



Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

General Public Mental Health and COVID-19

Quantitative Research

July 2022

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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.
- ❖ A number of General Public studies fielded since 2019 looking at incidence of various mental health conditions and gradually the impact of Covid-19 on these and the likelihood of seeking professional help.
- ❖ Research has been undertaken using a combination of Behaviour & Attitudes **Face-to-Face Barometer survey** and **Online Barometer survey**.
- ❖ Both represent the adult population aged 16 and over but the online version tends to produce relatively higher incidences of certain conditions (notably both depression and interestingly obesity.) It is likely that online respondents are a little less guarded, but also that there may be more openness to the possibility of specific conditions among those who are active online.
- ❖ This report uses a combination of face-to-face and online-collected data; it had not been possible to undertake face-to-face research during the pandemic, hence the mix of approaches.

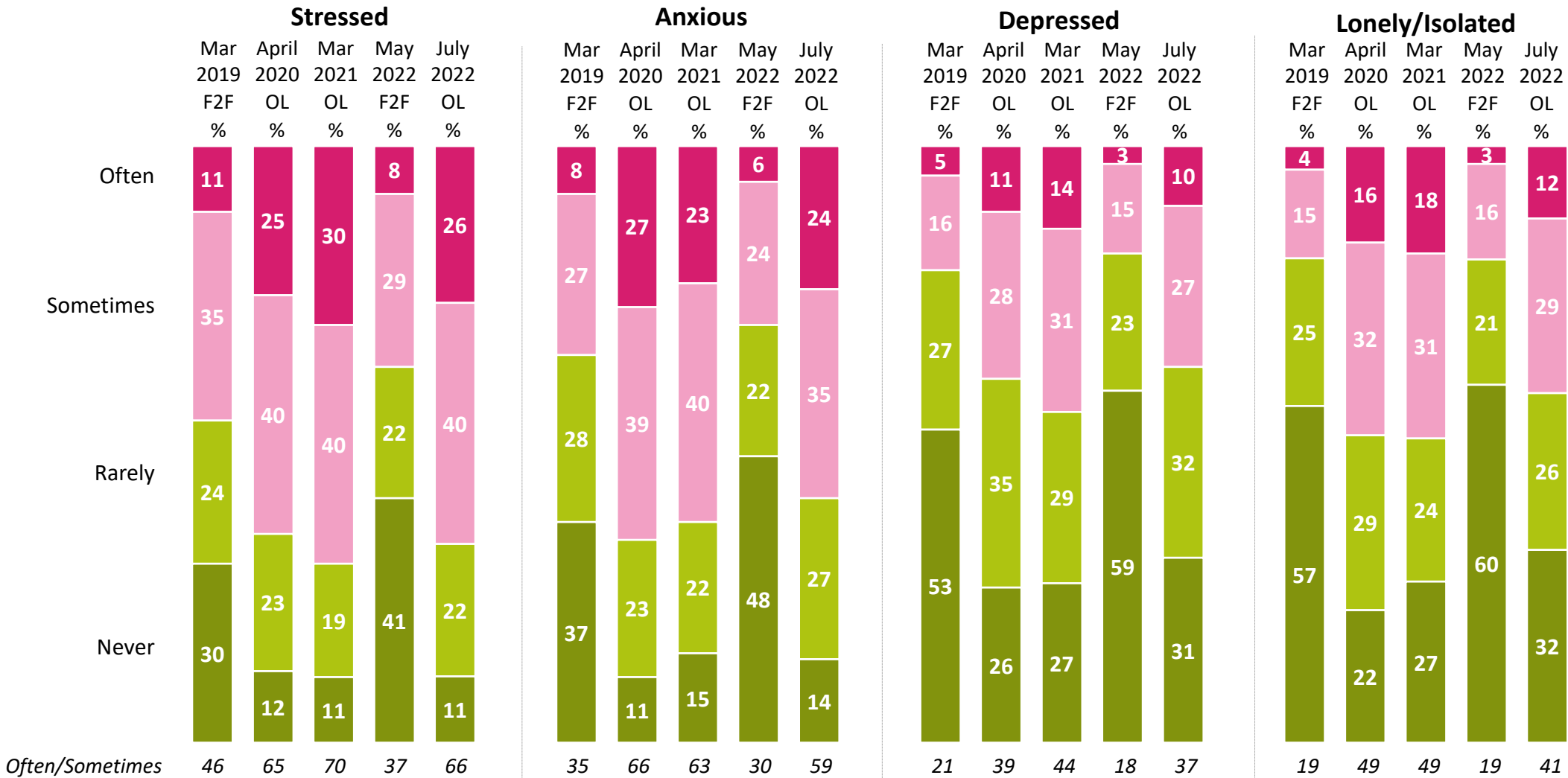




Results

Recent experience of mental health conditions

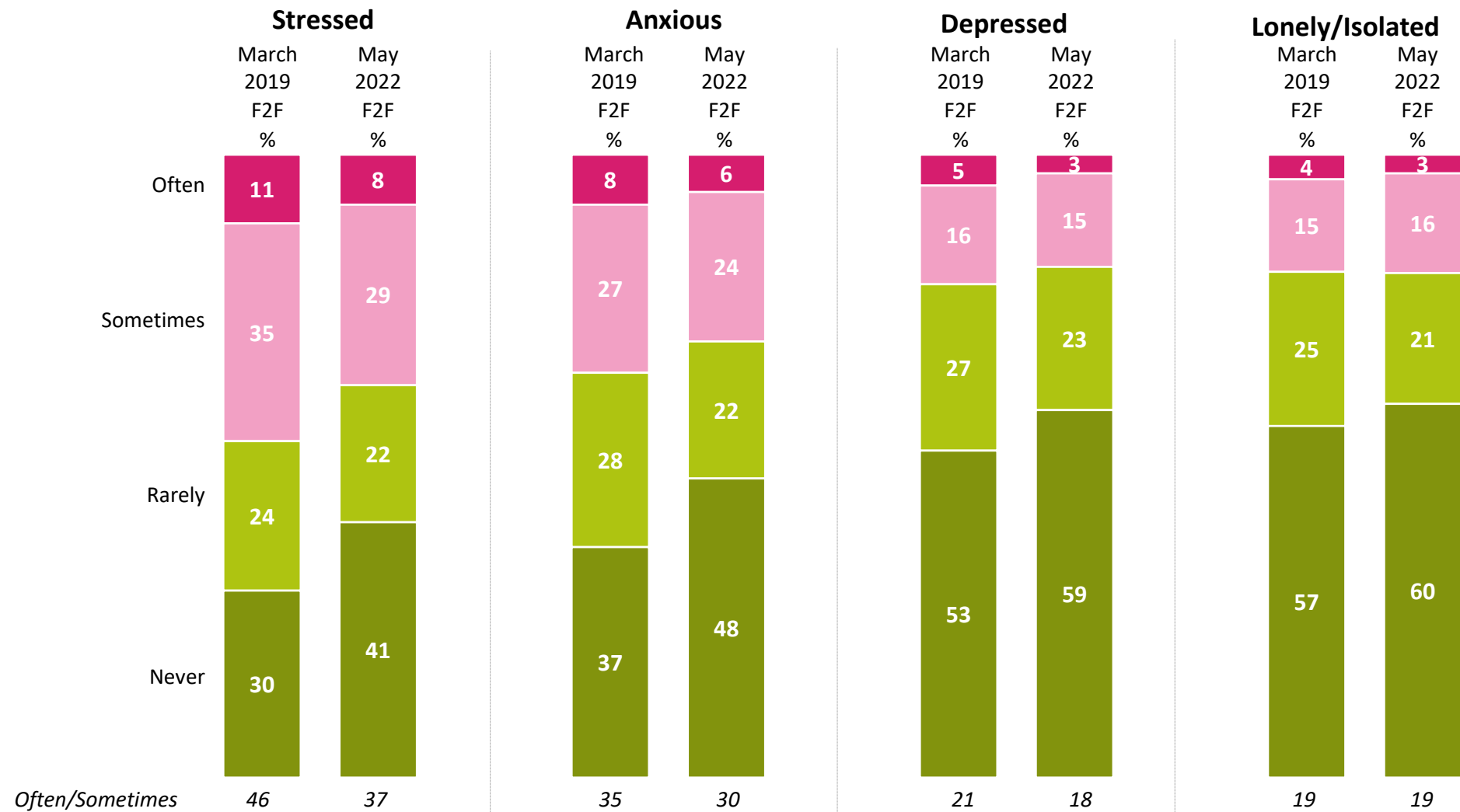
Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000



Latest online research in July 2022 shows a reduction in reports of loneliness/isolation, feeling depressed, of anxiety and to a more limited extent of stress. Equally the same pattern is apparent when we look at recent and 2019 face-to-face studies too, with stress and anxiety both lower but downward shifts in depression limited and loneliness unchanged at 1 in 5.

Recent experience of mental health issues

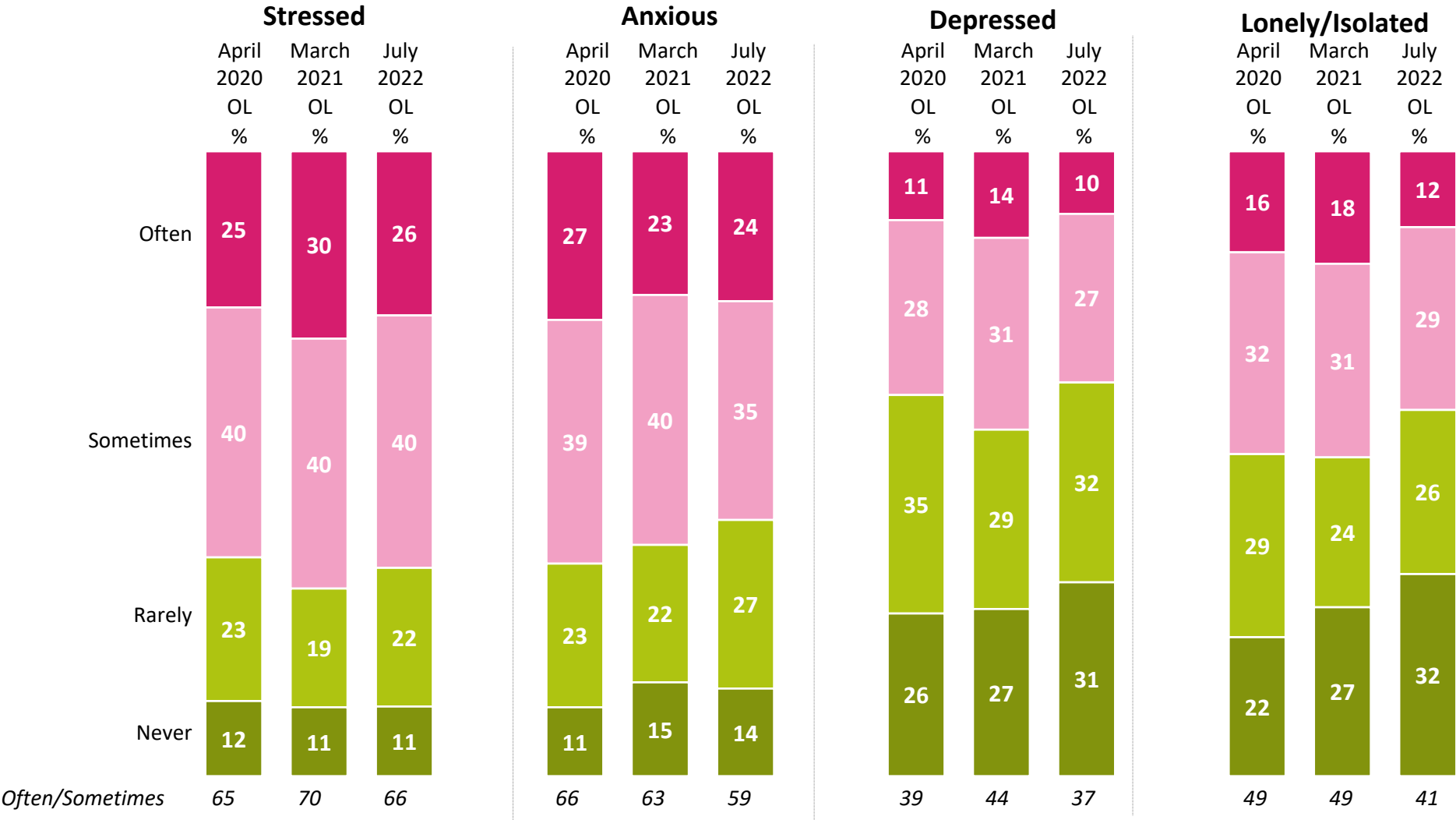
Base: All adults – 1,003/3,945,000 face-to-face surveys



Just comparing the two face-to-face surveys from March 2019 and May 2022, we see statistically significant reductions in at least occasional experience of stress and anxiety with experience of depression and/or loneliness/isolation relatively unaltered. Almost two in five experience stress sometimes or often with three in ten indicating anxiety. One in five have similar experience of depression or of loneliness/isolation.

Mid-pandemic experience of mental health issues

Base: All adults – online surveys

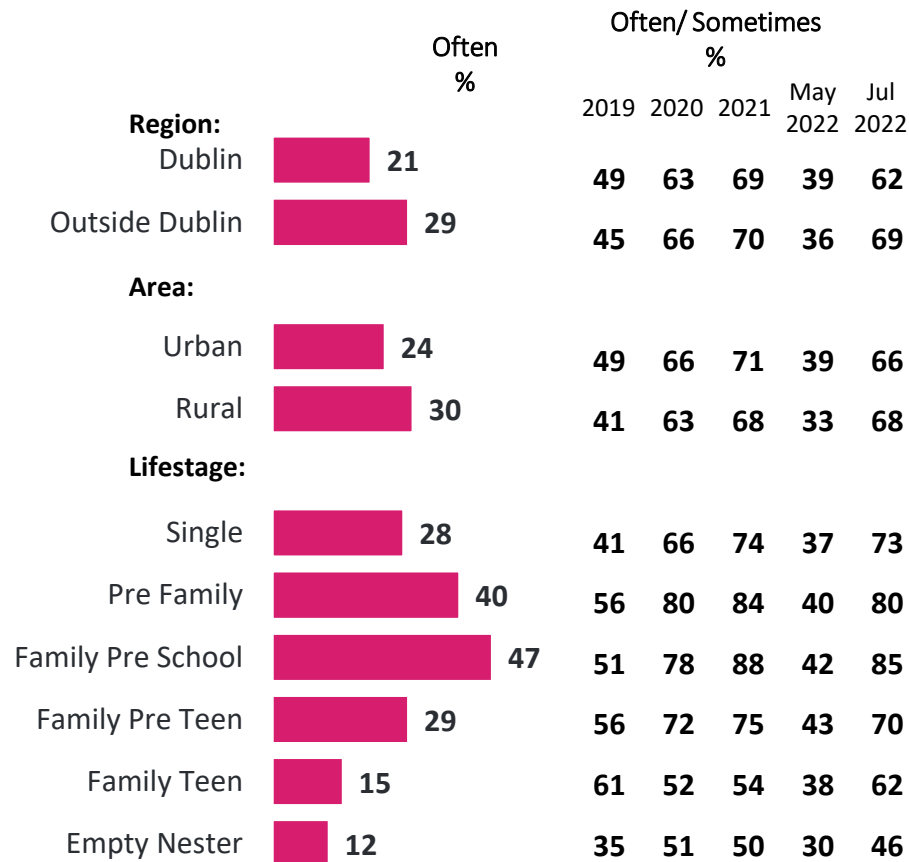
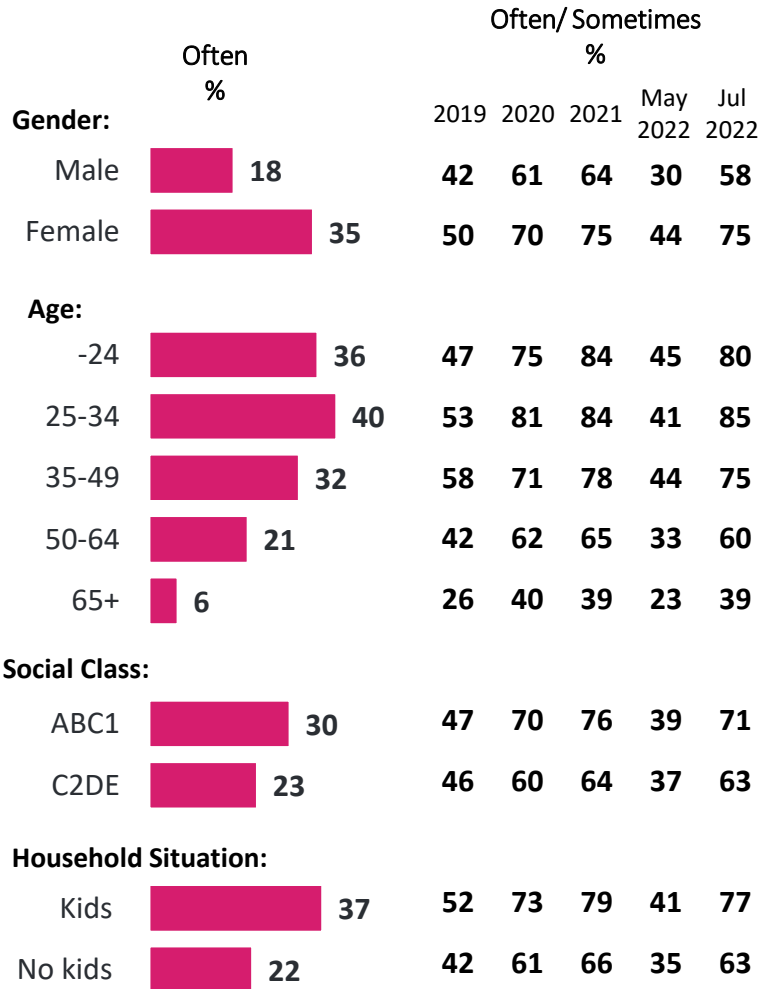
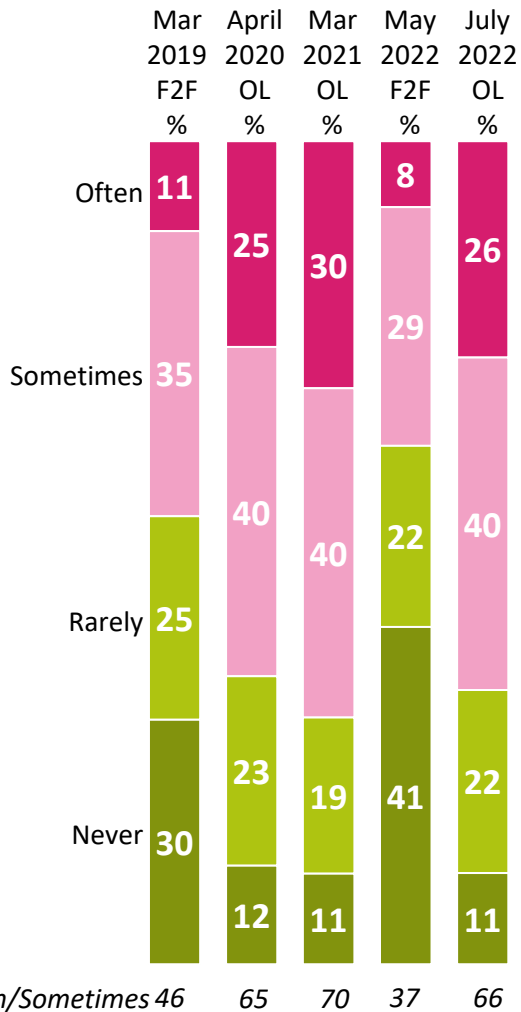


Anxiety and isolation have both notably reduced whereas both stress and depression are at similar levels to 2020 but lower than seen in March 2021, when we were in a much flatter and less enjoyable (or novel) phase of pandemic restrictions.



Feeling stressed x demographics

Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000



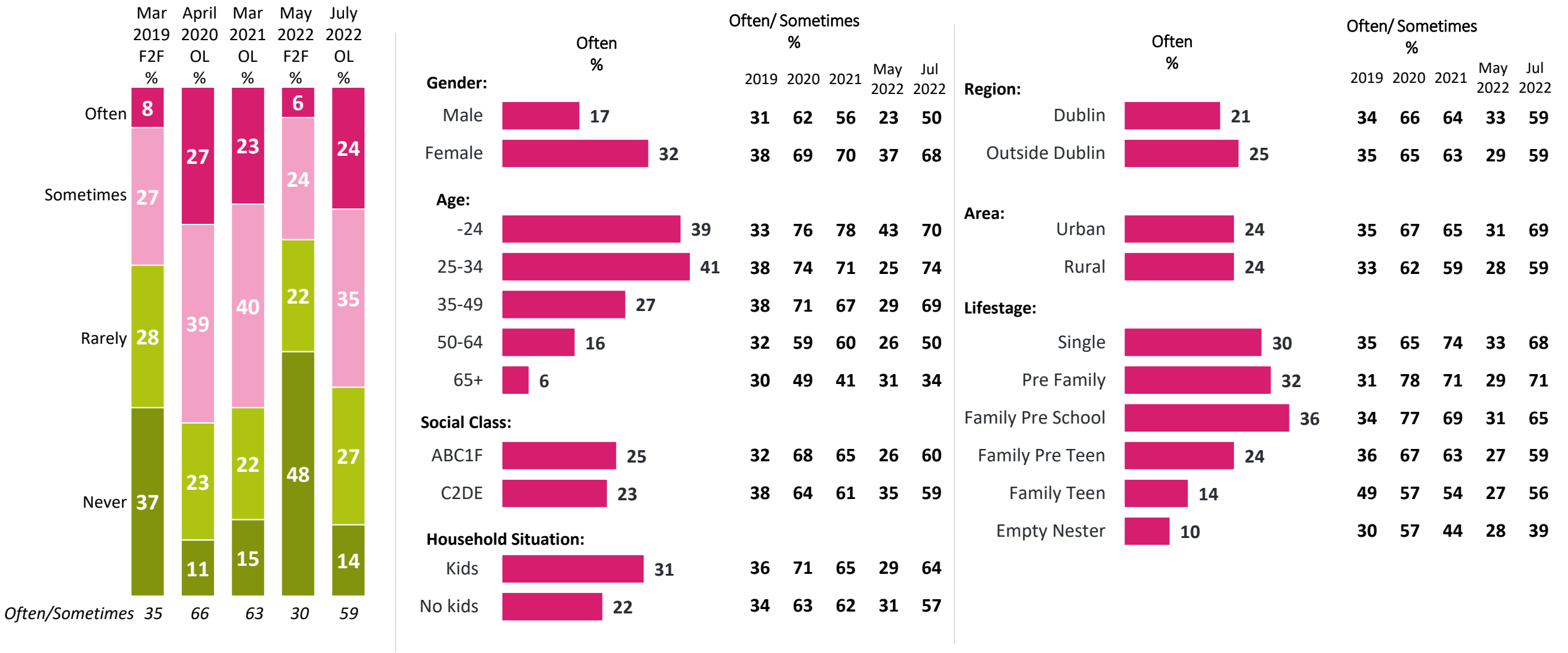
There is a reduction in numbers feeling stressed, now similar to the levels seen in April 2020. (A similar reduction in face-to-face collected data is apparent.) Irrespective of data collection methodology the same underlying patterns remain with higher reporting female, younger, middle class and non-Dublin. Particular impact on those with pre-school families.



Feeling anxious x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000



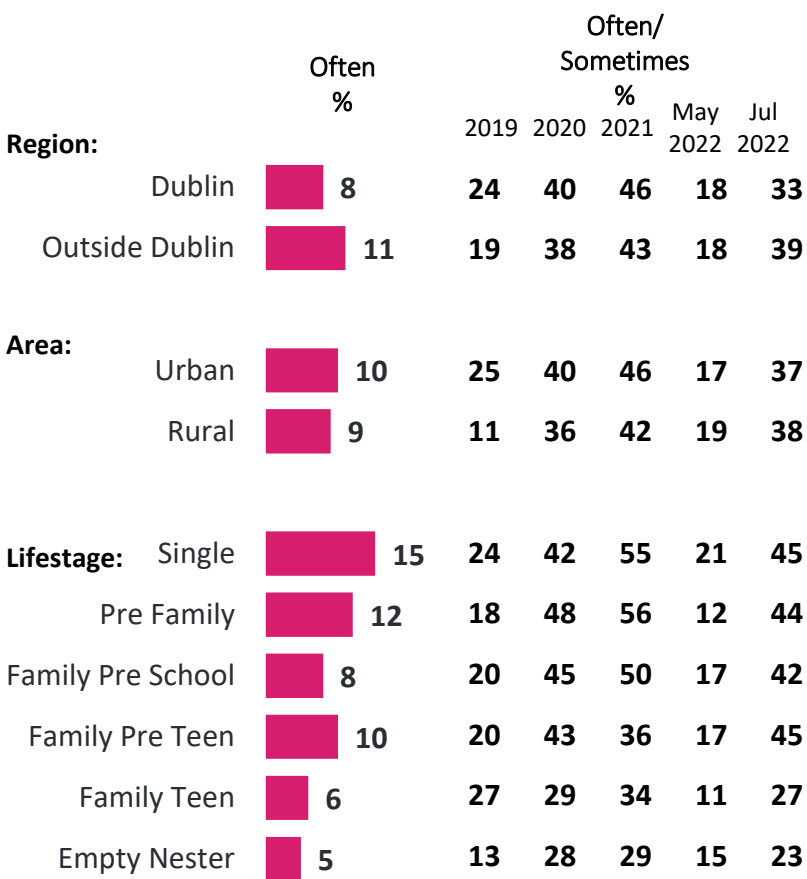
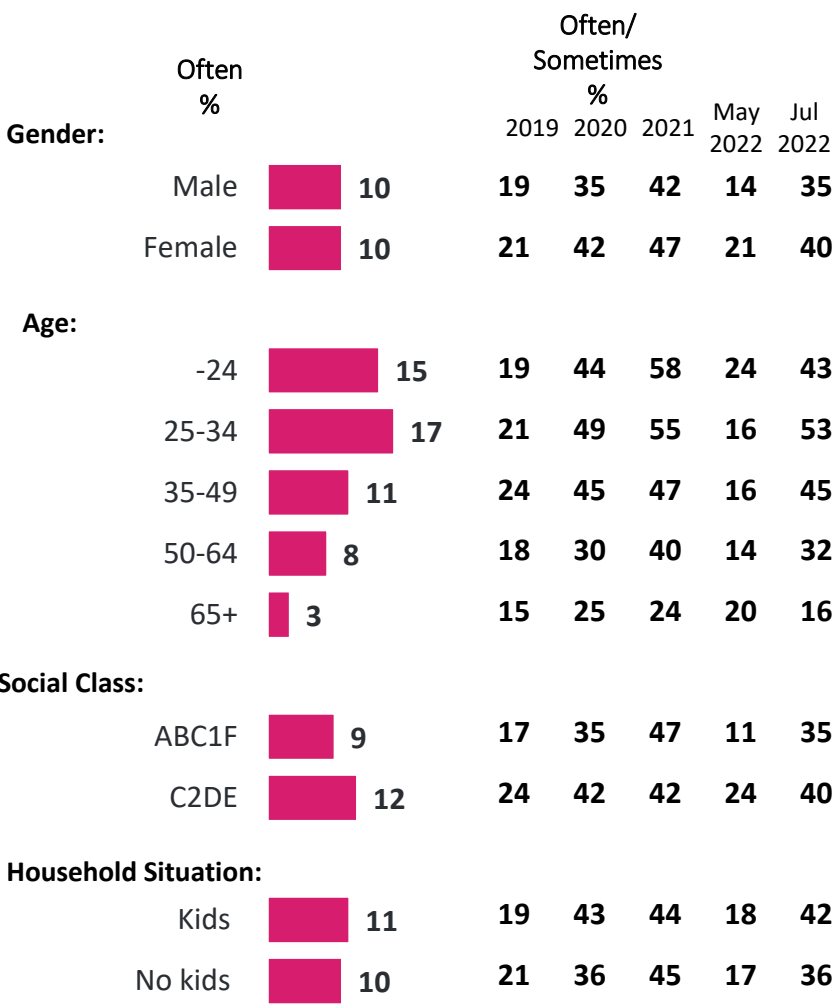
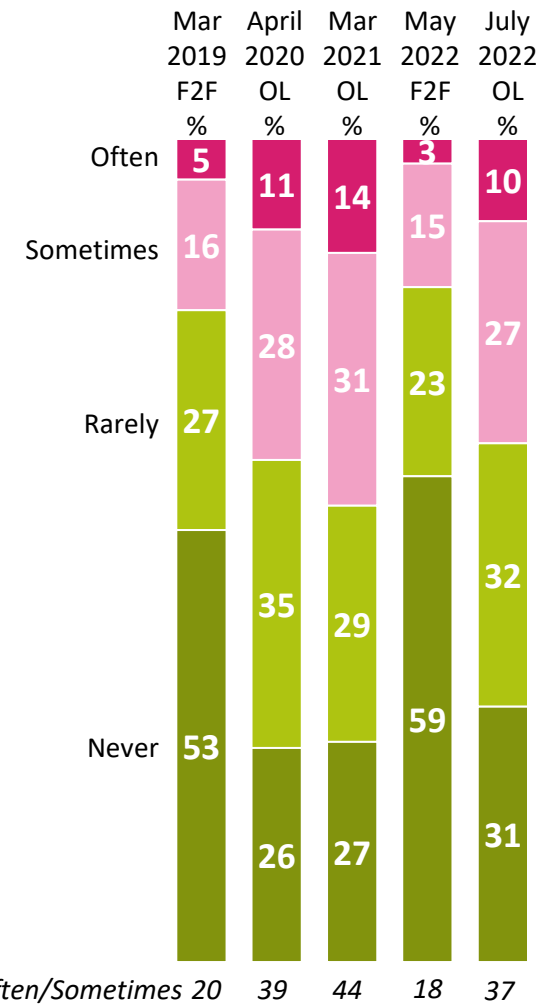
Six in ten experience anxiety on at least some basis, again higher female, younger and either among singletons or those with young children. Online incidences are marginally down versus a year ago with a similar drop when we compare face-to-face collected data from May and prior to that, March 2019.



Feeling depressed x demographics



Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000

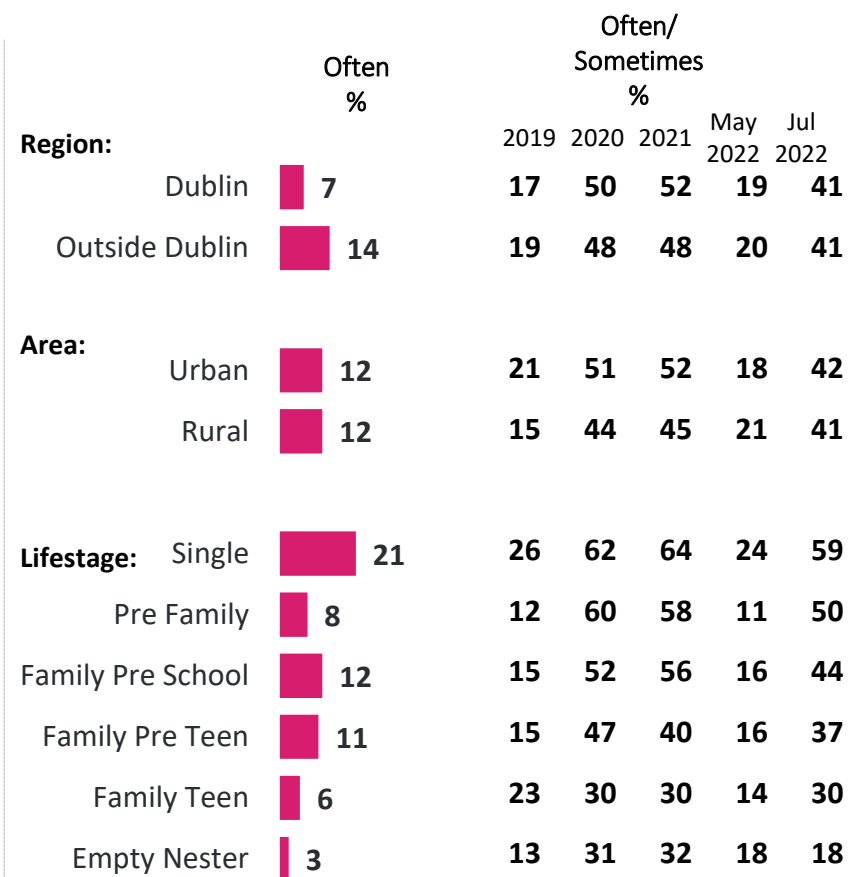
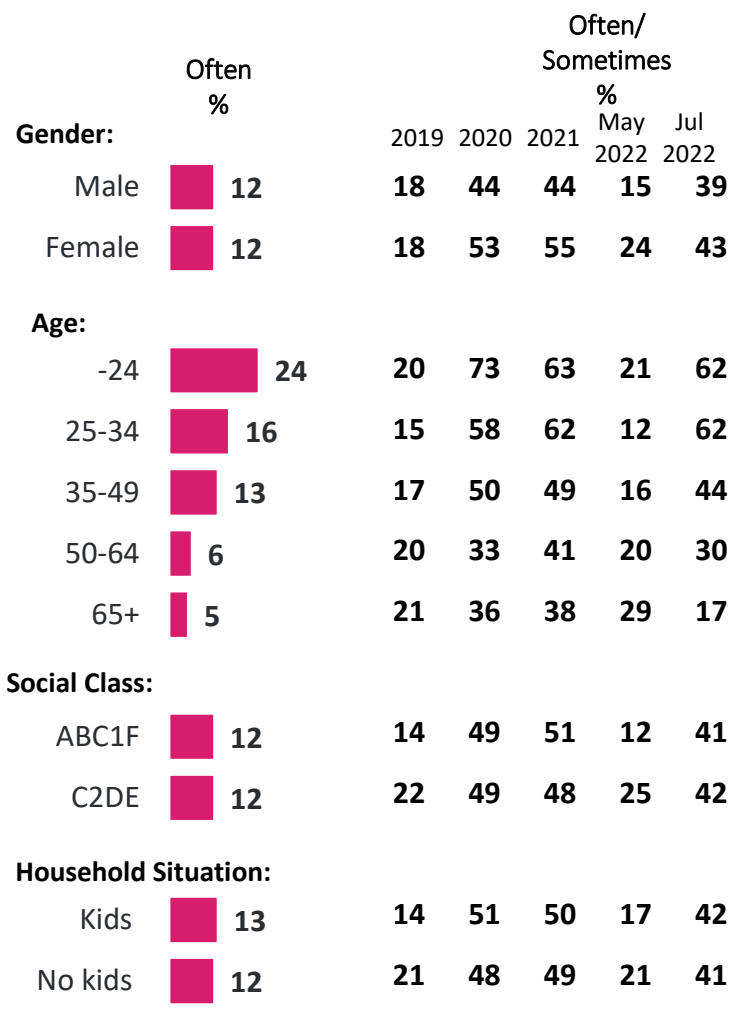
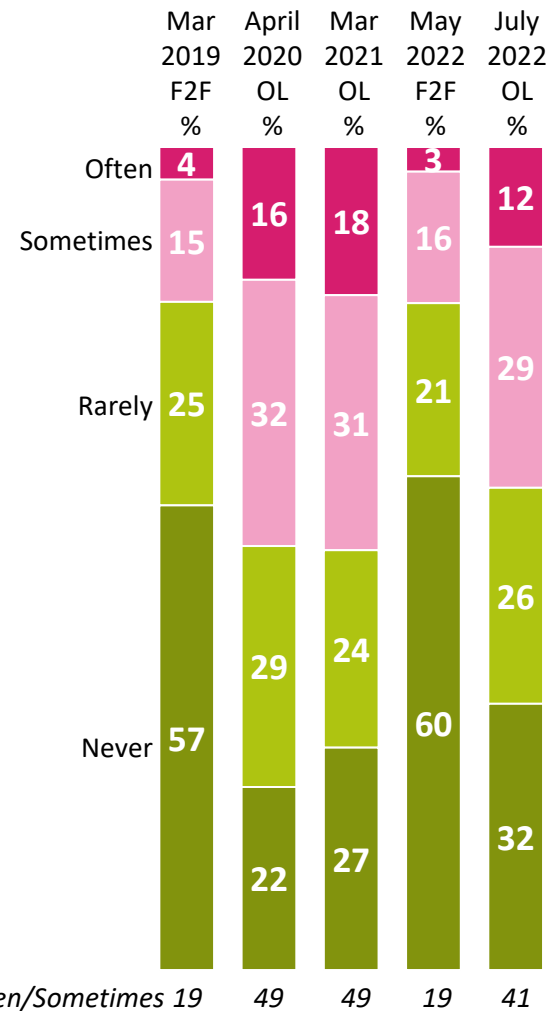


In common with the other conditions, we see much lower numbers online saying they 'never' experience depression; almost twice as many indicated this in face-to-face studies. Both methodologies see a reduction versus previous comparable studies, with 37% indicating at least occasional experience online (down 7%.) The reduction in claimed experience face-to-face a lot more modest.



Feeling lonely/isolated x demographics

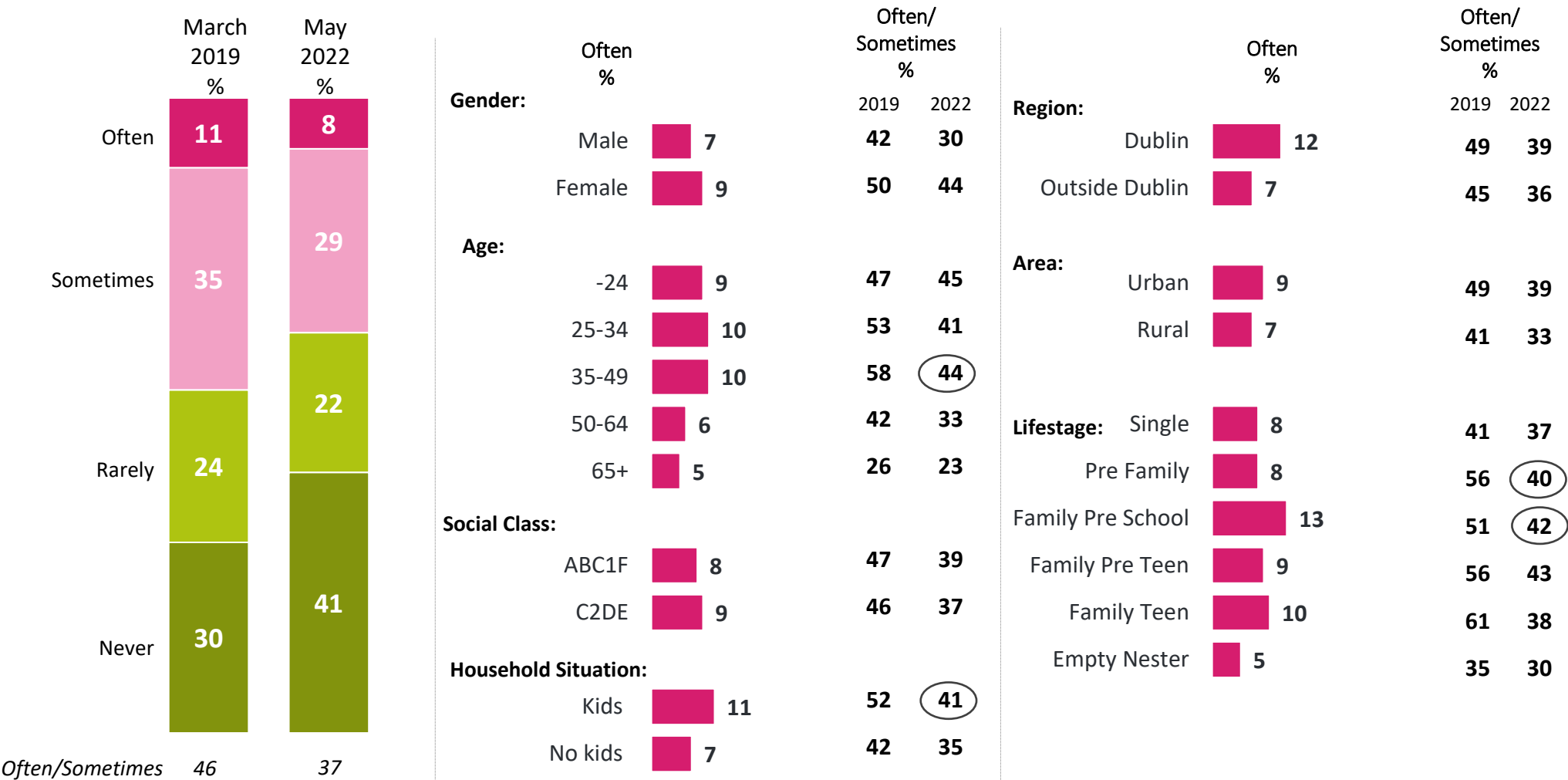
Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000



Quite noteworthy downward shift in past-two-week experience of loneliness/isolation compared with the in-pandemic online studies. Now 41% indicate experience, versus 49% in 2020 and 2021. The numbers reporting depression in face-to-face studies is much lower and has altered less.

Feeling stressed x demographics

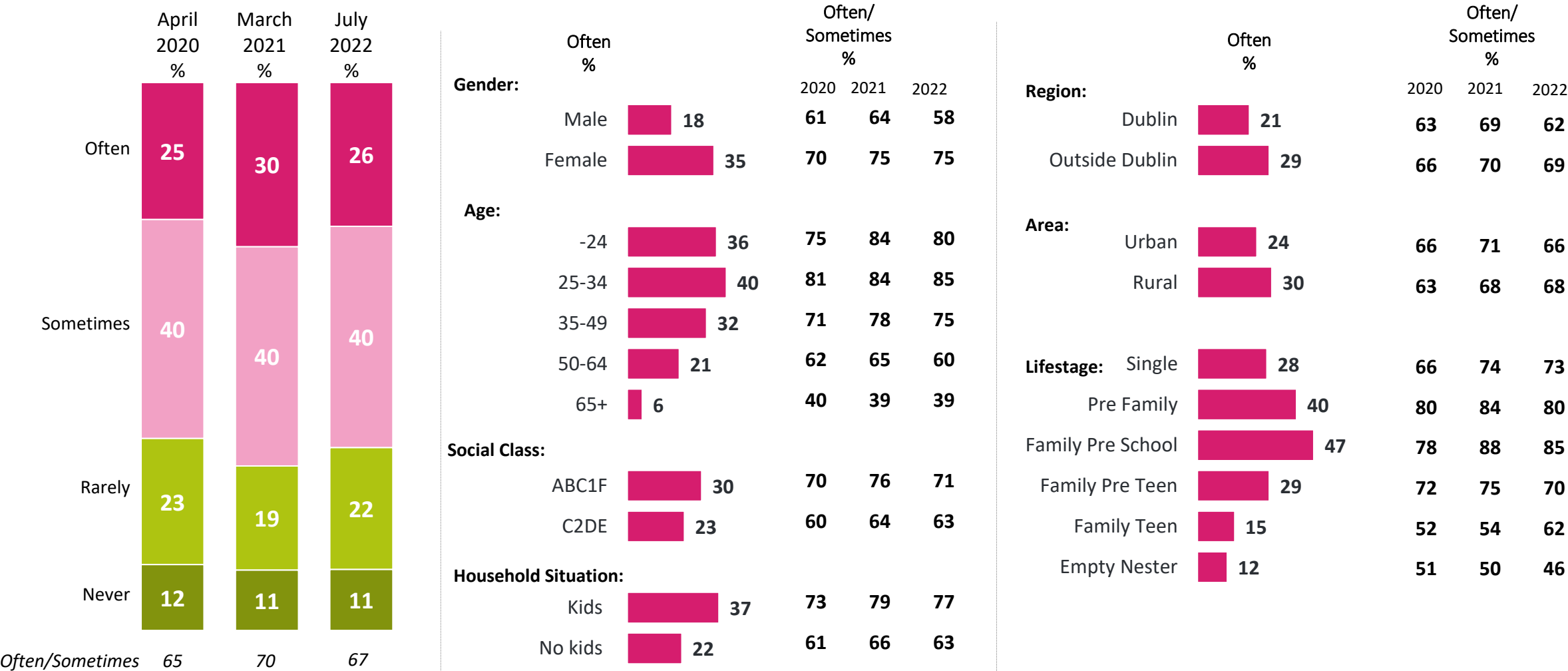
Base: All adults – 1,003/3,945,000 face-to-face surveys



Just focusing on the experience of stress as measured by face-to-face surveys before and after the pandemic, the incidence reduced significantly and more notably so in middle age, among parents and in the pre family and family teen lifestages.

Feeling stressed mid-pandemic x demographics

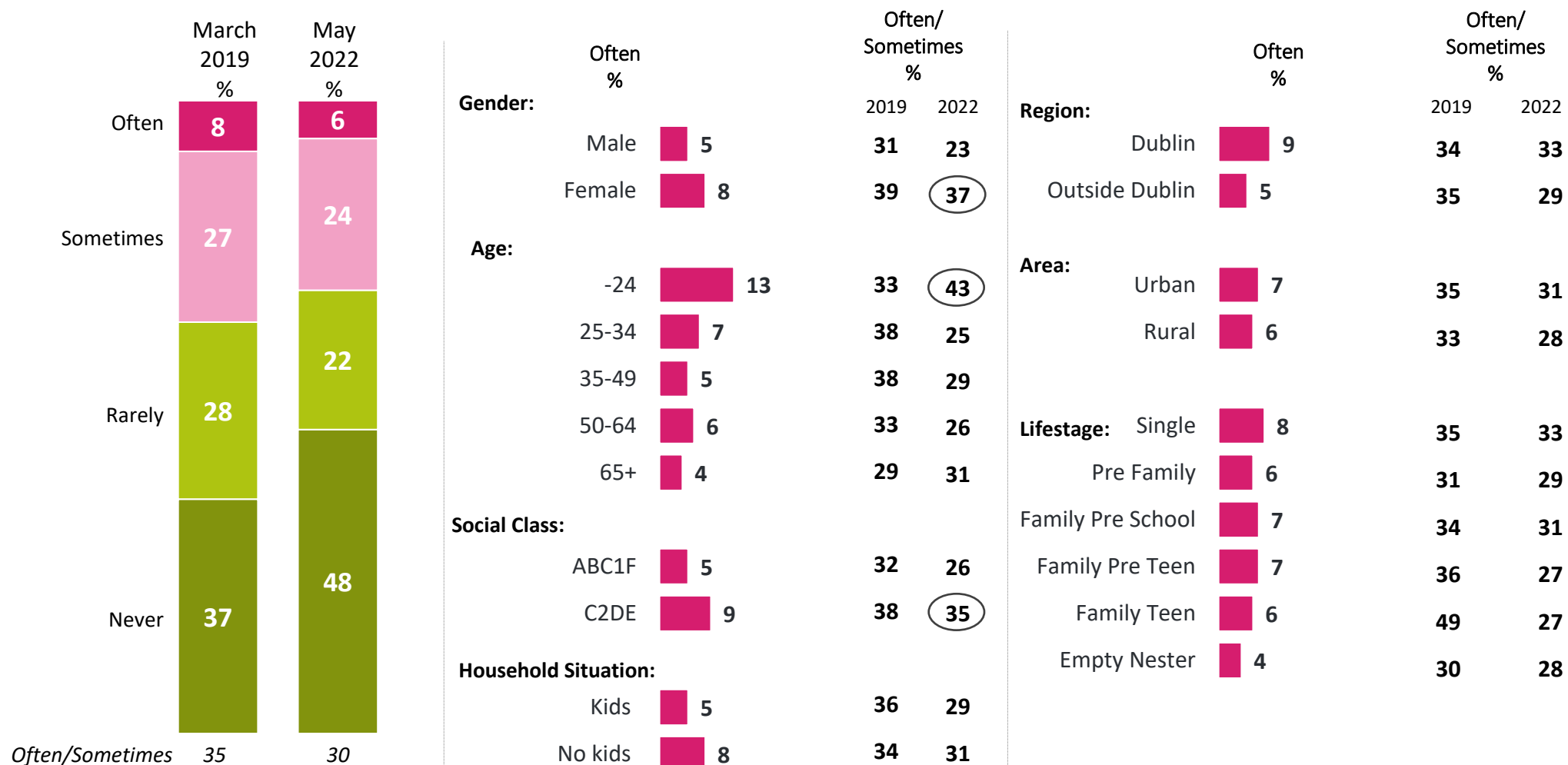
Base: All adults online surveys



Stress reached a relative high point in March 2021 and has fallen by a statistically significant 3% since but is not back to the (lower) April 2020 level. The same demographic underpinnings are apparent, with higher incidences female, younger and among those with children.

Feeling anxious x demographics

Base: All adults face-to-face surveys

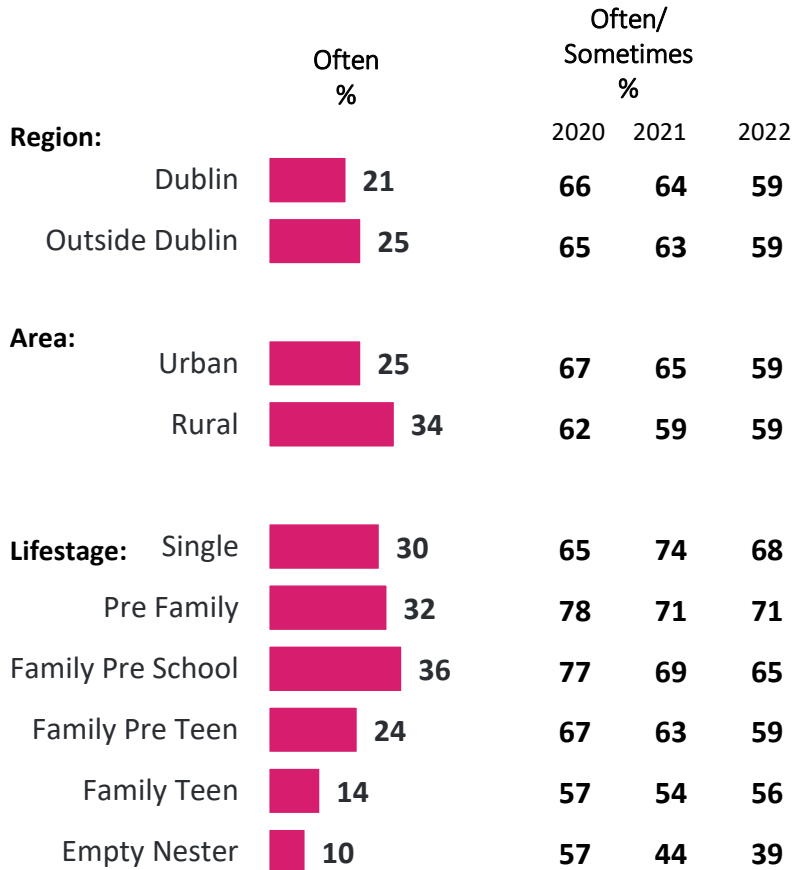
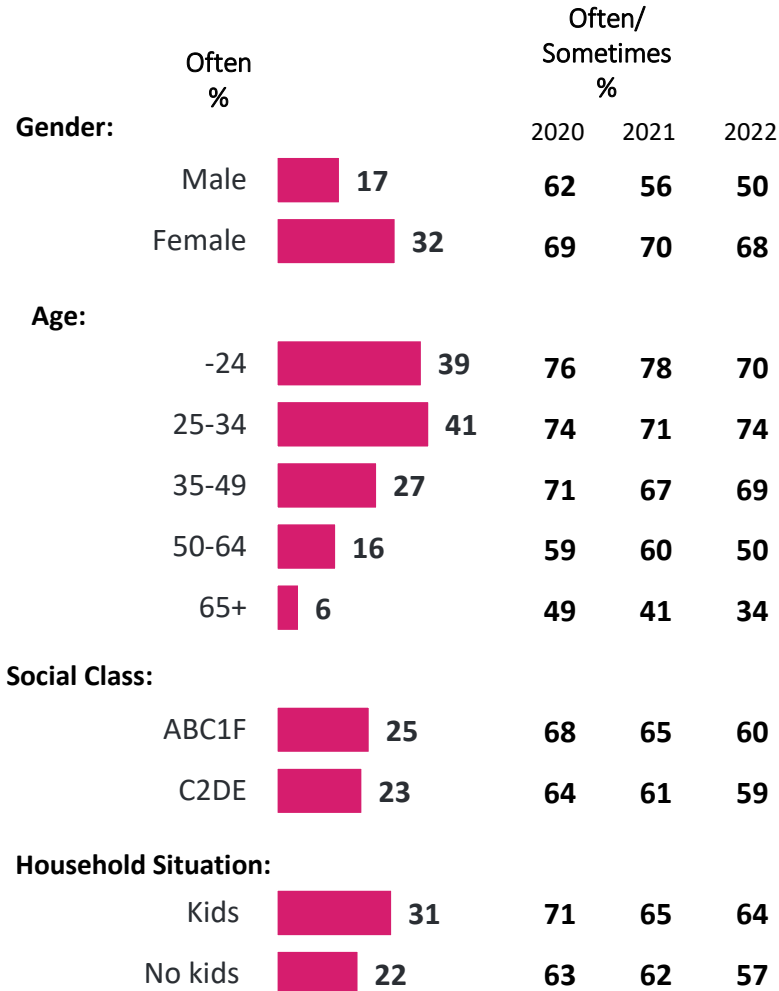
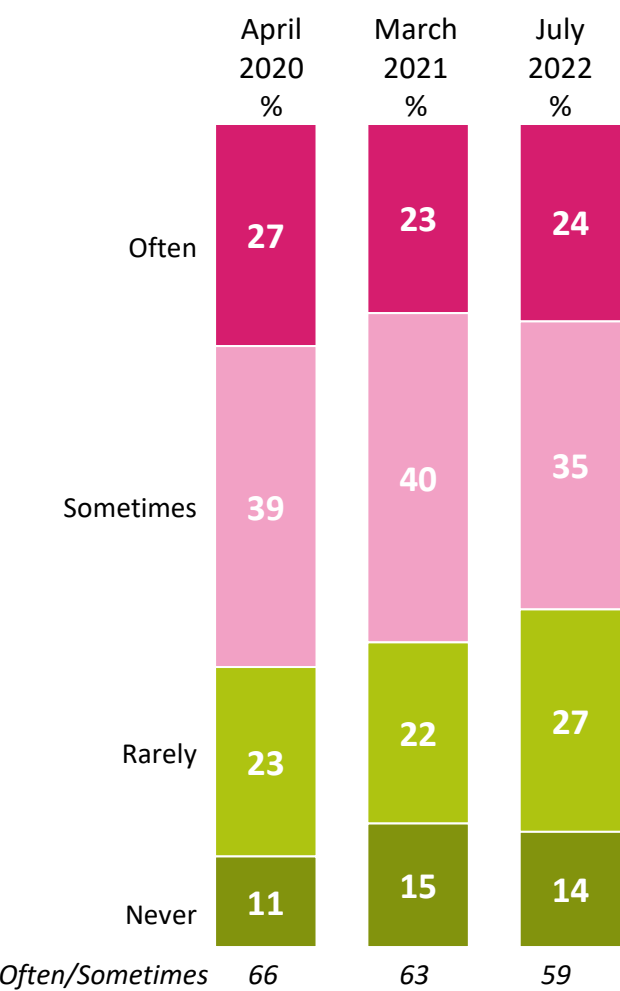


A marginal reduction of the overall incidence of anxiety over two years, albeit still particularly elevated at the younger end and among women.



Feeling anxious x demographics

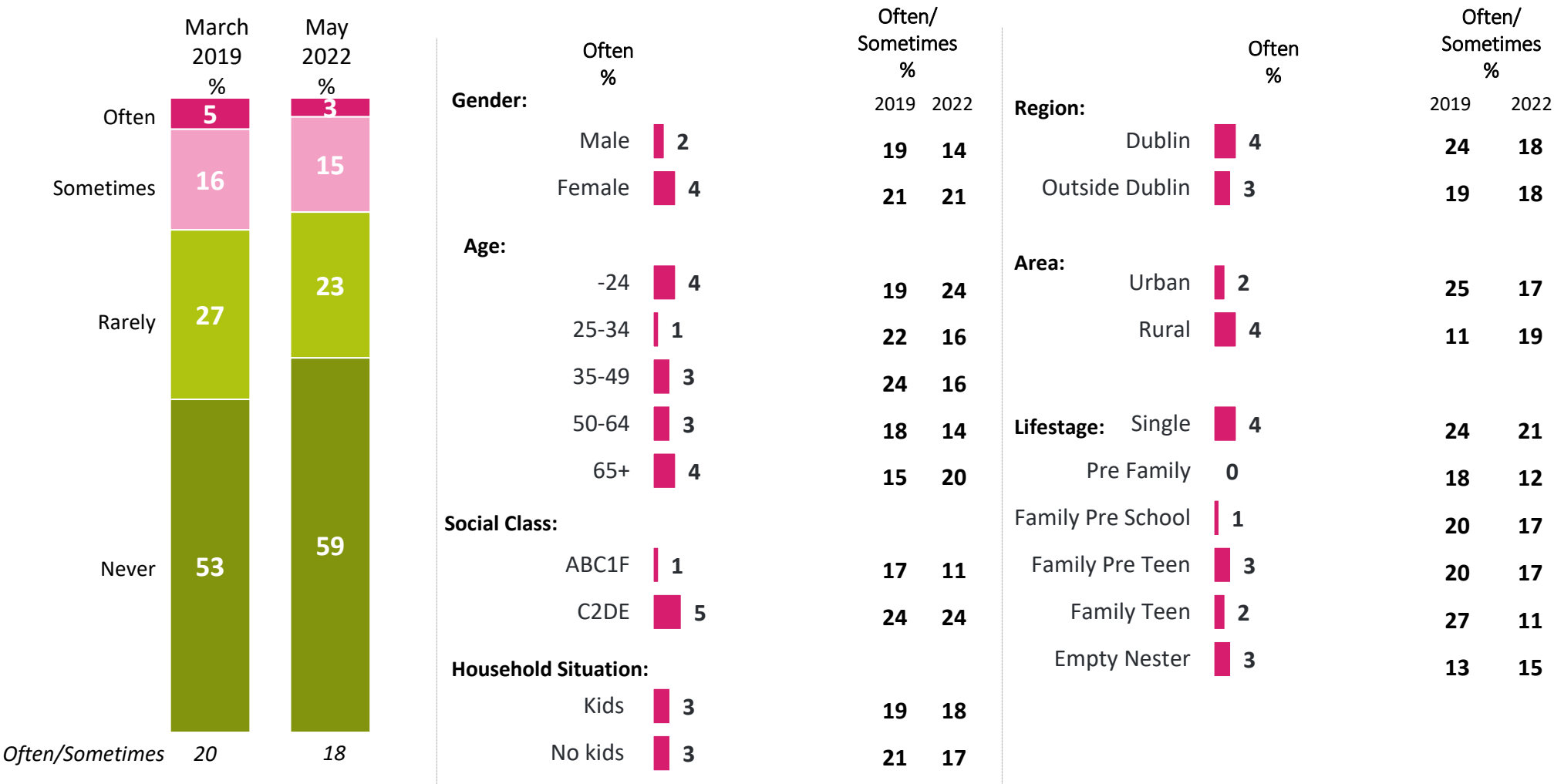
Base: All adults online surveys



A gradual tailing off in anxiety over three years but still at least occasionally experienced by 3 in 5 and regularly so by one in four.

Feeling depressed x demographics

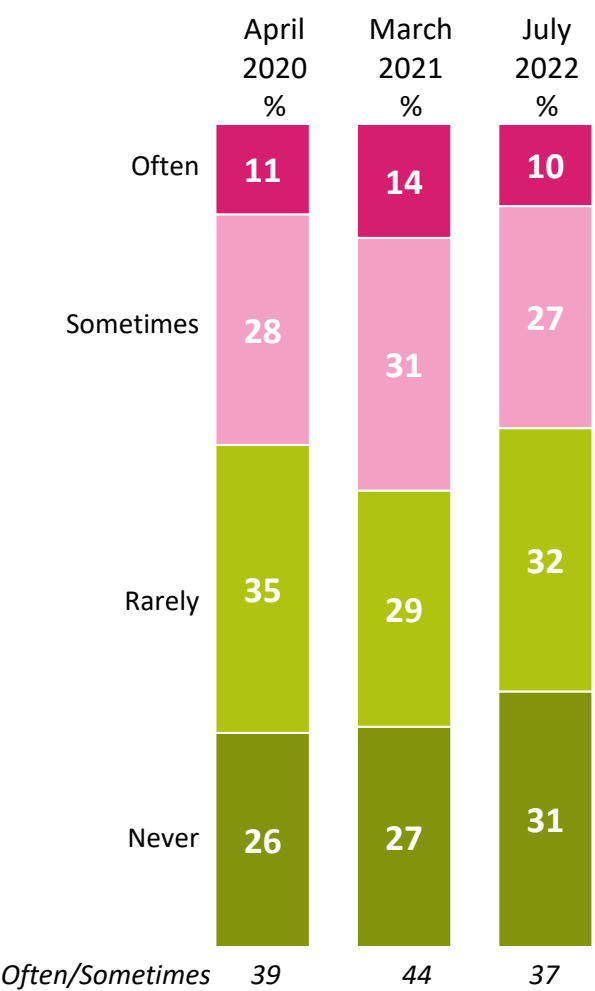
Base: All adults face-to-face survey



Relatively evenly spread albeit with a greater peak working class, rural and among women rather than men. Slight reduction in overall level pre to post pandemic.

Feeling depressed mid pandemic x demographics

Base: All adults online surveys



	Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
		2020	2021	2022
Gender:				
Male	10	35	42	35
Female	10	42	47	40
Age:				
-24	15	44	58	43
25-34	17	49	55	53
35-49	11	45	47	45
50-64	8	30	40	32
65+	3	25	24	16
Social Class:				
ABC1F	9	35	47	35
C2DE	12	42	42	40
Household Situation:				
Kids	11	43	44	42
No kids	10	36	45	36

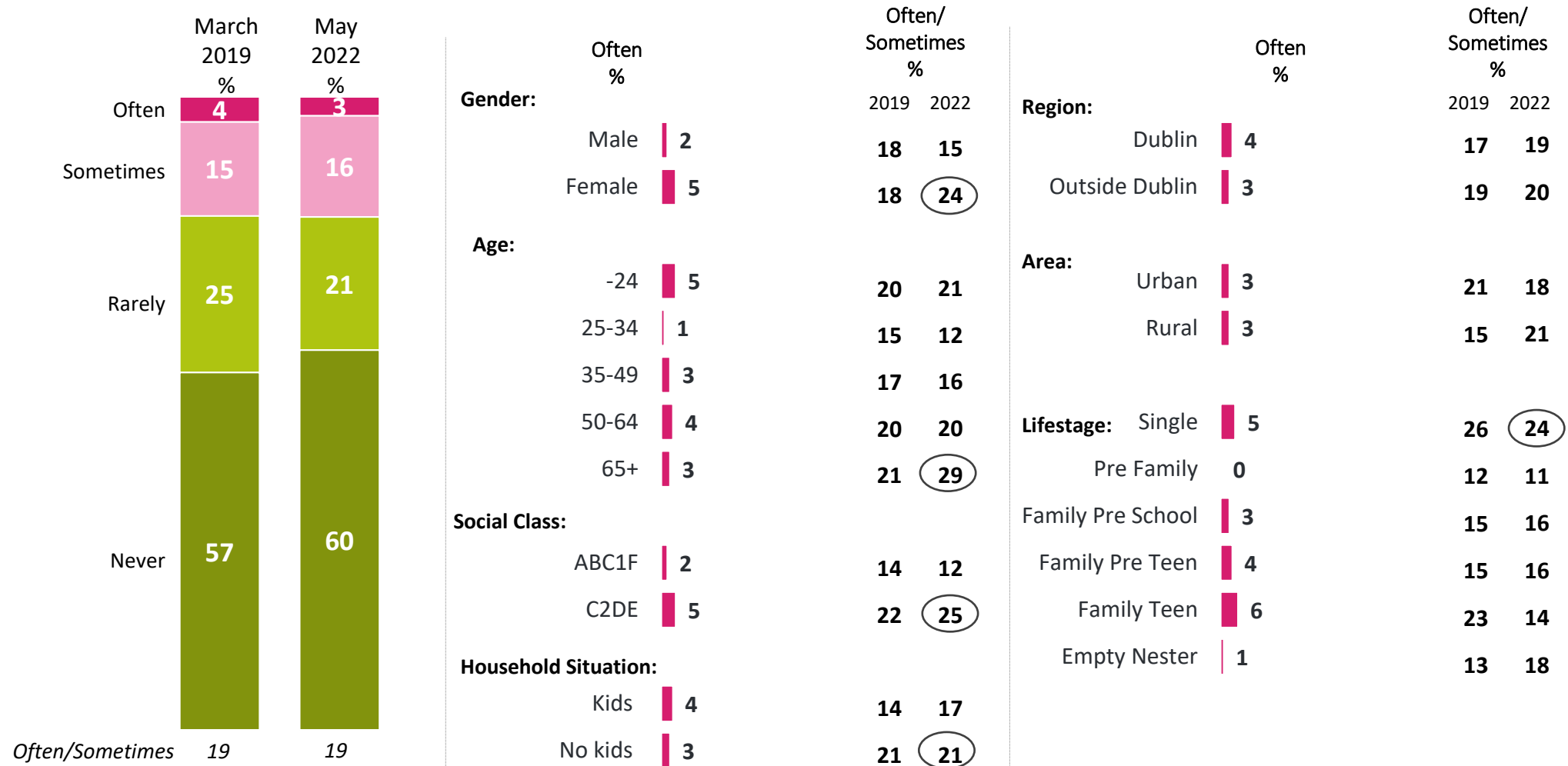
	Often %	Often/ Sometimes %		
		2020	2021	2022
Region:				
Dublin	8	40	46	33
Outside Dublin	11	38	43	39
Area:				
Urban	10	40	46	37
Rural	9	36	42	38
Lifestage:				
Single	15	42	55	45
Pre Family	12	48	56	44
Family Pre School	8	45	50	42
Family Pre Teen	10	43	36	45
Family Teen	6	29	34	27
Empty Nester	5	28	29	23

Reported levels of depression at their highest in 2021 and have now eased back to the levels recorded in 2020. Demographic variation is also more modest.



Feeling lonely/isolated x demographics

Base: All adults face-to-face surveys

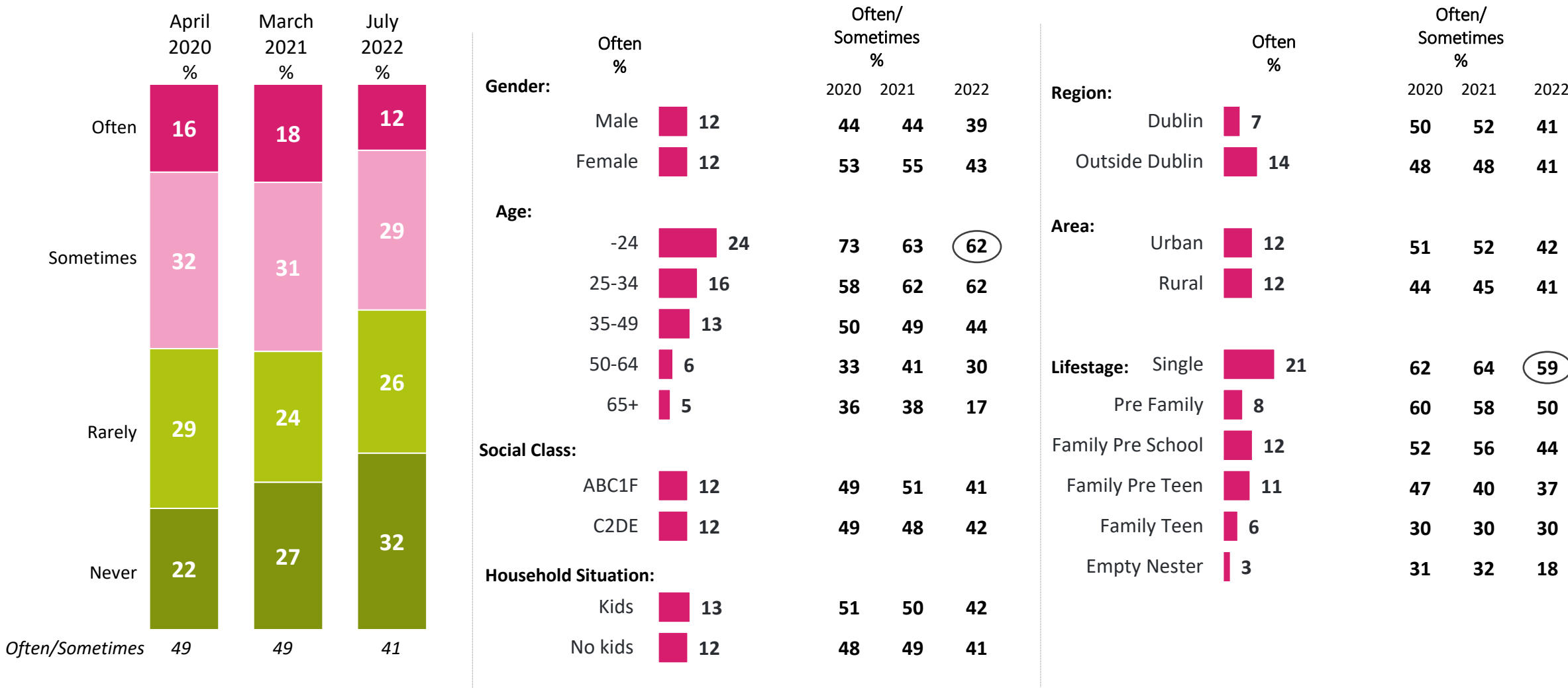


The experience of loneliness or isolation is relatively unchanged when measured on identical survey formats before and after the pandemic. Broader experience female, over 50 and working class and indeed among those who don't have children or who may be single (and as such more likely to be living in isolation or without a partner.)

Feeling lonely/isolated mid pandemic x demographics



Base: All adults online surveys

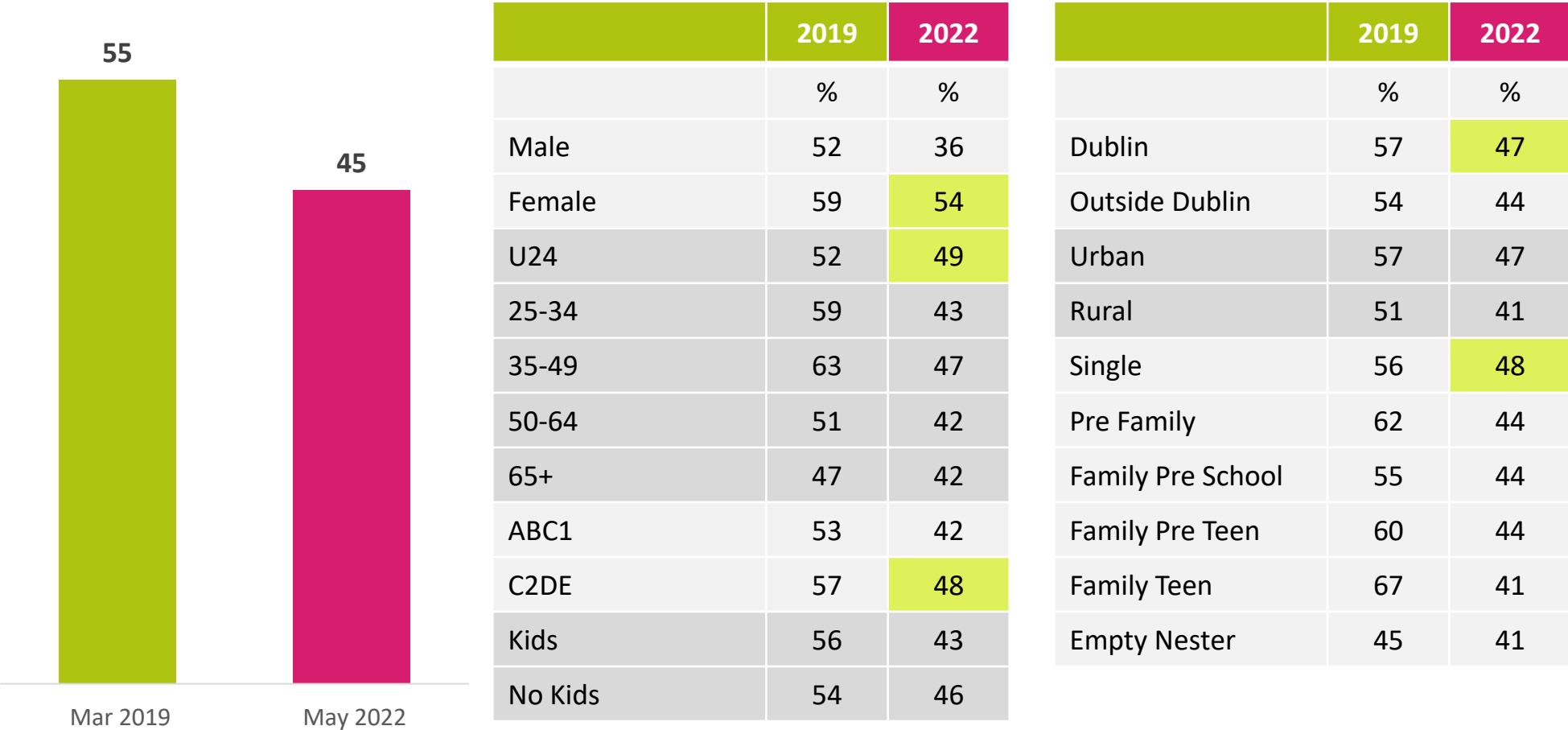


Single and younger adults the most likely to indicate loneliness or isolation, but the levels indicated over the preceding two weeks down by about a sixth in comparison with either 2020 or 2021.

Experience of any of the four issues (often/sometimes)



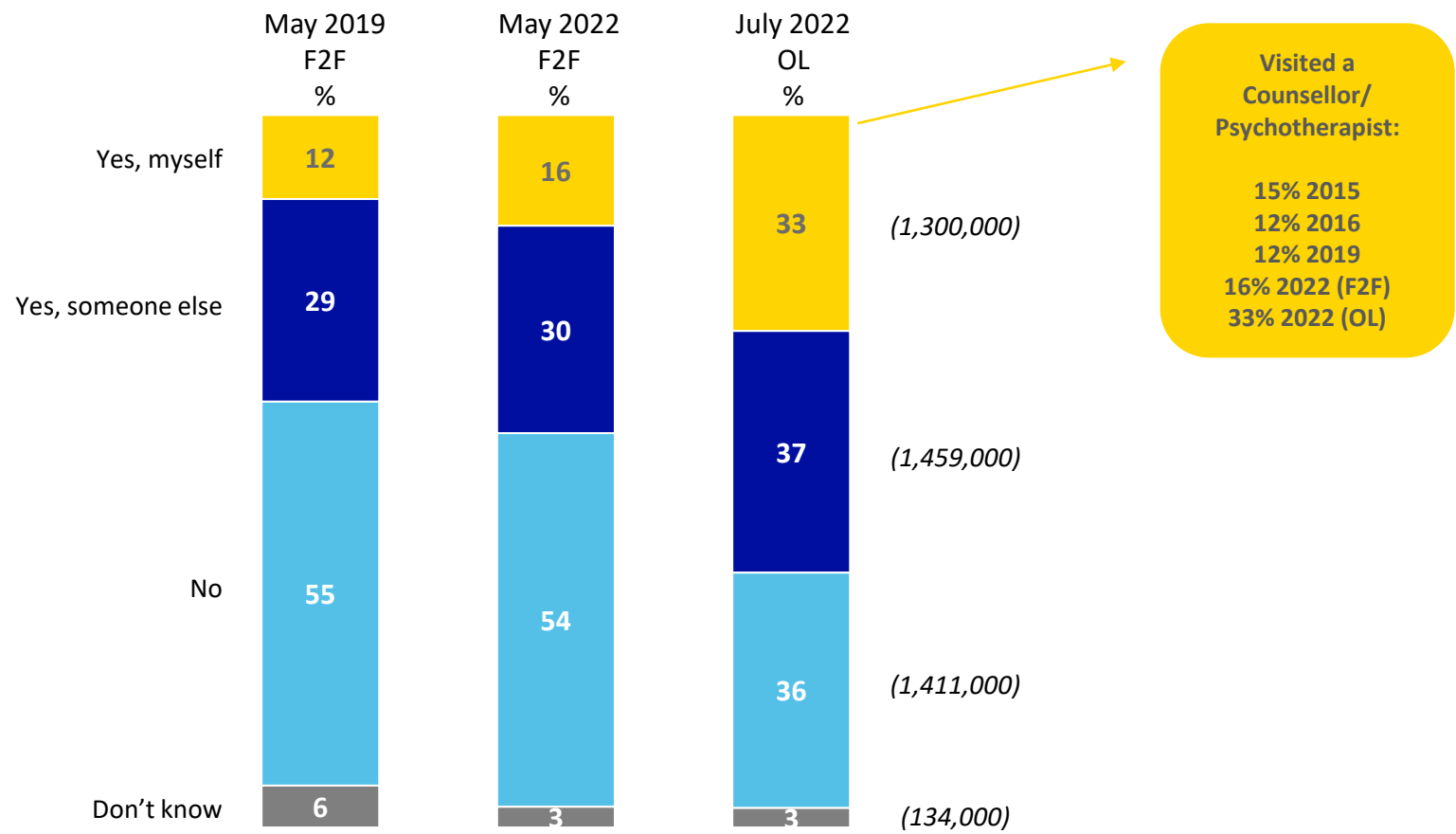
Base: All adults face-to-face surveys



There is an overall reduction in the experience of any of the four issues with 45% now indicating that they experience one of these conditions often or sometimes in a typical two-week period, a reduction by 10 percentage points. Experience of any is still higher female, working class and to a marginal extent amongst younger adults.

One in three say they have personally seen a Counsellor/Psychotherapist

Base: All adults

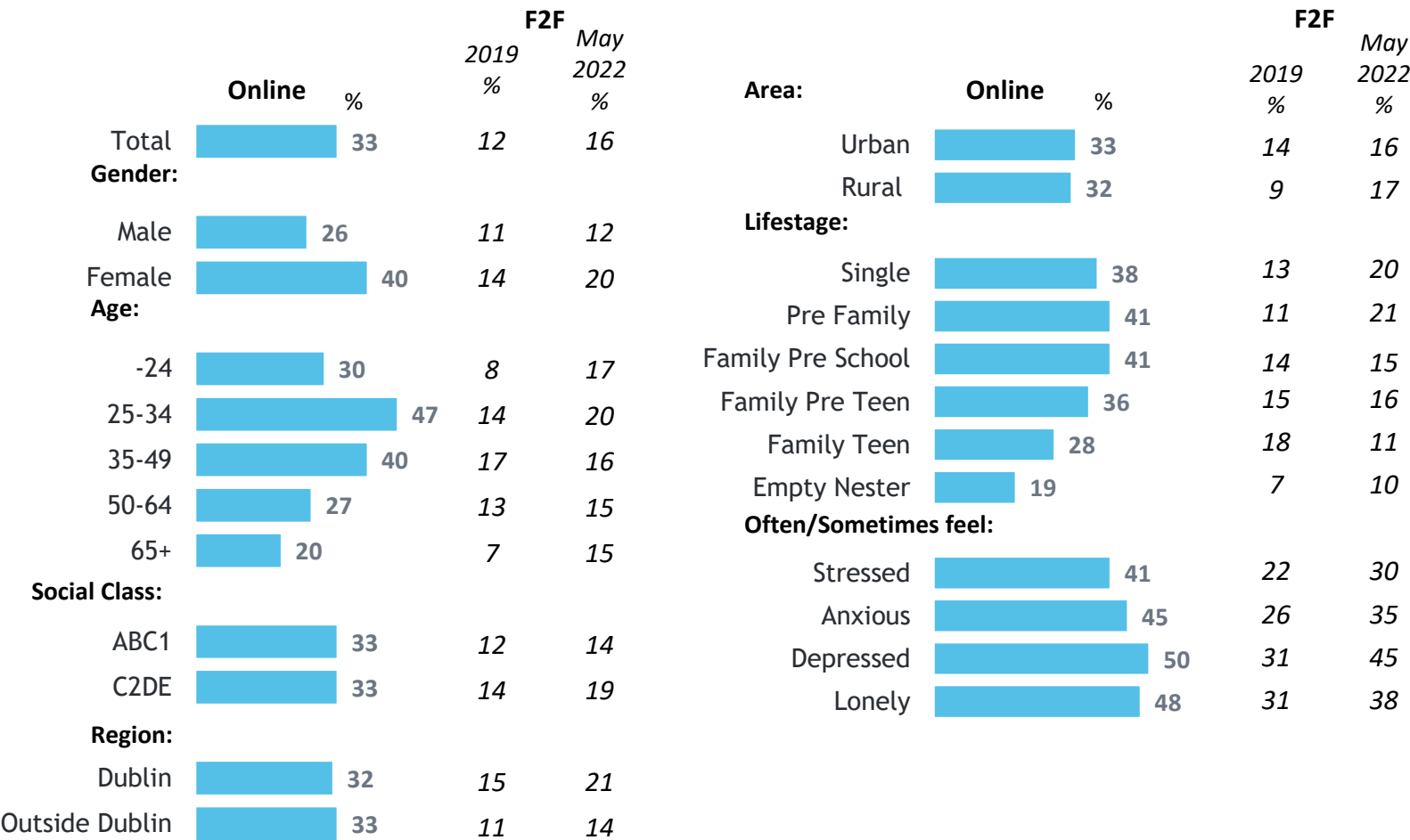


Claimed experience of counsellors or psychotherapists is well up when comparing identical studies in 2019 and 2020. Online incidences remain notably higher however.

Personally seeing a Counsellor/Psychotherapist x demographics



Base: All adults 1,002/3,945,000



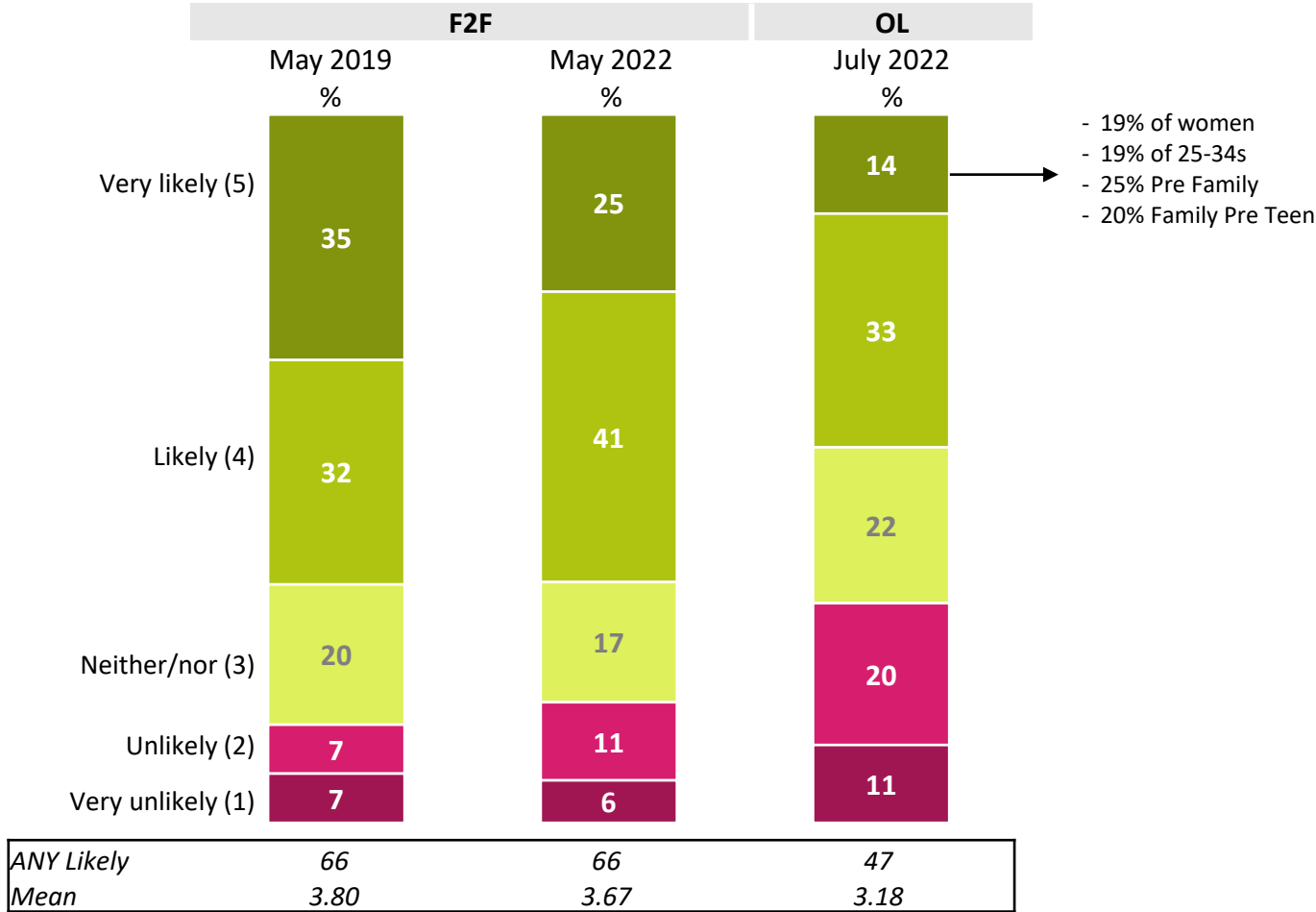
The online incidence is notably higher and distinctively elevated female and among those aged 25 to 50. Slightly greater correlation, or relationship with, depression than with other conditions.



About half say they would be likely to see a Counsellor/Psychotherapist if they were struggling



Base: All adults



A lower number online indicate that they would be prepared to see a counsellor or psychotherapist if they felt the need but it is important to remind ourselves that the same survey illustrated that a greater proportion of the online sample were in fact seeing a counsellor or psychotherapist already.

While counselling/ Psychotherapy is valued by the vast majority, societal understanding of it continues to be lacking



Base: All adults



Perceptions of public's value/understanding

Strongly/Any agree x demographics



Base: All adults 1,002/3,945,000

Counselling/psychotherapy should be.....	All Adults	Gender		Age					Social Class			Region		Area	
		Male	Female	-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65+	ABC1	C2DE	F	Dublin	Outside Dublin	Urban	Rural
<i>Base:</i>	1,002	491	511	62	175	324	250	191	523	471	8*	295	707	677	325
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Valued by people in general	69	62	75	68	70	70	70	66	68	70	58	71	68	68	71
	29	28	31	26	32	31	31	26	27	32	26	30	29	28	31
Not well understood by people in general	75	70	80	74	81	73	76	74	77	73	59	72	76	75	76
	29	29	29	31	34	29	26	29	29	30	11	30	29	29	30

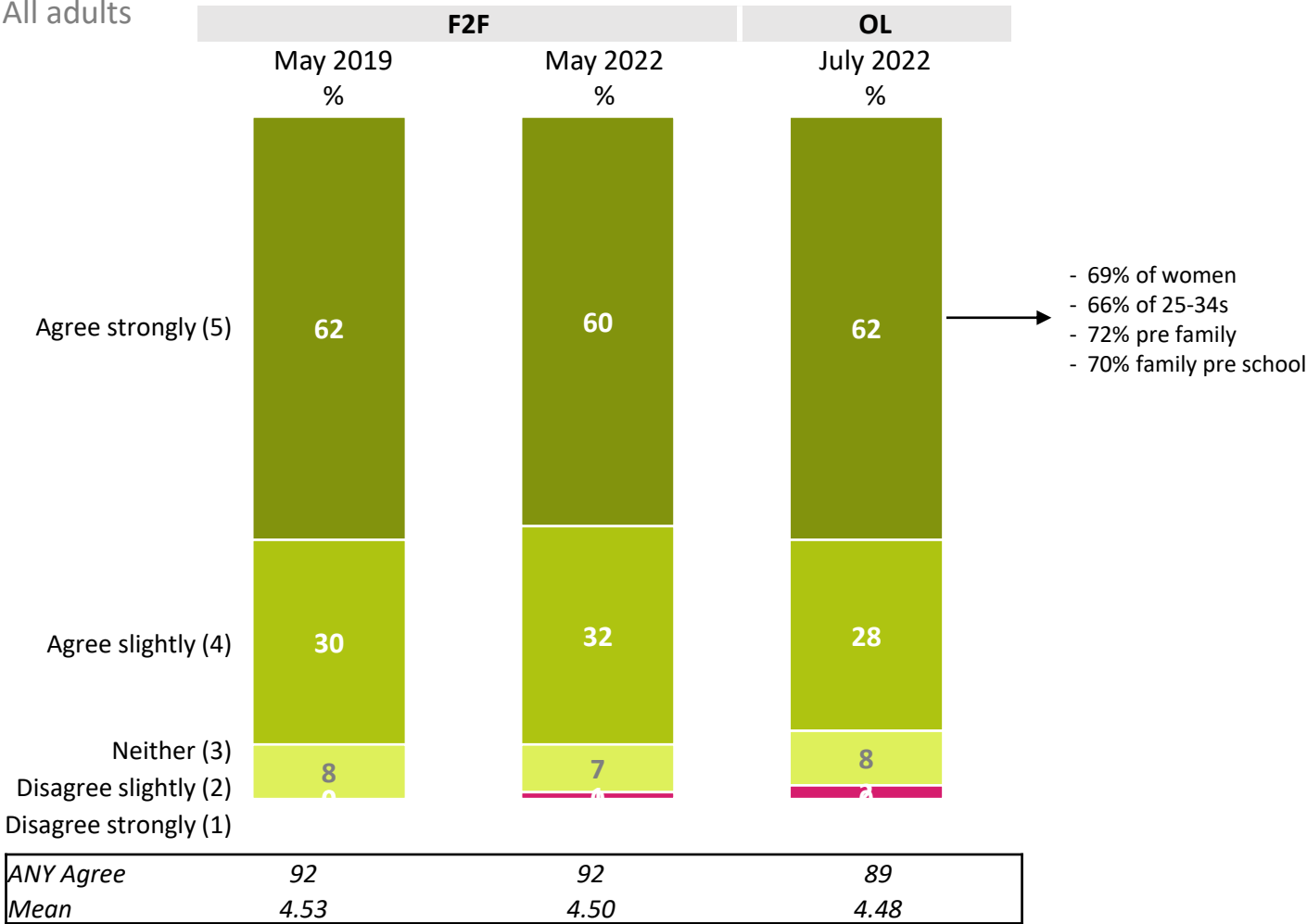
Bold = Any agree
Italics = Strongly agree

**Small base*

A slightly greater level of understanding indicated female and aged 25 to 34.

Nine in ten say it is a good idea to seek Counselling/Psychotherapy if struggling with mental health

Base: All adults

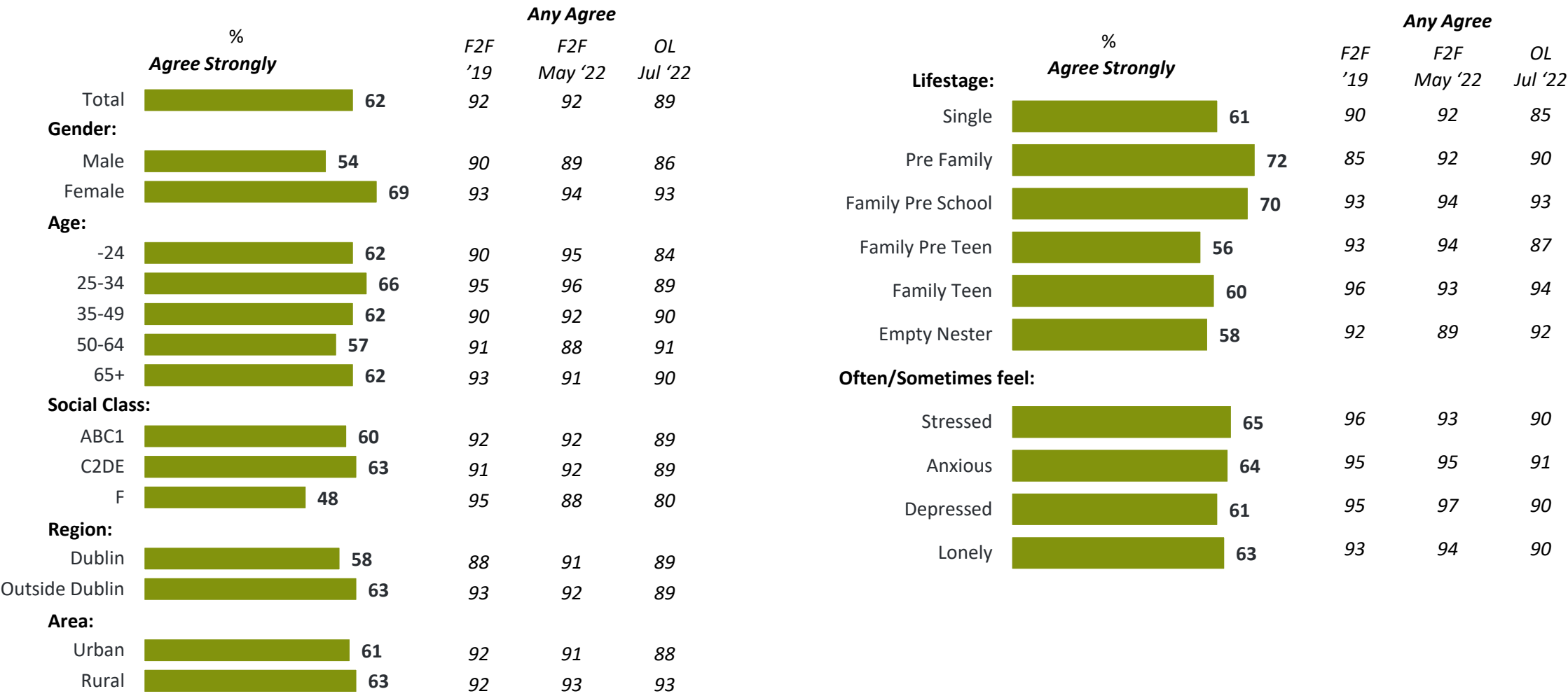


There is no material difference between online and face-to-face results; the vast majority feel it is a good idea in principle.

Strongly agree it is a good idea to seek C/P if struggling with mental health



Base: All adults



Very high levels of agreement but moreso female, early family lifestage and notably lower male or among those from farming backgrounds.

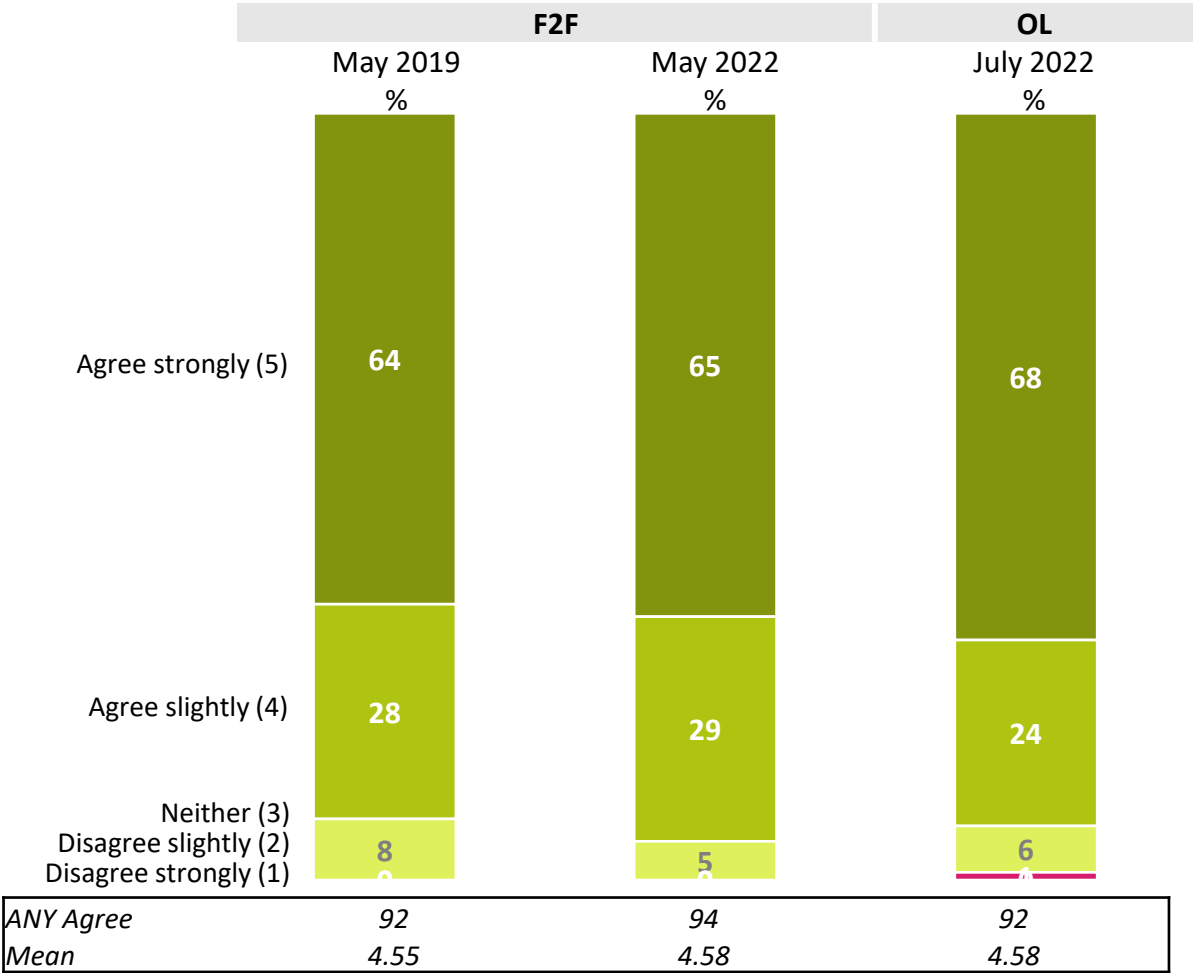




Counselling/Psychotherapy for Children/Adolescents

Over nine in ten say it is important for children/adolescents to have access to counselling/psychotherapist if struggling

Base: All adults



Strengthening agreement post-pandemic.

Strongly support C/P for children/adolescents x demographics

Base: All adults



Any Agree

	Strongly Agree	%	F2F '19	F2F May '22	OL Jul '22
Total		68	92	94	92
Gender:					
Male		58	91	93	87
Female		78	93	95	97
Age:					
-24		72	94	94	89
25-34		66	91	97	91
35-49		70	92	93	92
50-64		65	93	93	93
65+		68	91	93	95
Social Class:					
ABC1		67	92	95	92
C2DE		70	92	93	92
F		48	96	94	92
Household:					
Kids		70	93	95	92
No Kids		67	92	93	92
Region:					
Dublin		66	91	95	92
Outside Dublin		69	93	94	92
Area:					
Urban		67	92	94	91
Rural		70	92	94	94



Any Agree

	%	F2F '19	F2F May '22	OL Jul '22
Lifestage:				
Single	68	91	92	90
Pre Family	64	84	94	88
Family Pre School	75	91	97	94
Family Pre Teen	65	93	96	90
Family Teen	65	99	91	95
Empty Nester	68	84	94	96

As expected, higher agreement female than male (and among those from pre-school lifestages) but limited differences otherwise.

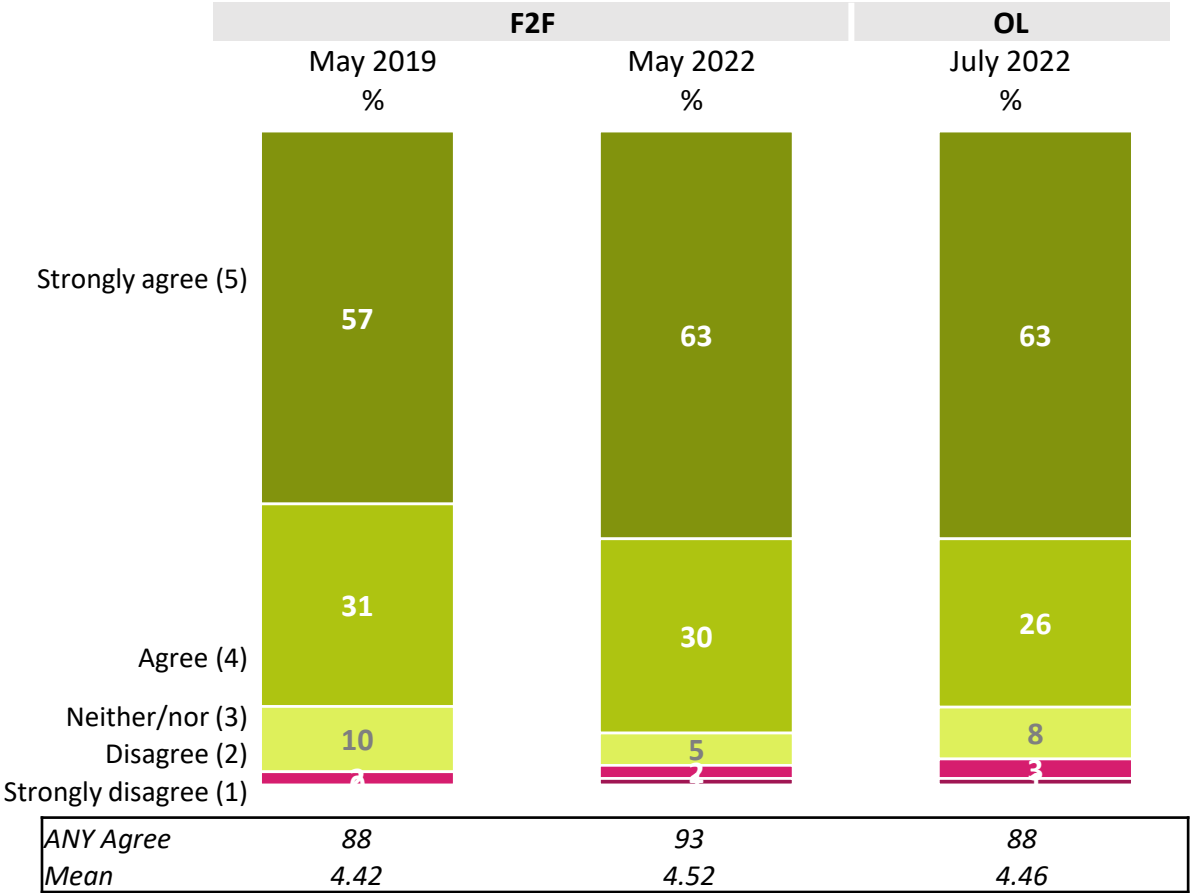


Q.3 And to what extent do you agree with each of the following? It is important for children/adolescents to have access to counselling/psychotherapist if they are struggling with their mental health.

More than nine in ten support the idea of Counselling/ Psychotherapy being available in schools



Base: All adults

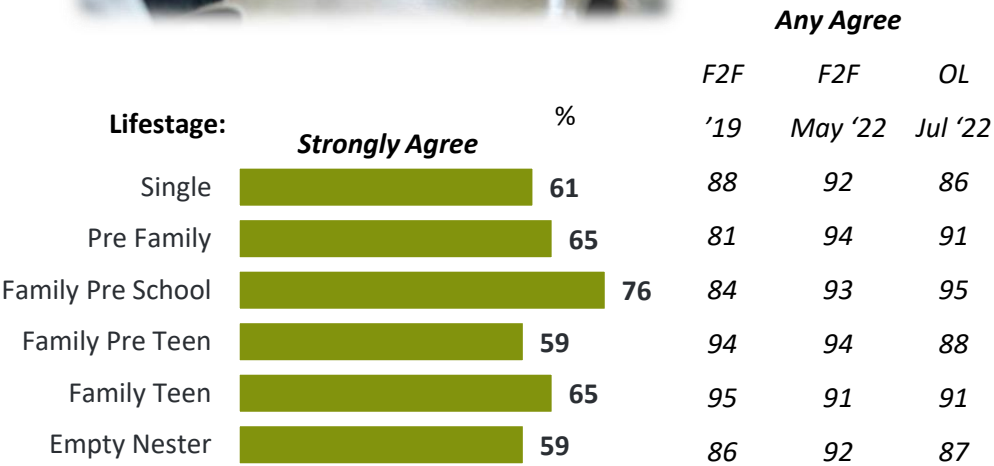
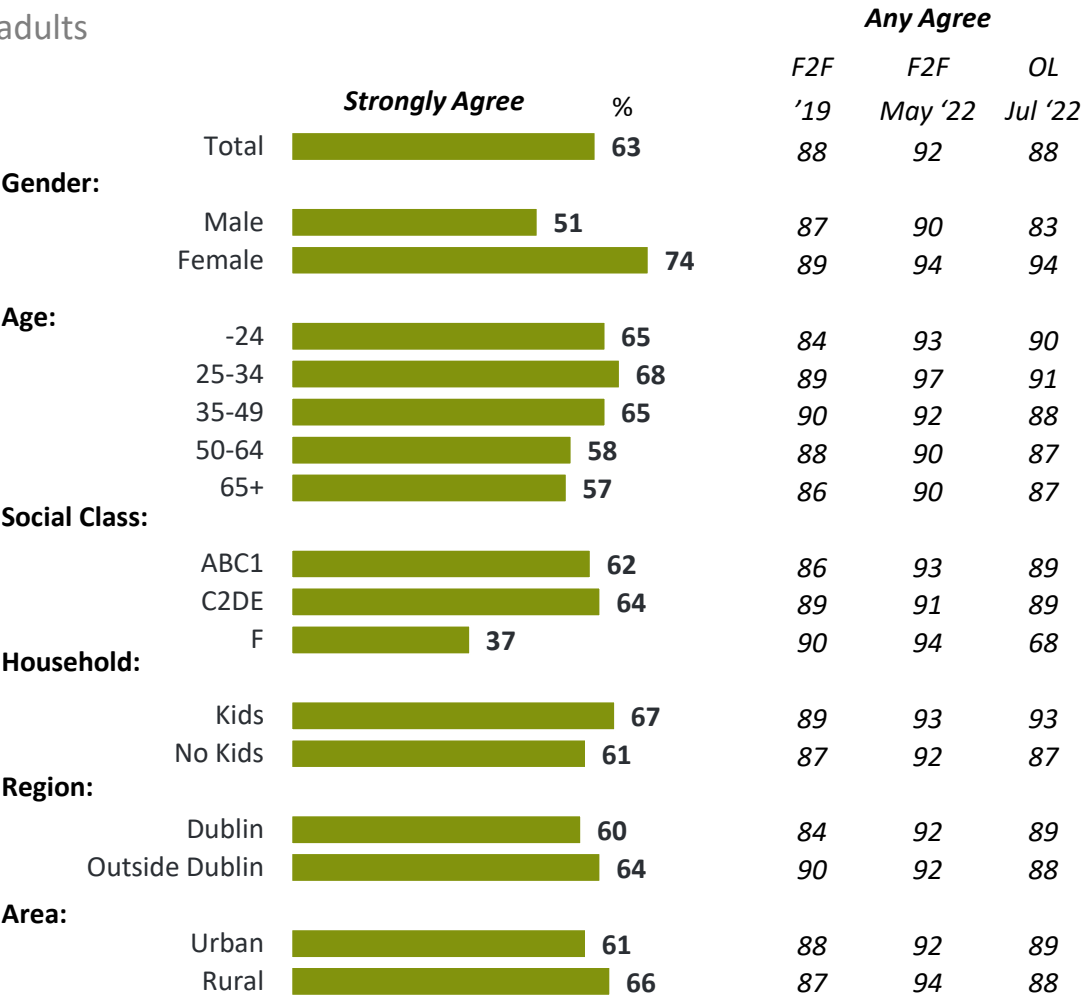


A similar level of broad agreement by and large: 7 out of 8 agree generally.

Support for making Counselling/Psychotherapy available through schools x demographics



Base: All adults

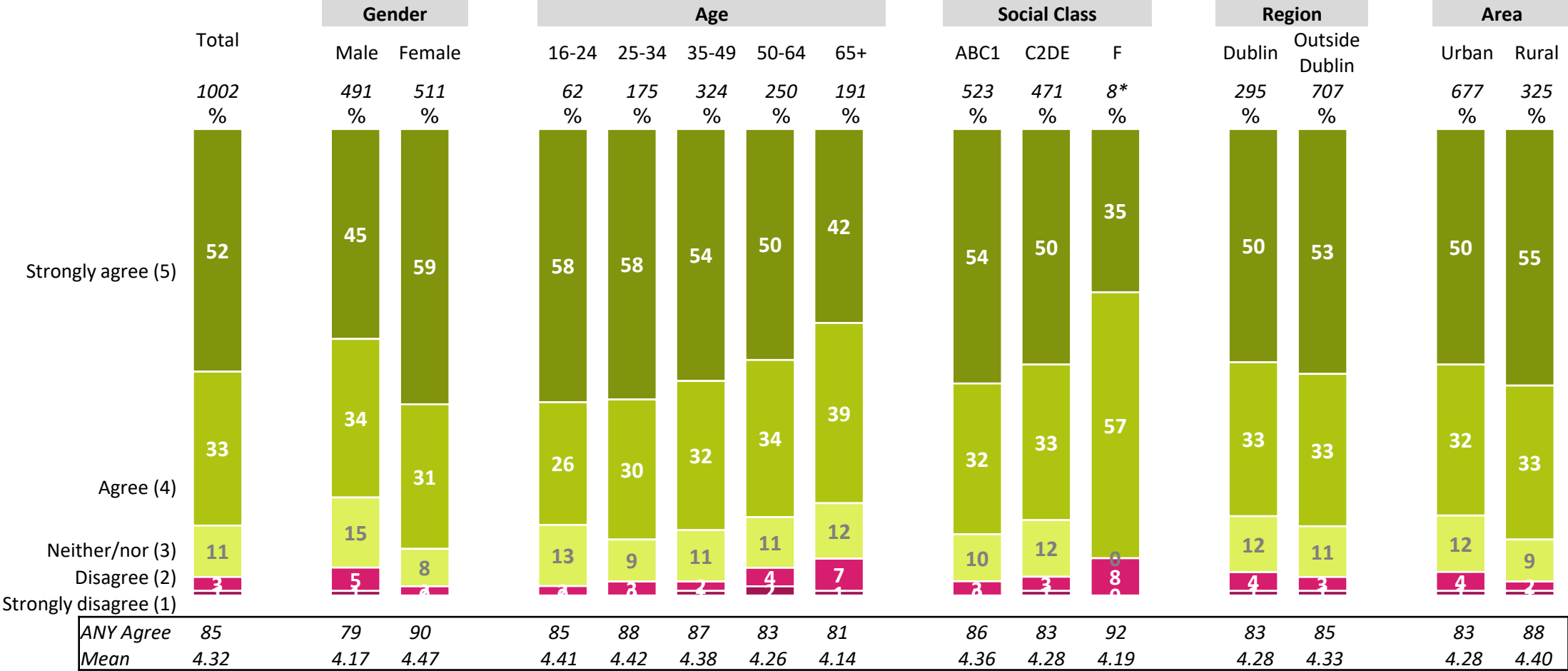


Again, very strong support and more particularly from women, younger adults, from parents and most notably from those in pre-school backgrounds.

There is a strong view that children/adolescents’ mental health has been negatively impacted by the pandemic



Base: All adults – 1,002/3,945,000



Very strong agreement overall and higher younger, female and middle class. Marginally greater agreement non-Dublin and in rural areas.



Summary

- At an overall level, the current studies on the experience of a variety of mental health issues show a marginal reduction in recent experience of most of these compared with earlier comparable surveys undertaken at the start of or during the pandemic.
- Most recent online survey shows a contraction in numbers with stress, anxiety or depression or indeed loneliness or isolation. Similar patterns, albeit at a lower level, are apparent of face-to-face surveys undertaken at the start of and later at the culmination of the pandemic.
- Irrespective of survey type, incidences remain higher female and younger by and large, with a notable concentration in the family pre-school lifestage in respect of anxiety and stress.
- Those with depression are more evenly distributed, although with slightly higher incidences between 25 and 34 and in single and earlier family lifestages.
- Loneliness and isolation largely follows a similar pattern, albeit more elevated amongst those who are single.
- In overall terms, the experience of any of these four issues is lower in May 2022, at 45% than it had been in March 2019 at 55%.
- One in three indicate that they have ever personally visited a counsellor or psychotherapist, considerably higher incidences than seen in previous studies.
- Perhaps relatedly, lower numbers say that they would be likely to see a counsellor or psychotherapist if they were struggling, but we need to bear in mind that a greater proportion of the sample indicated that they have already visited one.

- There is broad agreement that counselling and psychotherapy is valued by people in general, although the level of agreement in this regard is not as strongly expressed online.
- A substantial majority, three out of four, feel that counselling or psychotherapy is not well understood by people in general.
- Almost nine in ten feel that it is a good idea to see a counsellor or psychotherapist if one is struggling.
- In respect of children and adolescents, most feel that it is beneficial for them to see a counsellor or psychotherapist if they are experiencing difficulties and there is equally strong support for the provision of the services in school.
- Finally, the vast majority feel that children or adolescents mental health has been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Thank you.



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