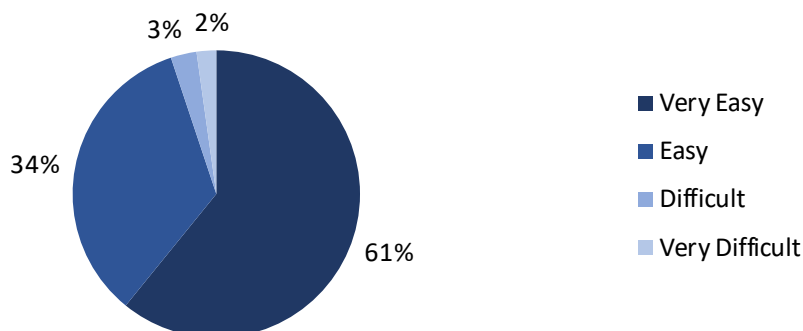
There were no differences between male and female respondents on whether they said they had applied to the Scheme themselves or asked someone else for assistance or to apply on their behalf.

COV_HSSB1b

How easy or difficult did you find the application process?

Respondents who said they had applied via the online portal themselves or with assistance were asked this question. Of the 585 respondents, the majority (95%) said they had found the online application process very easy/easy, whilst 5% said they had found it difficult/very difficult (Figure 3).

Figure 3. How easy or difficult did you find the application process?



Base = 585

There were no differences on whether respondents said they had found the online application process very easy/easy or difficult/very difficult when looking at age band, limiting longstanding illness, sex or employment status.

COV_HSSB1c

Why did you find the portal difficult to use?

Respondents who said they had found the online application process difficult or very difficult were asked this question. Of the 31 respondents, the main reasons given for finding the portal difficult to use were the system was slow or kept crashing and the application portal was not user friendly. Due to the low number of respondents, no further analysis was carried out.

COV_HSSB2

Why did you not apply to get a £100 Spend Local card?

Respondents who said they had not applied for a Spend Local £100 card were asked this question. Due to the low number of respondents (15), no analysis was carried out.

COV_HSSB4

Why did you apply via the telephone service rather than online?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card using the telephone service were asked this question. Of the 30 respondents, the main reasons given for applying via the telephone service rather than online were they would prefer to apply via telephone and they cannot use the internet. Due to the low number of respondents, no further analysis was carried out.

COV_HSS4b

How easy or difficult did you find the application process using the telephone service?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card using the telephone service were asked this question. Of the 29 respondents, the majority said they found the application process very easy/easy using the telephone service. Due to the low number of respondents, no further analysis was carried out.

COV_HSS4c

Why did you find the telephone service difficult to use?

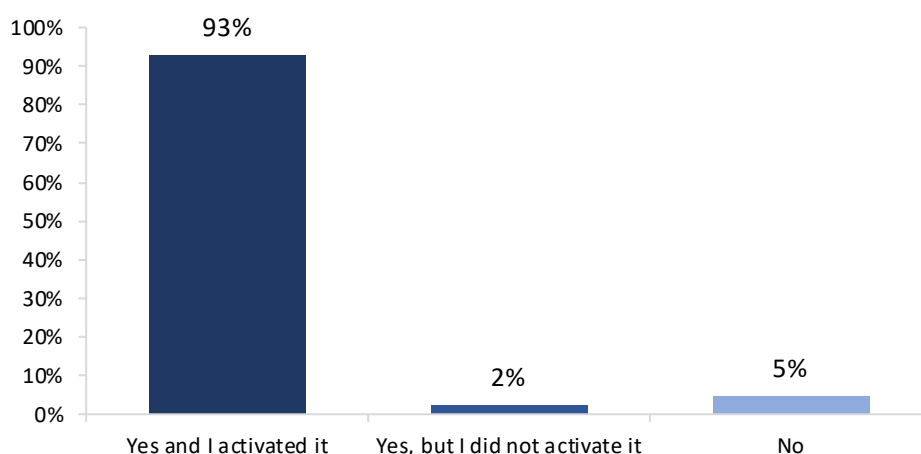
Respondents who said they had found the application process difficult or very difficult using the telephone service were asked this question. Due to the low number of respondents (1), no analysis was carried out.

COV_HSS5

Did you receive your Spend Local card?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card were asked this question. Of the 2,156 respondents, the majority (93%) said 'Yes and I activated it', whilst 5% said 'No' and only 2% said 'Yes, but I did not activate it' (Figure 4)².

Figure 4. Did you receive your Spend Local card?



Base = 2,156

Female respondents were more likely to say they had received and activated their Spend Local card and less likely to say they had not received it. There were no differences on whether respondents said they had received their Spend Local card when looking at age band, limiting longstanding illness or employment status.

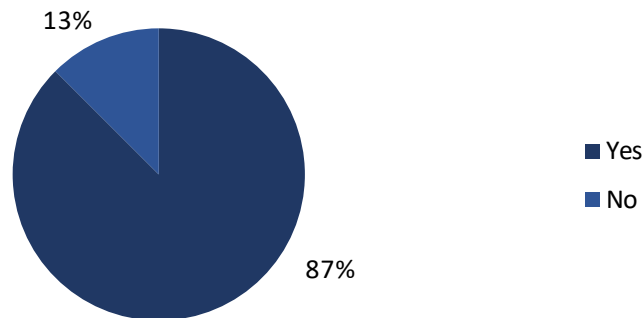
COV_HSS5a

Did you use your card to buy anything?

Respondents who said they had received and activated their Spend Local card were asked this question. Of the 1,999 respondents, the majority (87%) said they had used their card to buy something, whilst an eighth (13%) said they had not (Figure 5).

² [DfE published official statistics](#) showed that 99.6% of received Spend Local cards were activated.

Figure 5. Did you use your card to buy anything?



Base = 1,999

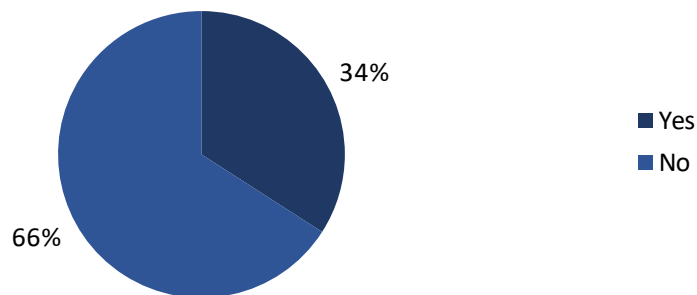
There were no differences on whether respondents said they had used their card to buy something when looking at age band, limiting longstanding illness, sex or employment status.

COV_HSS5b

When you have used your Spend Local card, were there any occasions when you needed to add money to pay for your purchase(s)?

Respondents who said they had used their card to buy something were asked this question. Of the 465 respondents, two thirds (66%) said there were no occasions when they needed to add money to pay for their purchase(s), whilst 34% said there were occasions (Figure 6).

Figure 6. When you have used your Spend Local card, were there any occasions when you needed to add money to pay for your purchase(s)?



Base = 465

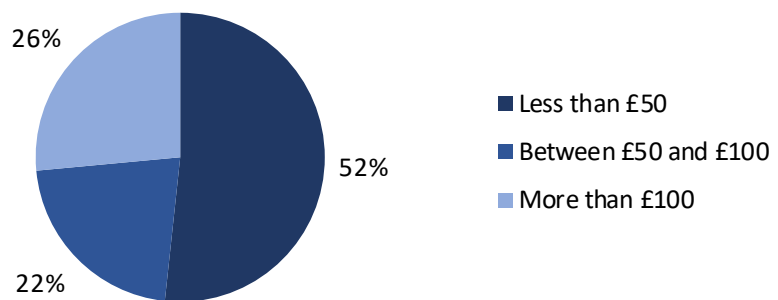
Respondents aged 18 to 34 were less likely than those aged 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 to say there were occasions when they needed to add money to pay for their purchase(s) when they used their Spend Local card. Those not in paid employment were also less likely to say this. There were no differences on whether respondents said there were any occasions when they needed to add money to pay for their purchase(s) when looking at limiting longstanding illness or sex.

COV_HSS5c

On this/these occasion(s), in total, how much EXTRA money did you have to pay to complete your purchase(s)?

Respondents who said there were occasions when they needed to add money to pay for their purchase(s) when they had used their Spend Local card were asked this question. Of the 154 respondents, over half (52%) said they had to pay less than £50, just over a quarter (26%) said they had to pay more than £100 and over a fifth (22%) said they had to pay between £50 and £100 in total to complete their purchase(s) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. On this/these occasion(s), in total, how much EXTRA money did you have to pay to complete your purchase(s)?



Base = 154

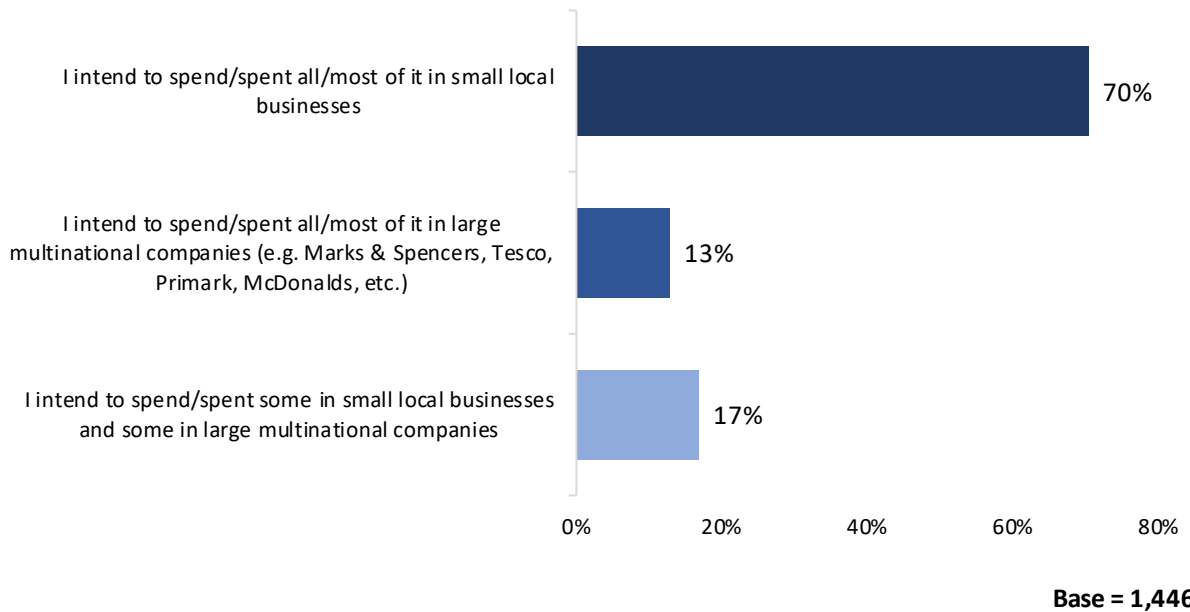
There were no differences in how much extra money respondents said they had to pay to complete their purchase(s) when looking at age band, limiting longstanding illness, sex or employment status.

COV_HSSB6_Combined

Although the Spend Local card can be used to purchase goods and services in any business within Northern Ireland that has the facility to accept card payments, people will be encouraged to spend the money in small local businesses. Where do you intend to spend/did you spend the £100?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card and respondents who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something were asked this question. Of the 1,446 respondents, the majority (70%) said they intend to spend or spent all or most of the £100 in small local businesses. A sixth (17%) said they intend to spend or spent some in small local businesses and some in large multinational companies, whilst an eighth (13%) said they intend to spend or spent all or most of it in large multinational companies (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Where do you intend to spend/did you spend the £100?



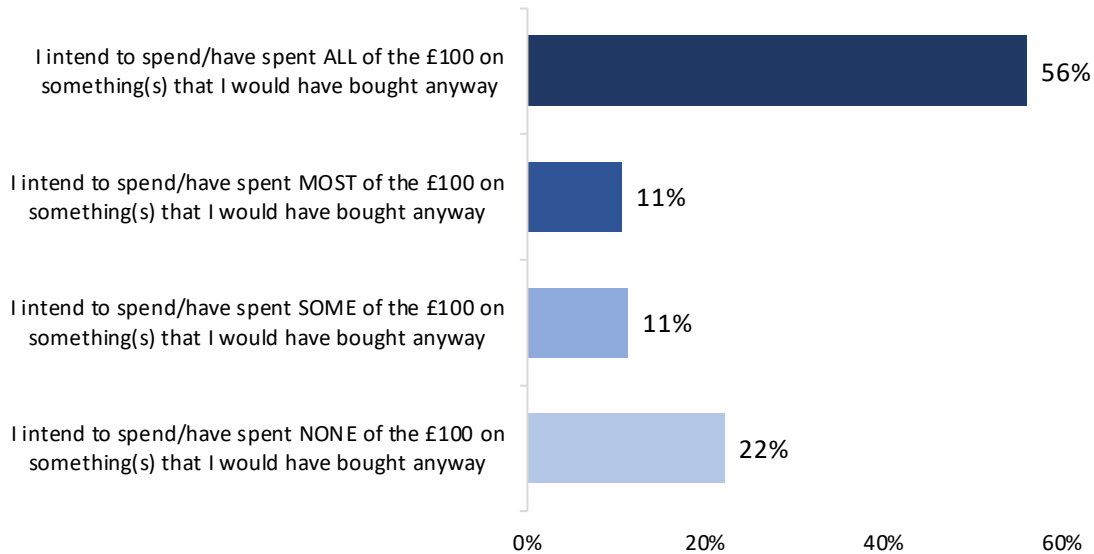
Compared to respondents aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 49, respondents aged 65 or over were more likely to say they intend to spend or spent all or most of the £100 in small local businesses and less likely to say they intend to spend or spent all or most of it in large multinational companies. Male respondents were more likely to say they intend to spend or spent all or most of the £100 in small local businesses. There were no differences in where respondents said they intend to spend or spent the £100 when looking at limiting longstanding illness or employment status.

COV_HSSB7

Do you intend to spend/have you spent the £100 Spend Local card on something(s) that you would have bought anyway?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card and respondents who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something were asked this question. Of the 2,123 respondents, over half (56%) said they intend to spend/ have spent all of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway, over a fifth (22%) said they intend to spend/ have spent none of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway, whilst similar proportions (11%) said they intend to spend/ have spent most or some of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Do you intend to spend/have you spent the £100 Spend Local card on something(s) that you would have bought anyway?



Base = 2,123

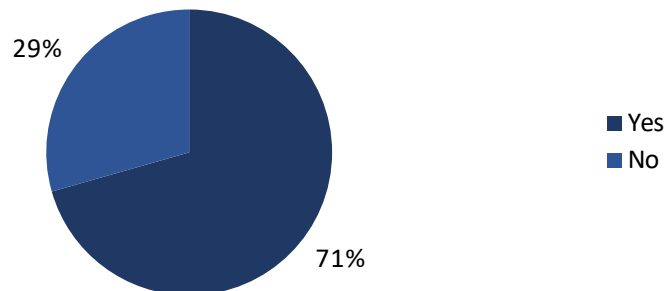
Respondents aged 65 or over were more likely than those aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 to say they intend to spend or have spent some of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway. Male respondents were more likely to say they intend to spend or have spent all of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway, and less likely to say they intend to spend or have spent none of it on something they would have bought anyway. There were no differences in the portion of the £100 Spend Local card respondents said they intend to spend or have spent on something they would have bought anyway when looking at limiting longstanding illness or employment status.

COV_HSSFreed

Given that you intend to spend/have spent all or most of your £100 Spend Local card on something that you would have bought anyway, has this “freed up” any money in your budget?

Respondents who said they intend to spend or have spent all or most of the £100 on something they would have bought anyway were asked this question. Of the 1,406 respondents, the majority (71%) said this had “freed up” money in their budget, whilst 29% said it had not (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Given that you intend to spend/have spent all or most of your £100 Spend Local card on something that you would have bought anyway, has this “freed up” any money in your budget?



Base = 1,406

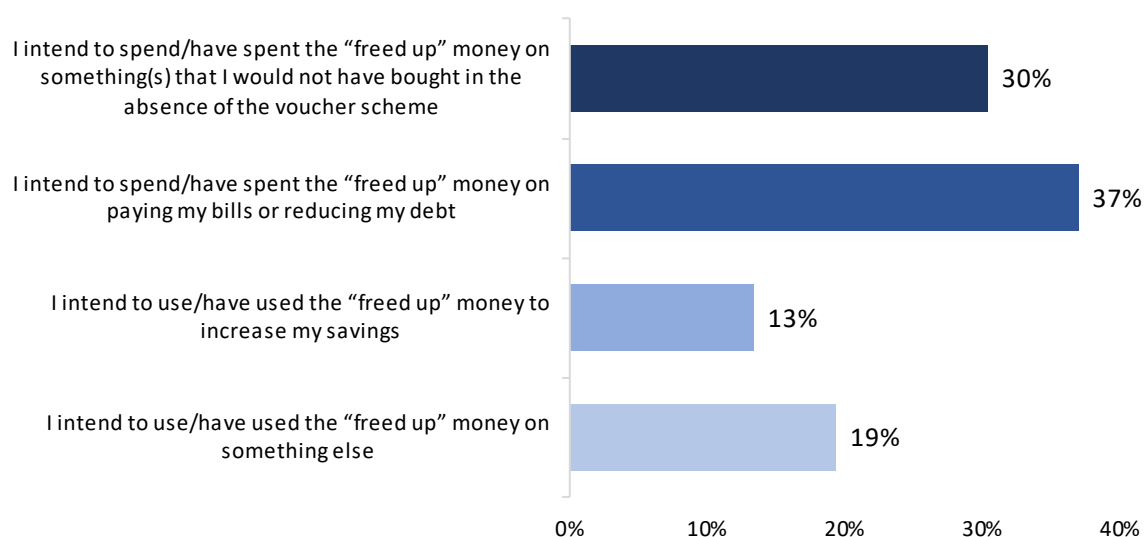
Respondents aged 18 to 34 were more likely than those aged 65 or over to say that spending all or most of their £100 Spend Local card on something they would have bought anyway had “freed up” money in their budget. Similarly, those in paid employment were more likely to say that it had “freed up” money in their budget. There were no differences on whether respondents said it had “freed up” money in their budget when looking at limiting longstanding illness or sex.

COV_HSSB7a

How do you intend to use/have you used the “freed up” money in your budget?

Respondents who said they had “freed up” money in their budget were asked this question. Of the 963 respondents, over a third (37%) said they intend to spend or have spent the “freed up” money in their budget on paying bills or reducing debt, under a third (30%) said on something they would not have bought in the absence of the Scheme, just under a fifth (19%) said on something else, whilst an eighth (13%) said to increase their savings (Figure 11).

Figure 11. How do you intend to use/have you used the “freed up” money in your budget?



Base = 963

Male respondents and those with a limiting longstanding illness were more likely to say they intend to spend or have spent the “freed up” money in their budget on something they would not have bought in the absence of the Scheme.

Respondents aged 65 or over were less likely than those aged 35 to 49 and 50 to 64 to say they intend to spend or have spent the “freed up” money on paying bills or reducing debt.

Respondents aged 18 to 34 and those with no limiting longstanding illness were more likely to say they intend to use or have used the “freed up” money to increase their savings.

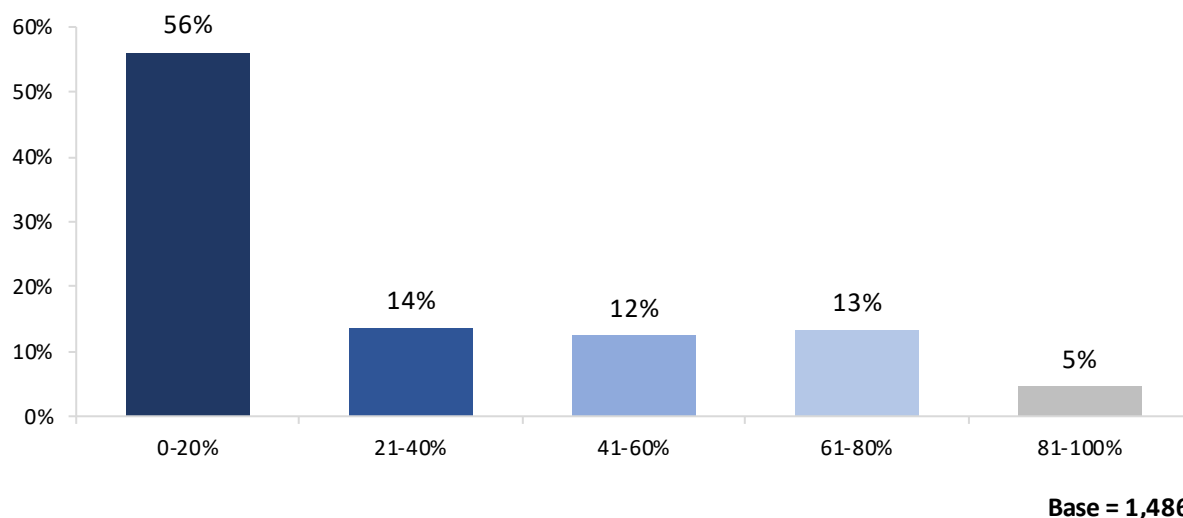
There were no differences in how respondents said they intend to use or have used the “freed up” money in their budget when looking at employment status.

COV_HSS8a

Thinking about your typical shopping habits over the last few months before the introduction of the Spend Local Scheme, what percentage of your total shopping (inclusive of food shopping) could be attributed to online shopping?

Of the 1,486 respondents, over half (56%) said 0-20% of their total shopping before the introduction of the Scheme could be attributed to online shopping, a seventh (14%) said 21-40%, an eighth (13%) said 61-80%, over a tenth (12%) said 41-60%, whilst only 5% said 81-100% (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Thinking about your typical shopping habits over the last few months before the introduction of the Spend Local Scheme, what percentage of your total shopping (inclusive of food shopping) could be attributed to online shopping?



Respondents aged 18 to 34, those with no limiting longstanding illness and those in paid employment were less likely to say that 0-20% of their total shopping before the introduction of the Scheme could be attributed to online shopping.

Female respondents, those with no limiting longstanding illness and those in paid employment were more likely to say that 41-60% of their total shopping before the introduction of the Scheme could be attributed to online shopping.

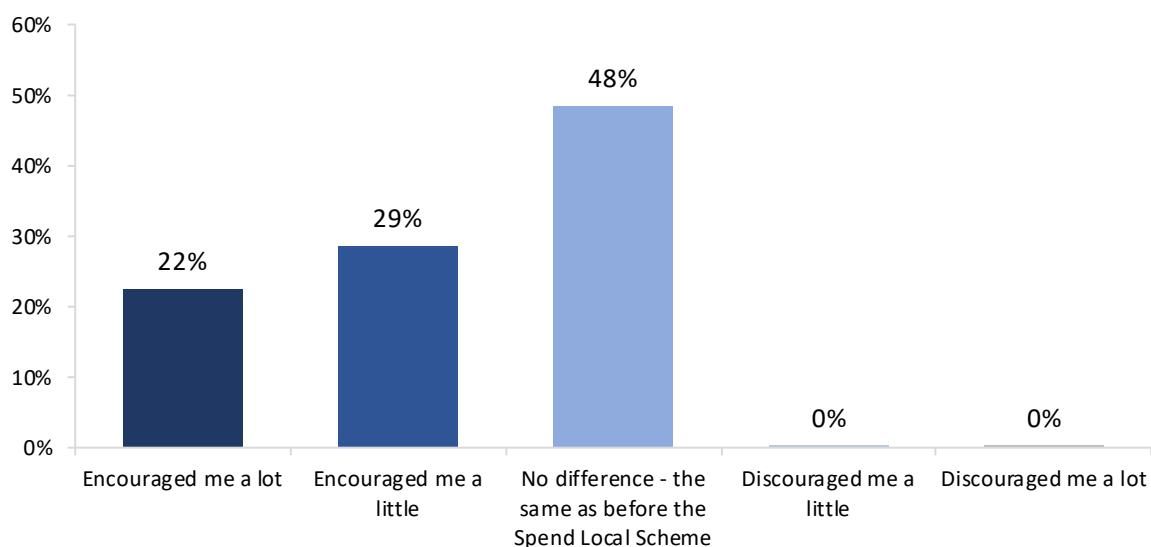
Respondents aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 were more likely than those aged 50 to 64 and 65 or over to say that 81-100% of their total shopping before the introduction of the Scheme could be attributed to online shopping. Similarly, those in paid employment were more likely to say that 81-100% of their total shopping before the introduction of the Scheme could be attributed to online shopping.

COV_HSS8b

To what extent has your participation in the Spend Local Scheme encouraged you to consider spending more with local/independent retailers in future?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card were asked this question. Of the 2,152 respondents, just over half (51%) said their participation in the Scheme has encouraged them a little or a lot to consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future, whilst under half (48%) said their participation in the Scheme has made no difference. No respondents were discouraged by their participation in the Scheme to consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future (Figure 13).

Figure 13. To what extent has your participation in the Spend Local Scheme encouraged you to consider spending more with local/independent retailers in future?



Base = 2,152

Female respondents were more likely to say their participation in the Scheme has encouraged them a lot to consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future.

Respondents aged 18 to 34 and 35 to 49 were more likely than those aged 50 to 64 and 65 or over to say their participation in the Scheme has encouraged them a little to consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future. Similarly, those in paid employment were more likely to say their participation has encouraged them a little.

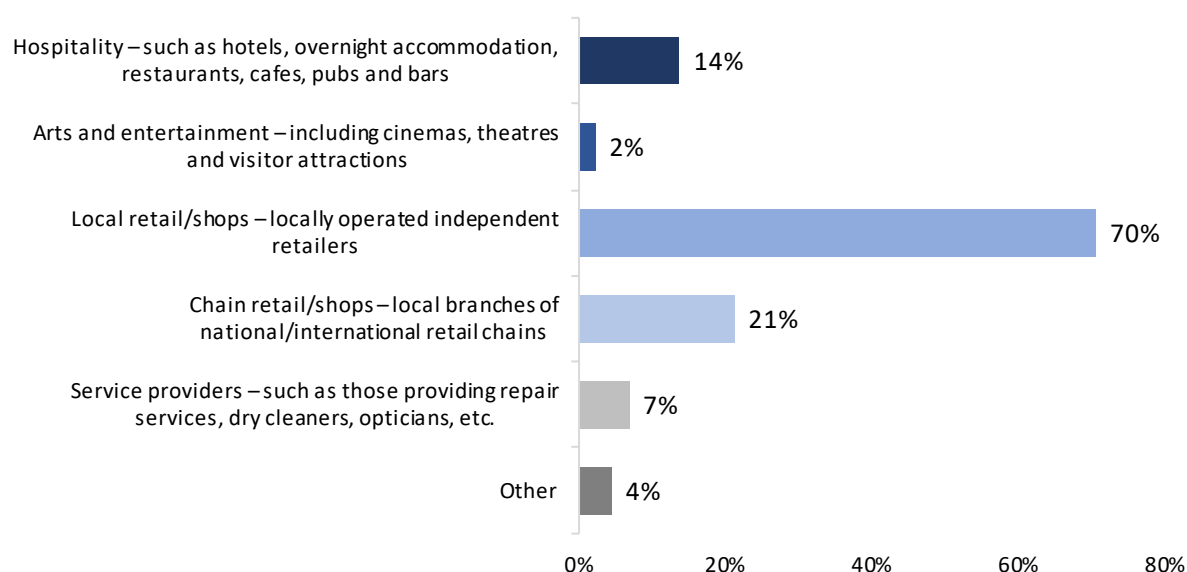
Male respondents, those aged 65 or over and those not in paid employment were more likely to say their participation in the Scheme has made no difference on whether they would consider spending more with local or independent retailers in future.

COV_HSSType

What types of establishments/businesses did you use your Spend Local card in?

Respondents who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something were asked this question. Of the 678 respondents, the majority (70%) said they had used their Spend Local card in local retail or shops, just over a fifth (21%) said in chain retail or shops, a seventh (14%) said in hospitality, 7% said in service providers, 4% said 'Other', whilst 2% said in arts and entertainment (Figure 14).

Figure 14. What types of establishments/businesses did you use your Spend Local card in?¹



¹ Percentages sum to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Base = 678

Respondents aged 18 to 34, those with no limiting longstanding illness and those in paid employment were more likely to say they had used their Spend Local card in hospitality.

Male respondents were more likely to say they had used their Spend Local card in arts and entertainment.

Respondents aged 65 or over were more likely than those aged 18 to 34 to say they had used their Spend Local card in local retail or shops.

Respondents aged 35 to 49 were more likely than those aged 65 or over to say they had used their Spend Local card in chain retail or shops.

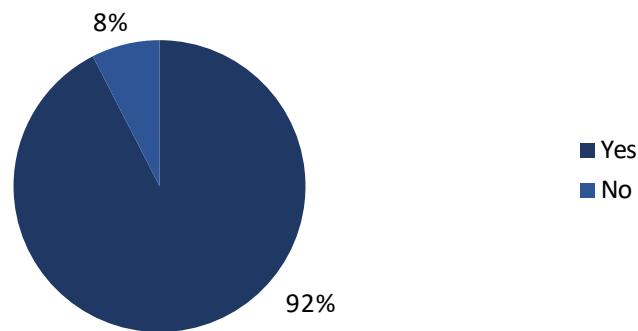
Respondents with a limiting longstanding illness were more likely to say they had used their Spend Local card in service providers.

COV_SpendAll

Did you spend the full £100, which was on your Spend Local card?

Respondents who said they had used their Spend Local card to buy something were asked this question. Of the 678 respondents, the majority (92%) said they had spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card, whilst 8% said they had not (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Did you spend the full £100, which was on your Spend Local card?



Base = 678

Respondents aged 18 to 34 were less likely than those aged 35 to 49 and 65 or over to say they had spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card. Female respondents and those in paid employment were more likely to say they had spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card. There were no differences on whether respondents said they had spent the full £100 when looking at limiting longstanding illness.

COV_SpendMuch

Approximately how much did you spend out of your £100?

Respondents who said they had not spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card were asked this question. Of the 40 respondents, the majority said they had spent approximately £60 to £99 out of their £100. Due to the low number of respondents, no further analysis was carried out.

COV_SpendNo

Why did you not spend the full £100?

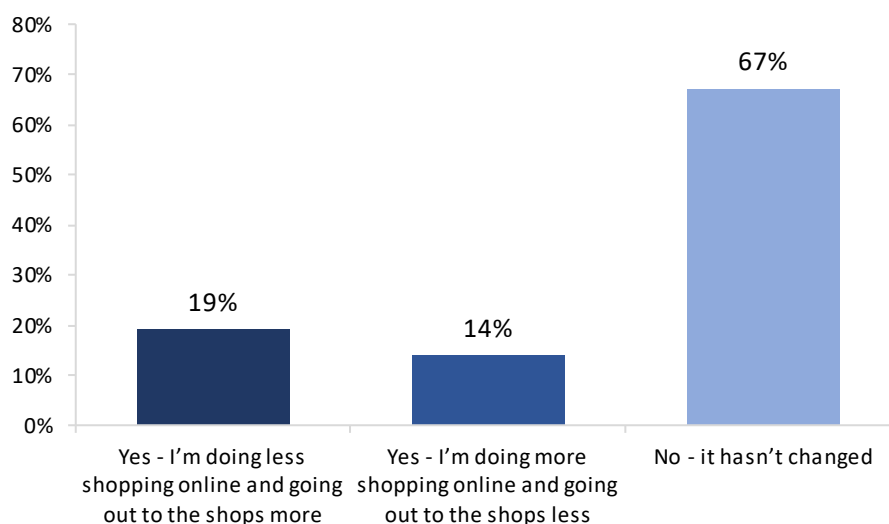
Respondents who said they had not spent the full £100 that was on their Spend Local card were asked this question. Of the 40 respondents, the main reasons given for not spending the full £100 were the balance remaining was too small to go to the effort of spending it and they forgot to spend it. Due to the low number of respondents, no further analysis was carried out.

COV_HSSB8a_NEW

Thinking about your typical shopping habits now compared to before the introduction of the Spend Local Scheme, have they changed?

Of the 711 respondents, two thirds (67%) said their shopping habits have not changed since before the introduction of the Spend Local Scheme, whilst just under a fifth (19%) said they are doing less shopping online and going out to the shops more and a seventh (14%) said they are doing more shopping online and going out to the shops less (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Thinking about your typical shopping habits now compared to before the introduction of the Spend Local Scheme, have they changed?



Base = 711

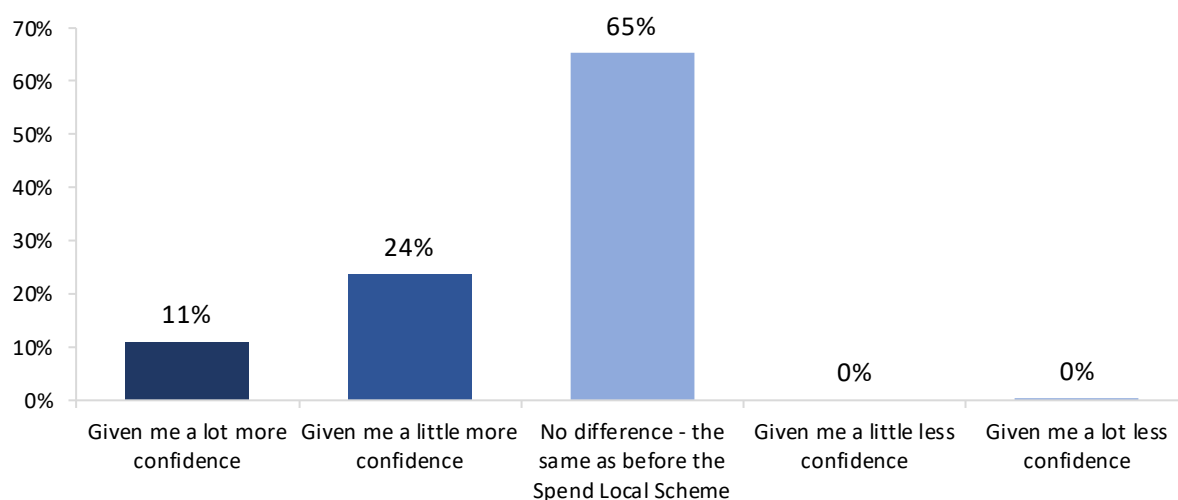
Respondents aged 18 to 34 were more likely than those aged 65 or over to say they are doing less shopping online and going out to the shops more. Respondents aged 35 to 49 were more likely than those aged 50 to 64 to say they are doing more shopping online and going out to the shops less. Respondents aged 65 or over were more likely than those aged 35 to 49 to say their shopping habits have not changed. There were no differences in shopping habits when looking at limiting longstanding illness, sex or employment status.

COV_HSSConf

To what extent has your participation in the Spend Local Scheme given you more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local/independent retailers despite the pandemic?

Respondents who said they had applied for a Spend Local £100 card were asked this question. Of the 693 respondents, over a third (35%) said their participation in the Scheme has given them a little or a lot more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic, whilst under two thirds (65%) said their participation in the Scheme has made no difference. No respondents said their participation in the Scheme has given them less confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic (Figure 17).

Figure 17. To what extent has your participation in the Spend Local Scheme given you more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local/independent retailers despite the pandemic?



Base = 693

Respondents aged 50 to 64 and 65 or over were more likely than those aged 18 to 34 to say their participation in the Scheme has given them a lot more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic. Respondents with a limiting longstanding illness were also more likely to say their participation in the Scheme has given them a lot more confidence.

Female respondents were more likely to say their participation in the Scheme has given them a little more confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic.

Female respondents and those aged 50 to 64 were less likely to say their participation in the Scheme has made no difference to their confidence.

There were no differences in the extent to which participation in the Scheme impacted respondents' confidence to start shopping or spend more with local or independent retailers despite the pandemic when looking at employment status.

Annex A: Information on the NI High Street Scheme

Eligibility Criteria

Persons resident in NI and aged 18 or over on or before 25 October 2021 were eligible to apply for a Spend Local prepaid card. Prisoners (either convicted or on remand) who were incarcerated throughout the duration of the Scheme were not eligible for a Spend Local prepaid card.

Application methods

There were two ways to make an application for the Scheme:

- Online – the online portal via NI Direct opened on 27 September 2021
- By telephone – the telephone application service opened on 11 October 2021

The closing date for applications was 25 October 2021.

People that required assistance to apply could ask someone they trust to help them apply online or to apply on their behalf via the online portal. A person could make a maximum of four applications on behalf of others, plus their own application.

Using the Spend Local prepaid card

The Spend Local prepaid card was delivered preloaded with £100 and worked just like any other bank or building society debit or credit card. It was to be used to purchase goods and services from any business located in NI that accepts card payments. It could not be used online or to withdraw cash and it could not be topped up. It also could not be used for gambling or for paying for some legal and financial services such as mortgages, credit card payments, fines, insurance, and vehicle tax. The card could be used for numerous transactions but limited to a maximum spend of £100.

Key dates

Spend Local prepaid cards were delivered from 4 October 2021 onwards to verified, approved applicants. All cards expired at midnight on 19 December 2021 when the Scheme closed. The Scheme reopened on 24 December 2021 for a two week period for a limited number of individuals. In February 2022, DfE contacted a small proportion of individuals who were deemed eligible for a remedy payment in relation to the NI High Street Scheme.

Additional information

- Information on the eligibility criteria, the application process for the Scheme, how to use the Spend Local card and timelines is available on the [DfE High Street Scheme Frequently Asked Questions page](#).
- Information on [remedy measures for the High Street Scheme](#) is detailed on the DfE website.
- Figures on verified applications and take-up for the NI High Street Scheme, management information on Spend Local cards and related spend plus research and official statistics on the NI High Street Scheme are published on the [DfE website](#).

Annex B: Technical Notes

Data Collection

The information presented in this statistical report derives from the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey, which was issued by the Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to samples of the NI population from April 2020 to March 2022 to consider the impacts the pandemic had on peoples' lives and behaviour.

The Department for the Economy commissioned questions on the NI High Street Scheme in the survey during phases 15 to 20. The data summarised in this report were collected during phases 18 to 20 of the survey, from 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Fieldwork for the survey closed on 31 March 2022. The questionnaires for each phase of the survey are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Information on NISRA's sampling method, data collection mode and respondent selection are detailed in the [NISRA Technical Report](#).

Responses

This report summarises responses to questions regarding the NI High Street Scheme from 2,207 individuals aged 18 or over, asked during 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. All percentages presented in this report are weighted estimates and any differences reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The unweighted base is the number of respondents to each question. The base may vary from one question to another due to some respondents not answering certain questions. Also, only seven questions were asked during the entire period 25 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Most of the questions (15) were asked during one phase of the survey and two questions were asked during two phases.

Respondents who answered 'Don't know' or persons who refused to answer have been excluded.

COV_HSSB6_Combined summarises responses to COV_HSSB6, asked during phase 18 of the survey from 25 October 2021 to 15 January 2022, combined with responses to COV_HSSB6_NEW, asked during phase 20 of the survey from 10 January to 31 March 2022.

Due to the low number of respondents, a breakdown of responses for COV_HSSB1c, COV_HSSB2, COV_HSSB4, COV_HSS4b, COV_HSS4c, COV_SpendMuch and COV_SpendNo has not been included.

Open ended questions such as COV_HSSB1d, COV_HSSB2a, COV_HSSB4a, COV_HSS4d, COV_HSSB7b, COV_HSSTypeOth and COV_SpendOth have not been reported due to validation issues.

It should be noted that there was no question 'COV_HSSB3' in this report and corresponding questionnaires (phases 18 to 20). COV_HSSB3 appeared in an earlier version of the questionnaire (phase 17).

Data Quality

All survey estimates are subject to a degree of error and this must be taken into account when considering results. In particular, care should be taken when looking at results based on smaller breakdowns.

Weighting

Selecting only one individual for interview at each sampled address means that the probability of selection for the survey is inversely related to the size of the household. In other words, individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than individuals in small households.

Before analysis, the data are weighted in relation to the number of eligible adults at the address, derived from the details of the household structure recorded by interviewers on the questionnaire. This is known as a design weight and this weighting process adjusts the results to those which would have been achieved if the sample had been drawn as a systematic random sample of adults rather than of addresses.

Further weighting was applied to the data to adjust for differences in the composition of the achieved sample (after the design weight was applied) compared to the same characteristics in the population, known as non-response weights. The non-response weights were applied sequentially to calibrate the characteristics of the achieved sample to the population distribution in terms of sex and age.

Once the data was weighted by both the design weight and the non-response weights, the achieved sample became more representative of the population the survey aimed to reflect.

Rounding

Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and as a result may not always sum to 100%. 0% may reflect values less than 0.5% that have been rounded down.

Significance tests

Significance tests were carried out to determine if there were differences in responses given by various respondent groups. The significance tests were carried out at the 95% confidence level and only differences which are statistically significant are included in this report. This means that there is at least a 95% probability that there is a genuine difference between responses given by, for example, males and females and the difference between the two genders is not simply explained by random chance or sampling error. It should be noted however that not all statistically significant differences have been discussed in this report.

The following respondent groups are considered in this report:

Age band

The age of the respondent is grouped into the following age bands: 18 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64 and 65 or over.

Limiting longstanding illness

Respondents are grouped as to whether they have a limiting longstanding illness or not.

Sex

Sex of the respondent is defined as whether the individual is male or female.

Employment status

Employment status is defined as whether the respondent is in paid employment or not.

Where the number of respondents is large enough, breakdowns by respondent groups are detailed in the associated data tables. Definitions of the respondent groups are also included in the data tables.

Please note, where the number of respondents is large enough, the associated data tables provide a breakdown by Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) quintile. However, statistical significance tests were not carried out on this respondent group and therefore differences by MDM quintile are not discussed in this report.

Confidence intervals

Comparisons of confidence intervals have been made on weighted percentages and are included in the associated data tables. Confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level for population percentages were calculated by:

$$p \pm 1.96 * s.e.(p)$$

where p is a percentage and $s.e.(p)$ is the sampling error.

More information is detailed in the [NISRA Technical Report](#).

Additional Information

This statistical report and associated data tables are available on the [DfE website](#).

The previously published 'Northern Ireland High Street Scheme Survey August to November 2021 Report' and associated data tables are available on the [DfE website](#).

Key findings, visualisations, data tables, questionnaires and a technical report on the NISRA Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opinion Survey are available on the [NISRA website](#).

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to Youth Training Statistics and Research Branch using the contact information provided on the second page.