



*Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy*

## General Public Mental Health and COVID-19

### Quantitative Research

March 2021

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RESEARCH  
& INSIGHT

- ❖ The Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) is the largest Counselling and Psychotherapy organisation in Ireland, representing over 4,500 members.
- ❖ Behaviour & Attitudes has carried out surveys on the public's mental health on behalf of the IACP in 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- ❖ Given the evident impact of the COVID-19 crisis on our mental wellbeing, a short survey was distributed looking at levels of stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness/isolation over a 2-week period. This was identical to a previous study fielded in March 2020, but with an extra direct question about whether the impact of the pandemic has exacerbated stress and tension.
- ❖ The short survey was distributed online via B&A's Acumen online panel and was completed by a population-representative sample of 1,019 respondents.
  - The sample was quota controlled for gender, age, social class, region and area of residence.
  - Fieldwork took place between 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.
  - Previous studies including the 2019 report referenced in the results were carried out face-to-face, but the 2010 study, also during full lockdown was of necessity, online.





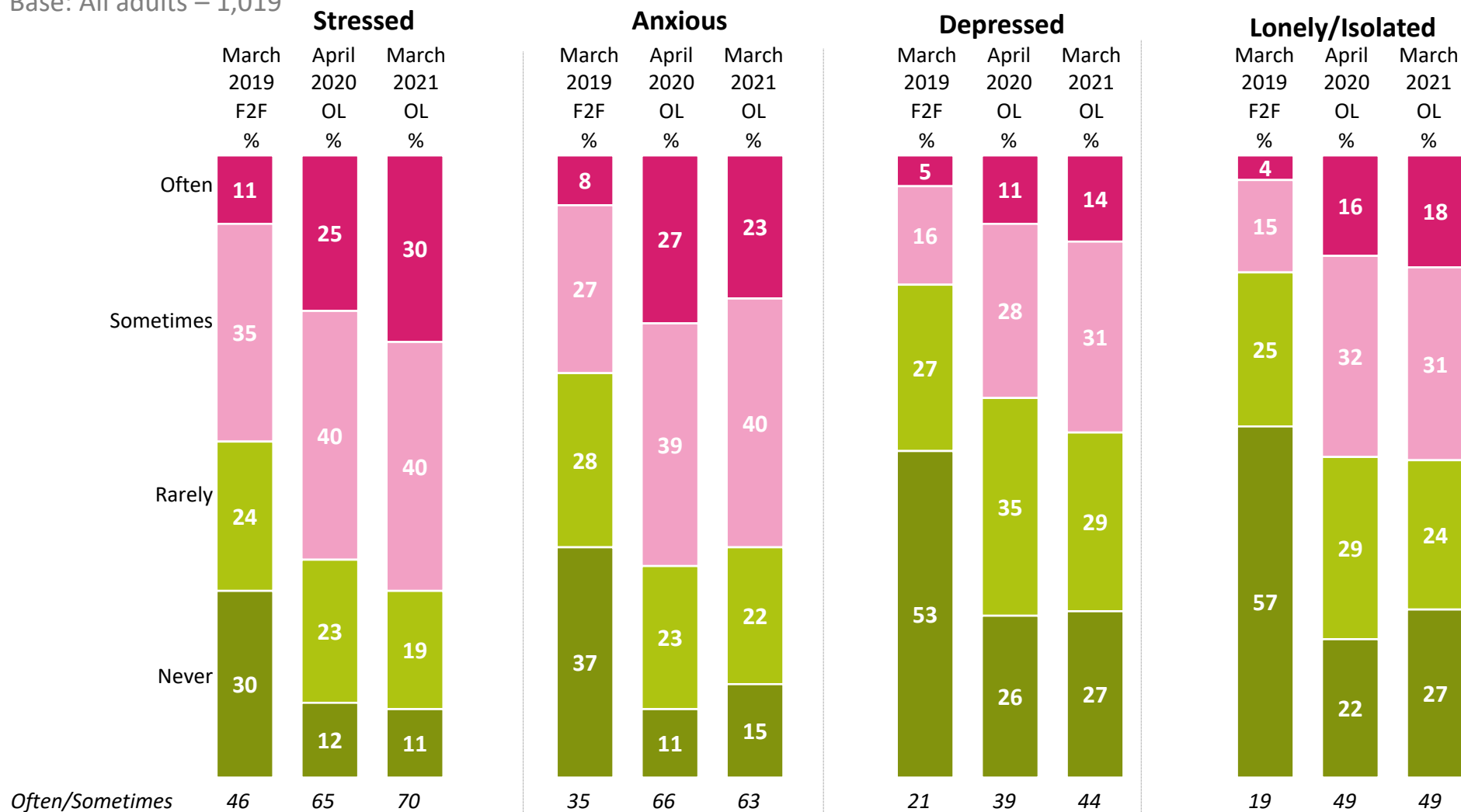
**Results**



# Recent experience of mental health conditions



Base: All adults – 1,019



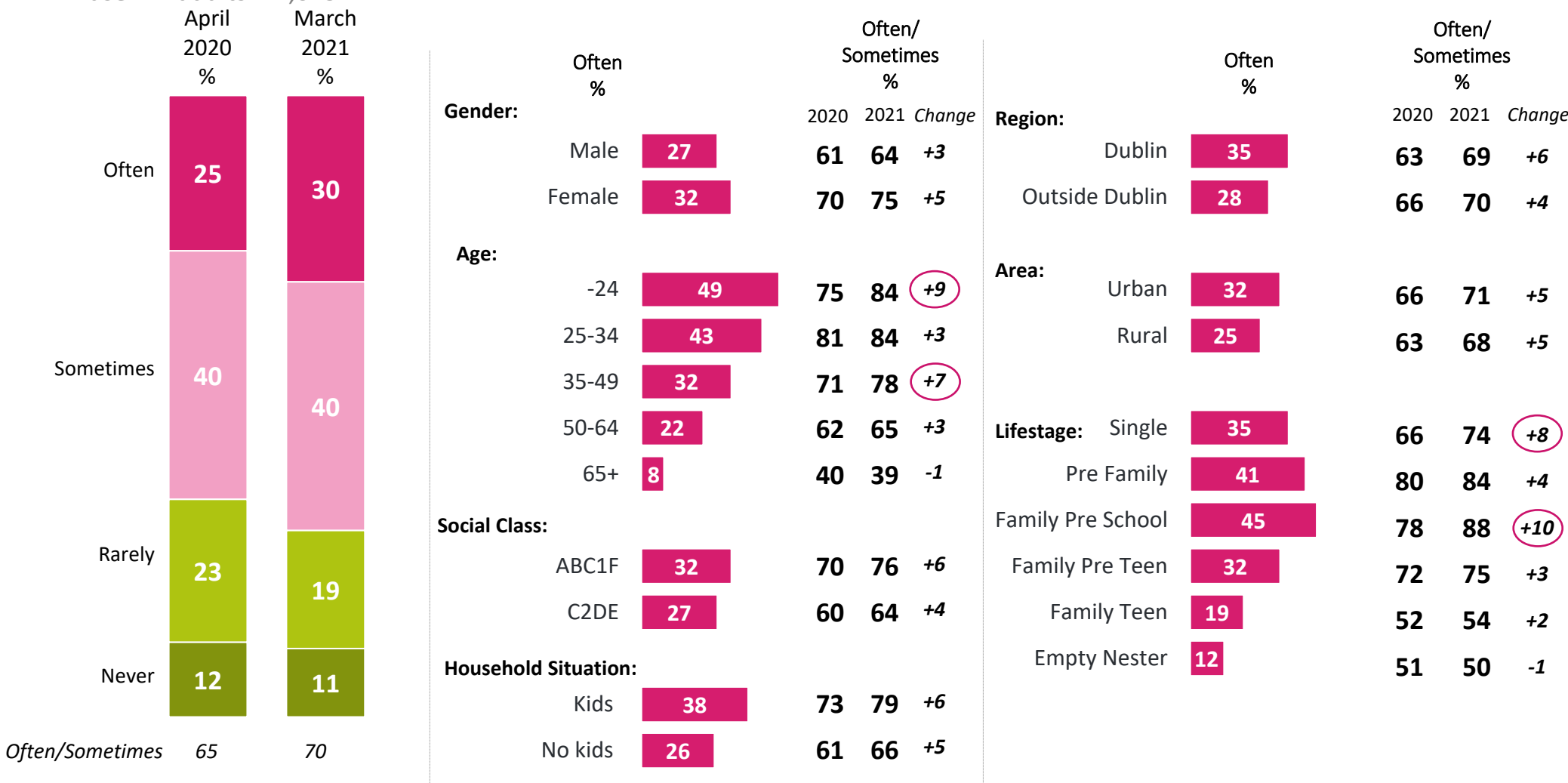
Stress and anxiety are by far the most prevalent with isolation/loneliness and depression more limited but rising. Anxiety has slightly stepped back, whereas stress, depression and isolation have all grown in terms of frequent experience.



# Feeling stressed x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,019

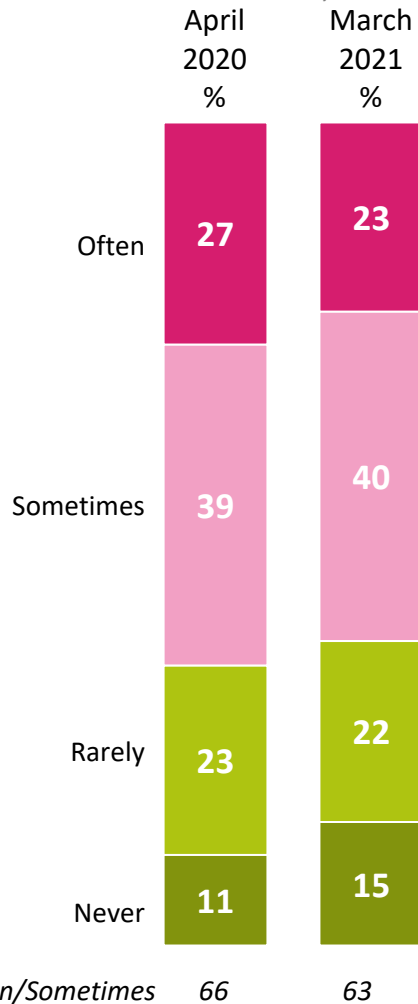


**Stress most prevalent younger and in the single or early family lifestages with parents more prominent.  
Most pronounced year-on-year growth single/under 25 and also 35 to 50/family pre-school.**

# Feeling anxious x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,019



	Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
Gender:		2020	2021	Change
Male	17	62	56	-6
Female	29	69	70	+1
Age:				
-24	38	76	78	+2
25-34	33	74	71	-3
35-49	22	71	67	-4
50-64	20	59	60	+1
65+	9	49	41	-8
Social Class:				
ABC1F	25	68	65	-3
C2DE	21	64	61	-3
Household Situation:				
Kids	28	71	65	-6
No kids	21	63	62	-1

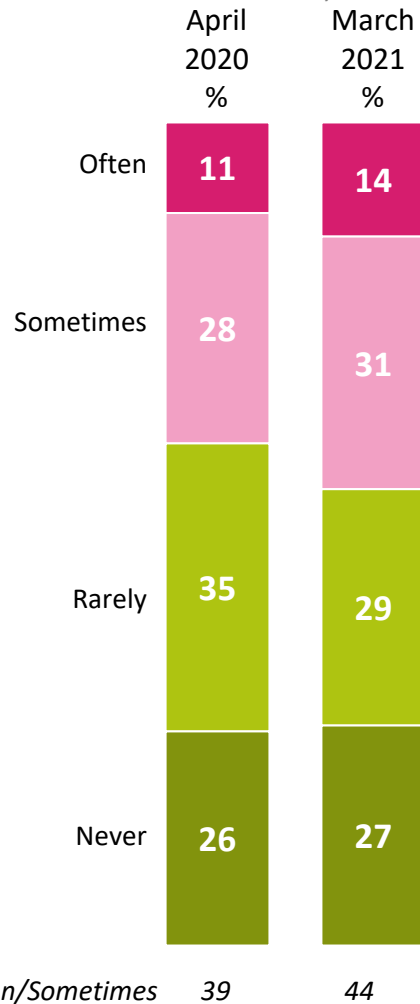
		Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
			2020	2021	Change
Region:	Dublin	28	66	64	-2
	Outside Dublin	22	65	63	-2
Area:	Urban	26	67	65	-2
	Rural	19	62	59	-3
Lifestage:	Single	29	65	74	+9
	Pre Family	29	78	71	-7
	Family Pre School	34	77	69	-8
	Family Pre Teen	23	67	63	-4
	Family Teen	14	57	54	-3
	Empty Nester	11	57	44	-13

Anxiety more apparent female, younger, parents, pre-school. Generally reducing in comparison with last year, except among young singles.

# Feeling depressed x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,019



	Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
Gender:		2020	2021	Change
Male	13	35	42	+7
Female	14	42	47	+5
Age:				
-24	25	44	58	+14
25-34	19	49	55	+6
35-49	13	45	47	+2
50-64	12	30	40	+10
65+	4	25	24	-1
Social Class:				
ABC1F	14	35	47	+12
C2DE	13	42	42	=
Household Situation:				
Kids	16	43	44	+1
No kids	12	36	45	+9

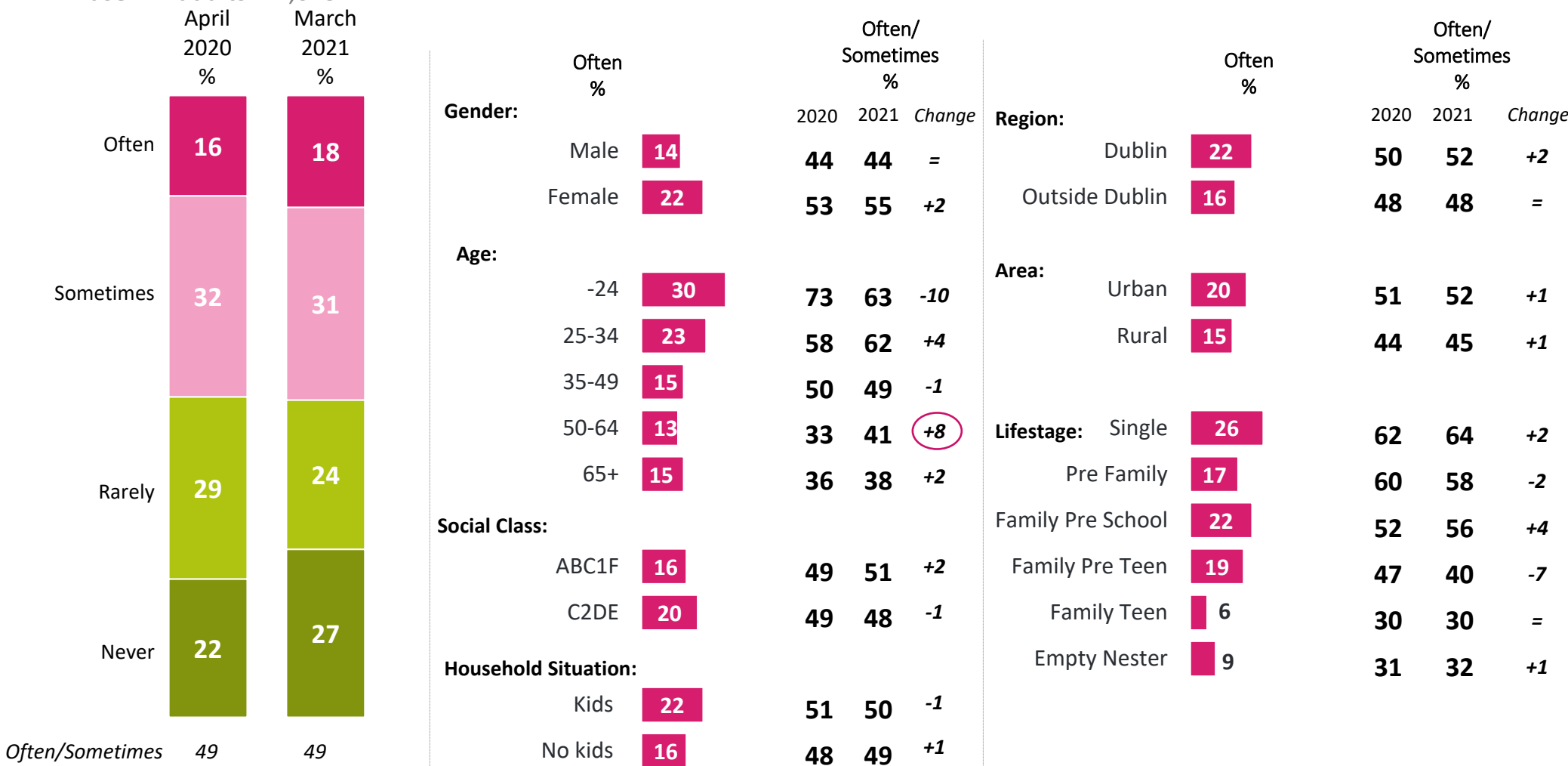
		Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
Region:			2020	2021	Change
	Dublin	16	40	46	+6
	Outside Dublin	13	38	43	+5
Area:					
	Urban	15	40	46	+6
	Rural	11	36	42	+6
Lifestage:					
	Single	20	42	55	+13
	Pre Family	11	48	56	+8
	Family Pre School	19	45	50	+5
	Family Pre Teen	12	43	36	-7
	Family Teen	5	29	34	+5
	Empty Nester	6	28	29	+1

Depression more prevalent younger, urban and either single or family pre-school. Has risen in all age groups under 65, but particularly in the earlier lifestages, middle class and among those who don't have children.

# Feeling lonely/isolated x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,019



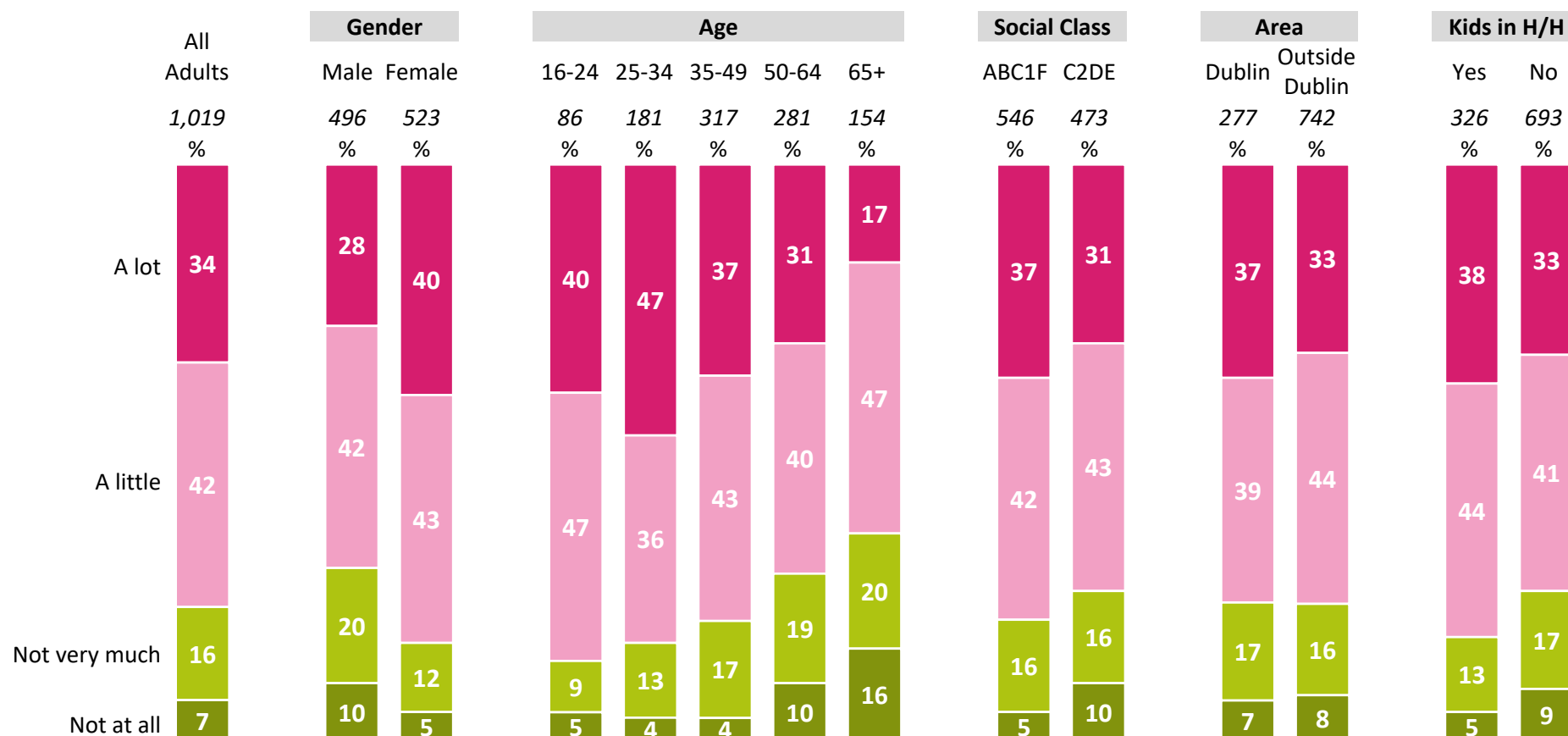
Levels of isolation relatively static but more prevalent younger and female while registering notable growth between 50 and 64.





# Heightened stress/tension during pandemic & restrictions

Base: All adults – 1,019



One in three feel that the pandemic and related restrictions has had a substantial impact in terms of exacerbating stress and tension. Most pronounced 25-34 and female, and generally receding over 50 with men less concerned overall.



# Summary

- Significant levels of recent stress and anxiety are apparent with increasing numbers indicating recent experience of depression and loneliness or isolation.
- The levels recorded in 2021 have risen significantly over those recorded in April 2020 in all regards, albeit with the exception of feeling anxious, which has very slightly reduced.
- Nonetheless, feelings of stress and depression have both significantly risen whereas the numbers indicating feelings of isolation have remained static.

## Often feeling STRESSED

- 30% of all adults under feeling stressed (+5).
- 32% of women/27% men.
- 49% under 25 & 43% 25-34
- Biggest increases under 25 and 35-50.
- More prevalent for parents and those in the family pre-school lifestage or singletons.

## Often feeling ANXIOUS

- 23% of all adults (-4).
- 29% of women/17% men.
- 38% of under 25s and 33% of 25-34s.

## Often feeling DEPRESSED

- 14% of all adults (+3)
- Even by gender.
- Highest under 25: 25%
- Broad growth in all age categories under 65.
- Significantly up in single, pre family and family pre school lifestages (but also notably amongst those who don't have kids.)

## Often feeling LONELY/ISOLATED

- 18% of all adults (+2)
- 22% of women/14% of men.
- Most prevalent under 35: 30% under 25, 23% 25-34.
- 8 percentage point growth (to 41% experiencing some level) 50-64

**A third of the adult population feel that the pandemic and related restrictions has had a substantial impact in terms of exacerbating stress and tension: most pronounced between 25 and 34, and stepping back considerably over the age of 50, with a substantial gender difference too (women notably more impacted.)**

# Thank you.



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## Delve Deeper



## Mood of the nation



# A wake up call?

**Covid, a catalyst for change in terms of the quality of our lives  
(58% want some change)**



- Reflecting on hectic lives.
- Personal connections.



- Healthier focus (exercise, mental health, etc).



- Work/Life Balance.



- WFH and how to do it.
- Less Commutes

***Implications possibly for where we live in the future***

Notable differences by Age and Socio-economic background with **25-34s** a stand-out group in terms of being impacted

Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020

# The economics of it all

## Economic

Fear for next 12 months and jobs/economy.



Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020

# Consumer confidence has improved significantly since October, but remains in negative territory

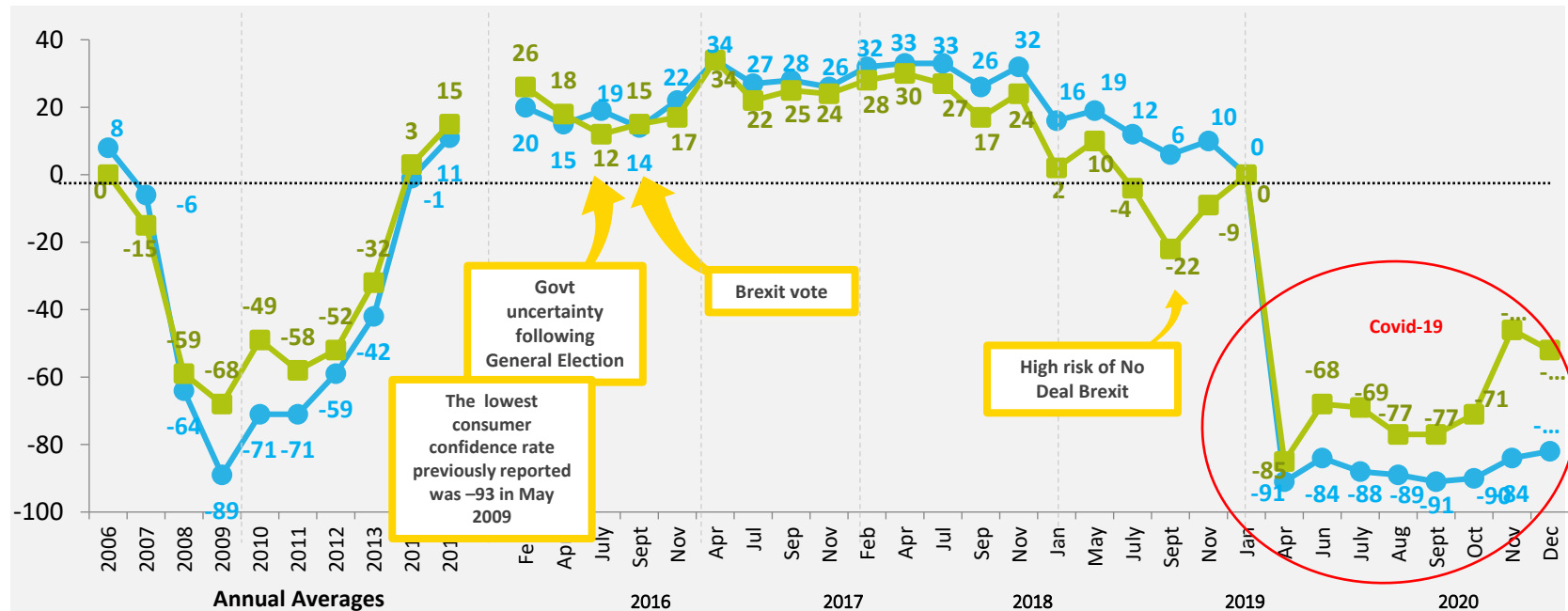
Consumer confidence improved following positive media coverage of a declining Covid case trend, positive vaccine news and easing of restrictions – but remains in negative territory and volatile.

Current vs. Looking Forward

**Looking forward**  
(Net Diff: Positive-Negative)

Dublin -46

Outside Dublin -55



\*Figures in the graph represent the net difference between those thinking the country will be economically better off minus those thinking it will be worse off.

Source: B&A Consumer Confidence Report

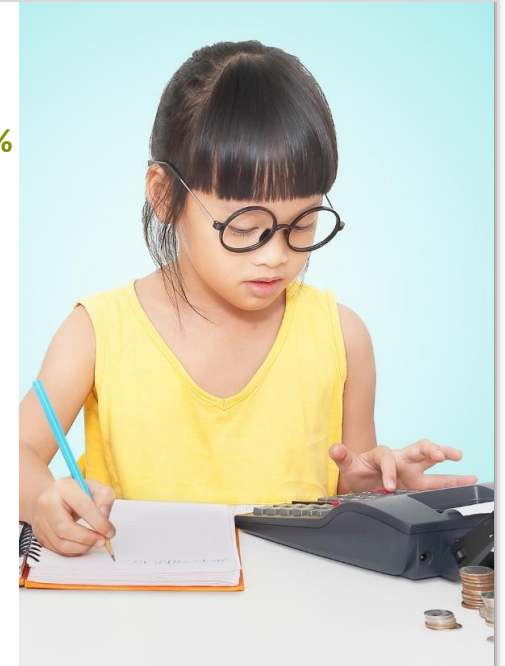
- Q.1 Thinking about the economy as a whole, do you think that the country is better off, worse off, or about the same as last year?  
 Q.2 And what about the coming year, do you think that the country will be better off, worse off or about the same as this year?

# A more frugal consumer has arrived

Base: All 12+ years ( \*\* asked of 18+ ) – 1,345

## % Likely to Continue These Activities

	Very Likely %	Quite Likely %	
Being careful of how much I spend	29	40	79%
Being focused on making money and earning a good...	18	29	
Regularly consciously saving money	17	29	
Consciously putting money into your pension **	9	15	
Requested a break on mortgage/Take a break on...	1		



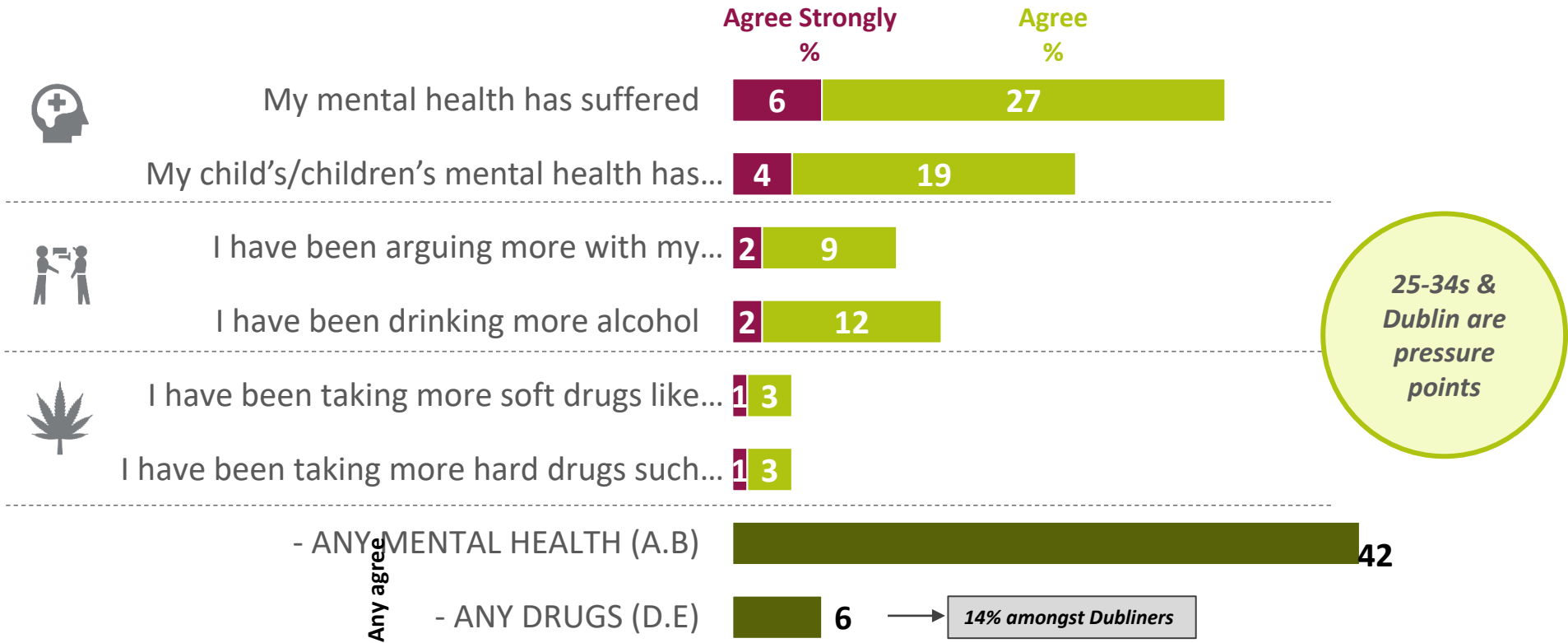
**Likely to remain a mindset for the foreseeable future (Most keenly felt among 25 – 49s & / or ABC1s)**

Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020

Q.14 How likely are you to continue to do any of these activities as we head into 2021? (\*\* = asked of all aged 18+ only) -

# Covid has taken its toll & has negatively impacted at many levels

Base: All 18+ years



Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020

Q.23 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.



# Covid obviously #1 but mental health as important as the economy for many

Base: All aged 12+ years 1,345



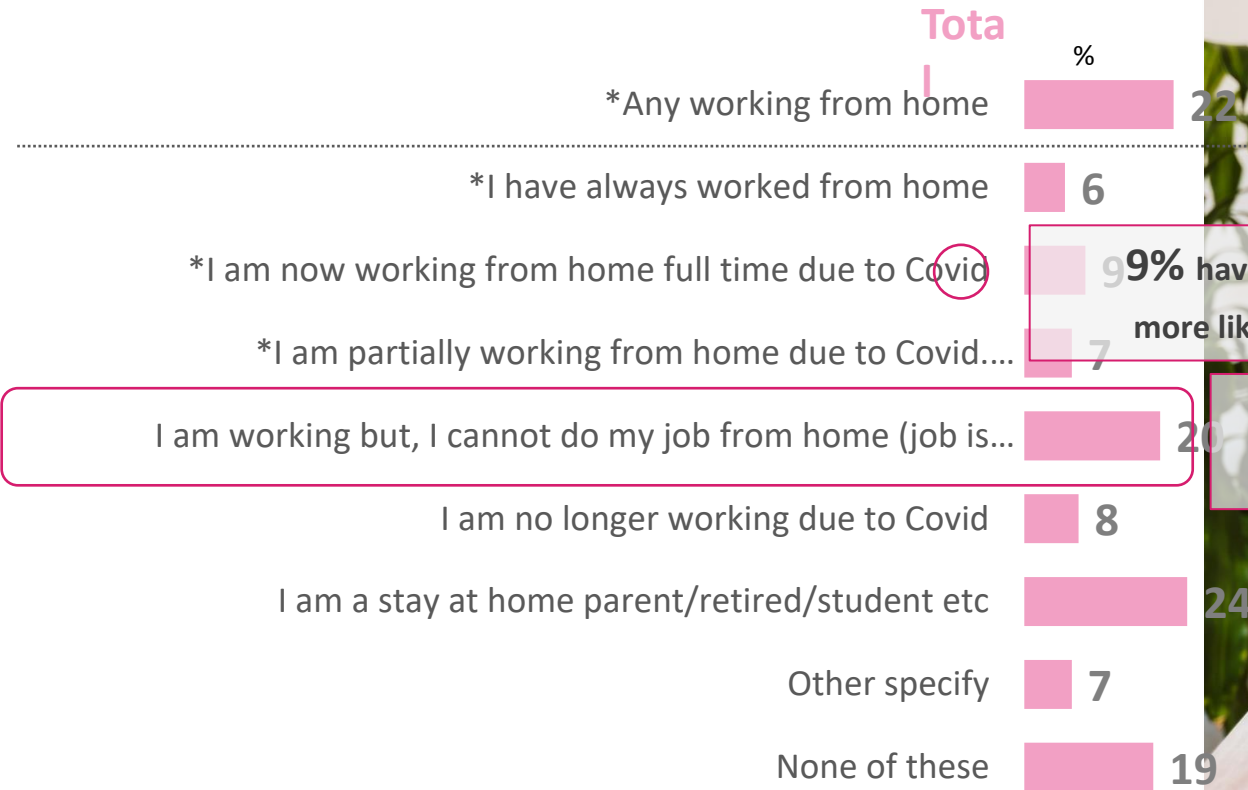
Q.1a Which of the following do you feel are the 3 most important issues facing Ireland today? ANY 1, 2, 3

Q.1b And which are the 3 most important issues to you personally? ANY 1, 2, 3

Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020

# A tech revolution - For some

Base: All adults 18+ - 1,149



**9% have switched to WFH full time – more likely to be ABC1 / Dublin**

**20% are working and cannot do their job from home...**

Q.3a Which of the statements below best describes your current working arrangements? **SHOW CARD. SCRIPTER: SINGLE RESPONSE**

Source: B&A/RTÉ Mood of the Nation Sept 2020