

# The Keen, the Concerned, the Content: the three groups anticipating the return of normal life post-Covid

16 May 2021

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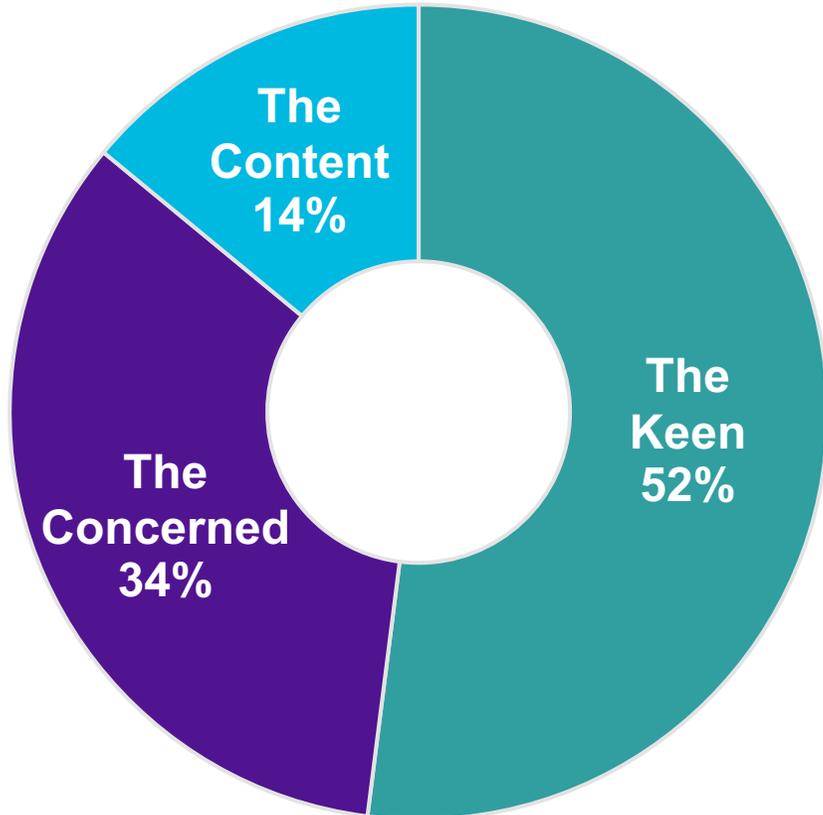


Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

**NIHR**

Health Protection Research Unit  
in Emergency Preparedness and  
Response at King's College London

# The three groups of people anticipating the return of normal life post-Covid



## The Keen (52% of UK)

Keen for normal life to resume, with few if any concerns about doing so – in fact, nearly half have no concerns at all.

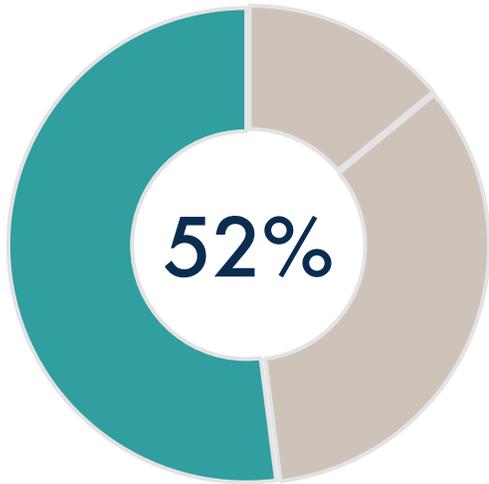
## The Concerned (34%)

Concerned about the restrictions lifting because they believe the rules are still necessary to protect public health, and reluctant to return to normality for that reason.

## The Content (14%)

Content with their life under lockdown and would therefore prefer to keep things the way they are.

# The Keen

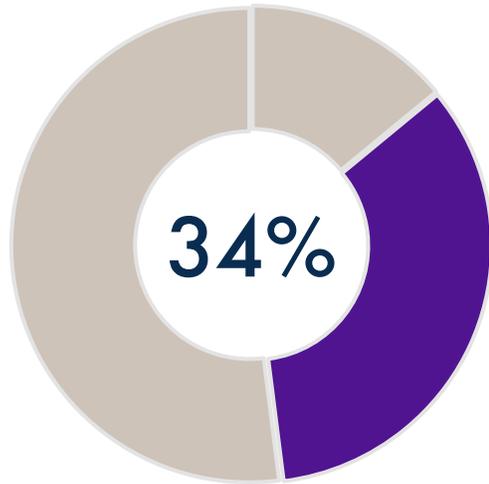


- By far the largest of the three groups, representing around half the UK population. Disproportionately male – unlike the other groups – and the only group made up of more Leavers than Remainers.
- Keenest of the groups to return to normal life and least likely to have concerns about doing so:
  - 6% say not enough people being vaccinated could make them not want to return to normality – compared with 32% of the Content and 55% of the Concerned who feel the same way.
  - 47% say there is no reason that could make them not want to go back. Not a single member of the other two groups says the same.
- Most relaxed about the prospect of resuming certain activities once allowed:
  - Around seven in 10 say they'll feel comfortable visiting family and friends or going to a shop.
  - Compared with the other groups, much larger proportions are comfortable going to the pub (50%), large public events (37%), or abroad for their holidays (35%).
- More likely than the other groups to think we should prioritise protecting civil liberties over fighting Covid.

## Key demographics

- 54% male vs 46% female
- Average age of 45
- 29% have a university degree
- 32% Conservative vs 24% Labour
- 55% Leave vs 45% Remain
- 54% in ABC1 social class
- 52% have household income under £35k

# The Concerned

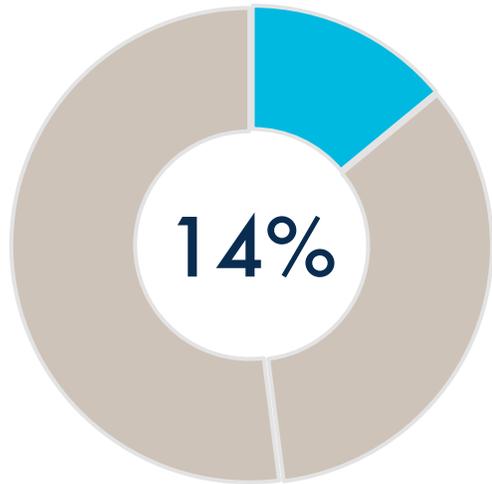


- Second-largest of the three groups, amounting to around a third of the population. Disproportionately female, with more Remainers than Leavers, and the group with the highest share of households earning less than £35k a year.
- Most concerned about the restrictions lifting because they believe the rules are still necessary to protect public health, and reluctant to return to normality:
  - The only group with a majority who say that new strains of Covid, a desire not to catch the virus, and a belief that not enough people have been vaccinated could stop them returning to their pre-pandemic life.
- Least likely of the groups to feel comfortable about resuming various activities:
  - Just 9% would be happy to go to large public events and 12% would be relaxed about going abroad on holiday.
- Most likely of the groups to be dissatisfied with their social life during the pandemic compared with how it was before, and slightly more likely to be dissatisfied with their job, how they spend their leisure time, and their life overall.
- 73% heavily prioritise controlling the spread of Covid over protecting civil liberties, compared with 63% of the Content and 52% of the Keen who feel the same.

## Key demographics

- 56% female vs 44% male
- Average age of 48
- 31% have a university degree
- 30% Labour vs 28% Conservative
- 55% Remain vs 45% Leave
- 56% in ABC1 social class
- 58% have household income under £35k

# The Content



- The smallest of the three groups, comprising around one in seven people in the UK. Disproportionately female.
- The most middle-class and highest-earning group, with the highest education level and share of Remainers.
- Most content with their lives under lockdown and therefore reluctant to go back to normal:
  - A majority say they don't want to go back to their pre-pandemic life, and report enjoying working from home.
  - Around two-thirds say they might not return to normal life because they can save money by not doing so and because they are happy not meeting as many people as they used to.
  - Sit between the other two groups in terms of how comfortable they feel about resuming various activities.
- Distinguished from the other groups by their being more content with various aspects of their life now than they were before Covid struck:
  - They are around twice as likely as the Keen and the Concerned to say they're more satisfied now with the amount of leisure time they have and even with their life overall.
  - Compared with the other groups, greater proportions are also happier with their job, house or flat and their household income.

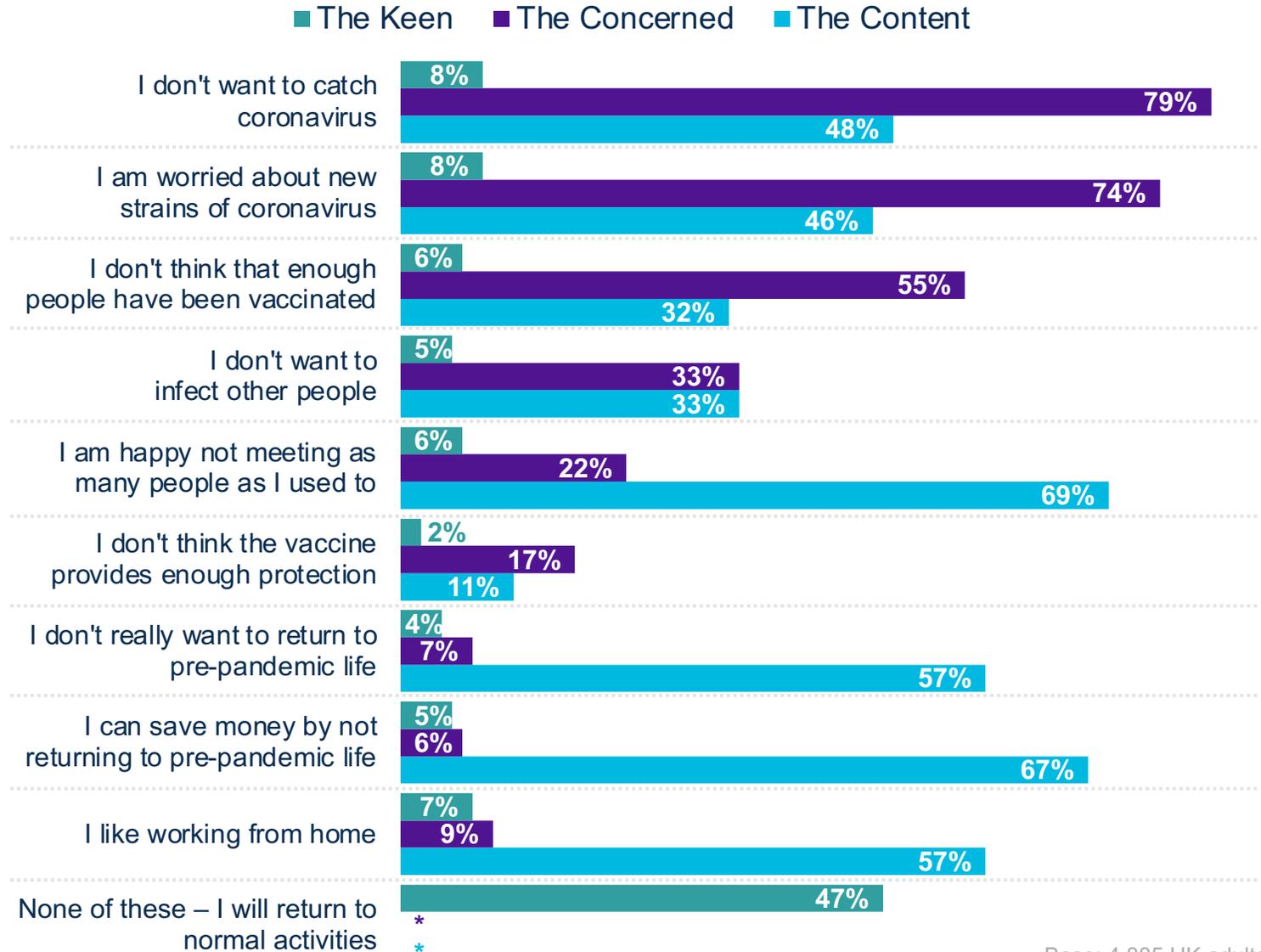
## Key demographics

- 56% female vs 44% male
- Average age of 42
- 43% have a university degree
- 31% Labour vs 26% Conservative
- 58% Remain vs 42% Leave
- 64% in ABC1 social class
- 53% have household income over £35k

The three groups were identified using a question about reasons people would not return to normal life, which highlighted very different positions among the population:

- Only a very small proportion of the Keen say there are reasons that could make them not want to resume pre-pandemic life, and nearly half give no reasons that could stop them.
- The Concerned, on the other hand, are still highly worried about the health impacts of Covid, with around three-quarters saying new strains and a desire not to catch the virus could stop them returning to normal activities and a majority citing a belief that not enough people have been vaccinated.
- The Content are by far the most likely to highlight various benefits of current lockdown arrangements as reasons that could make them not want to return – for example, around seven in 10 say they’re happy not meeting as many people as they used to and that they can save money by not going back to pre-pandemic life.

### Which of these reasons, if any, do you think would be likely to stop you returning to “normal” (pre-pandemic) activities?

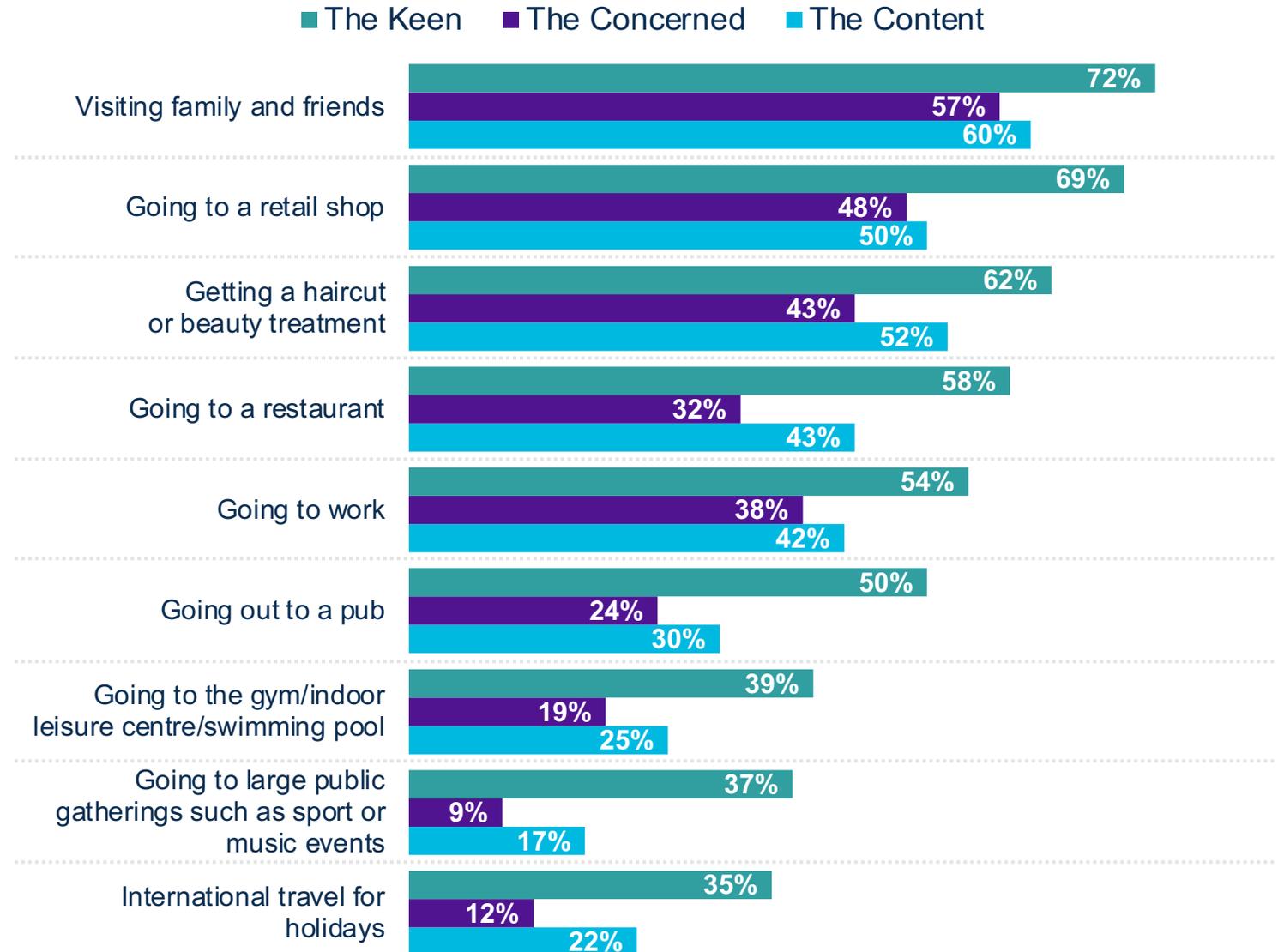


The Keen are the most comfortable with the idea of resuming various activities, with around seven in 10 saying they'll feel comfortable visiting family and friends or going to a shop. 50% also say they'll feel comfortable going to a pub, and 37% will be OK going to large public events – much higher than the proportions of the two other groups who feel the same.

The Concerned are particularly apprehensive about going to such events, with 9% saying they'd feel comfortable doing so. International travel for holidays is also a particular worry – only 12% would be happy to go abroad for a break.

The Content tend to sit between the other two groups in terms of how comfortable they feel about doing various activities. For example, 52% say they'd be comfortable getting a haircut or beauty treatment, compared with 62% of the Keen and 43% of the Concerned.

## How comfortable, or uncomfortable, do you think you will feel doing each of the following once they are allowed under government regulations? % who say very or fairly comfortable



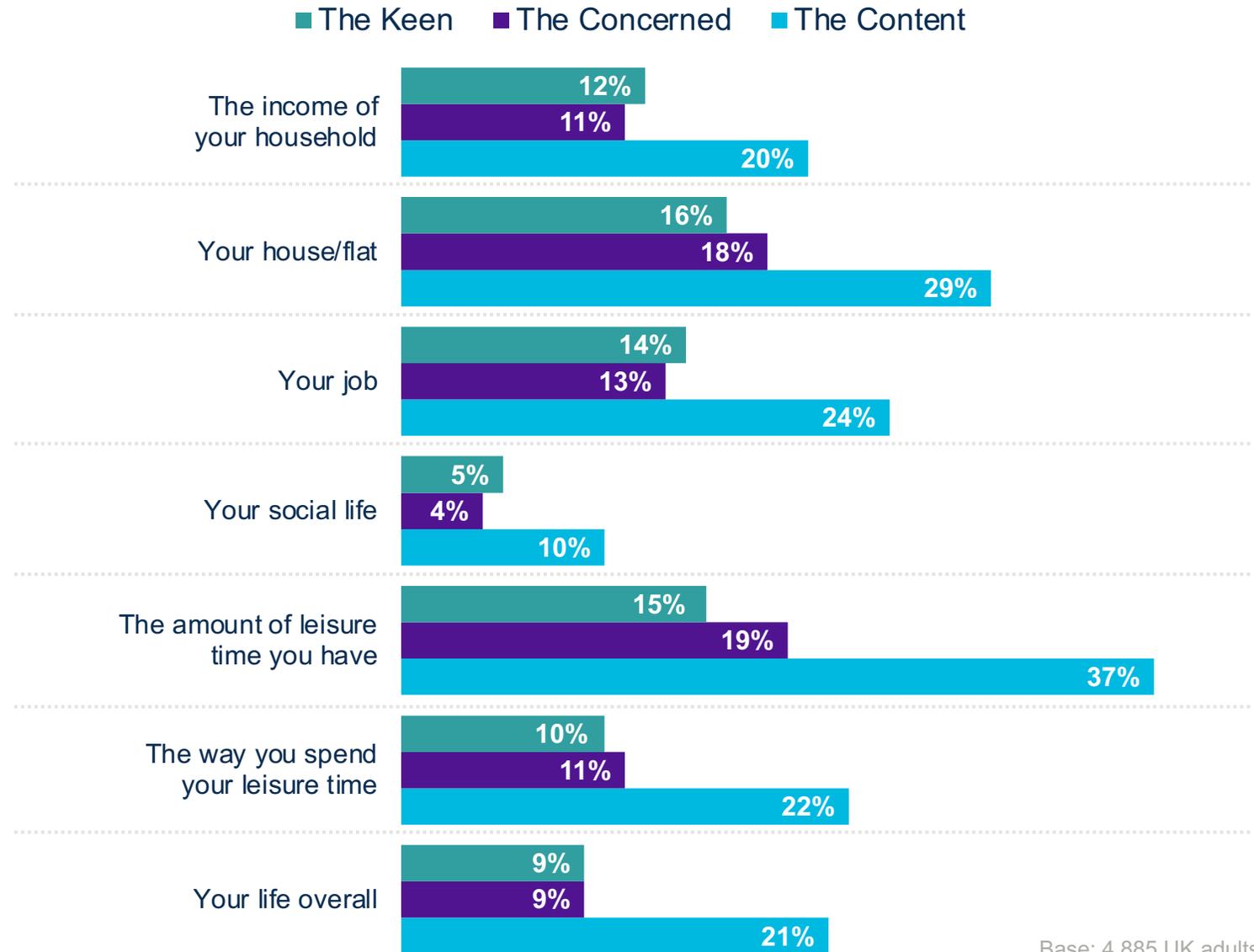
Differences in life satisfaction pre- and post-pandemic further distinguish one group from the others.

The Content are more likely than the other two groups to feel more satisfied with various aspects of their life than they were before Covid struck.

For example, the Content are around twice as likely as the Keen and the Concerned to say they're more satisfied now with the amount of leisure time they have and even with their life overall.

Greater proportions of the Content are also happier with their job, house or flat and their household income.

Would you say that you are more satisfied, less satisfied or about as satisfied with each of the following as you were just before the start of the pandemic? % who say more satisfied

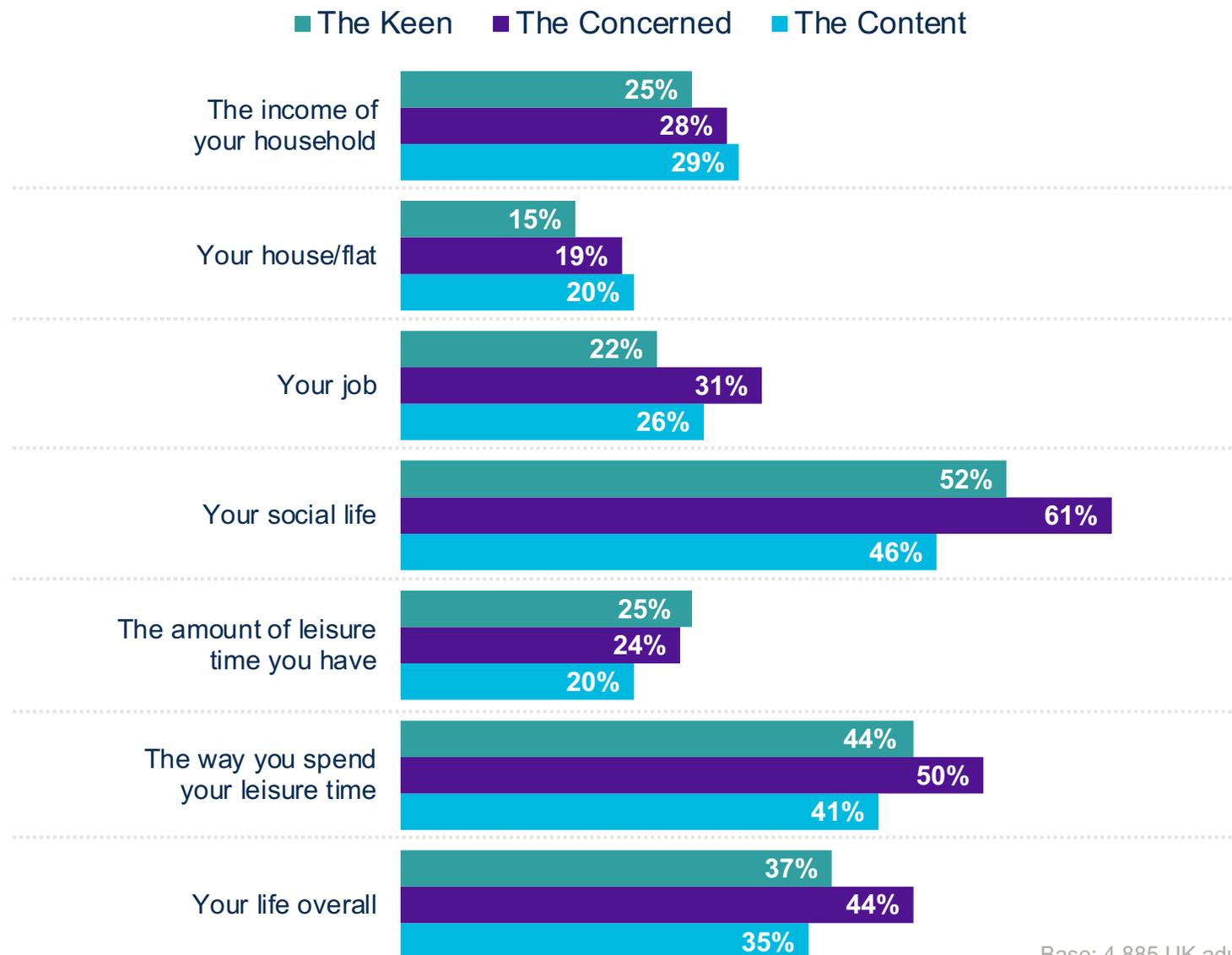


There are also differences – albeit smaller ones – between the proportions of the groups who feel *less* satisfied with various aspects of their life now compared with before the pandemic.

A greater share of the Concerned (61%) than the Keen (52%) and the Content (46%) are less happy with their social life now.

The Concerned are also slightly more likely than the other groups to be dissatisfied with their job, how they spend their leisure time, and their life overall.

Would you say that you are more satisfied, less satisfied or about as satisfied with each of the following as you were just before the start of the pandemic? % who say less satisfied

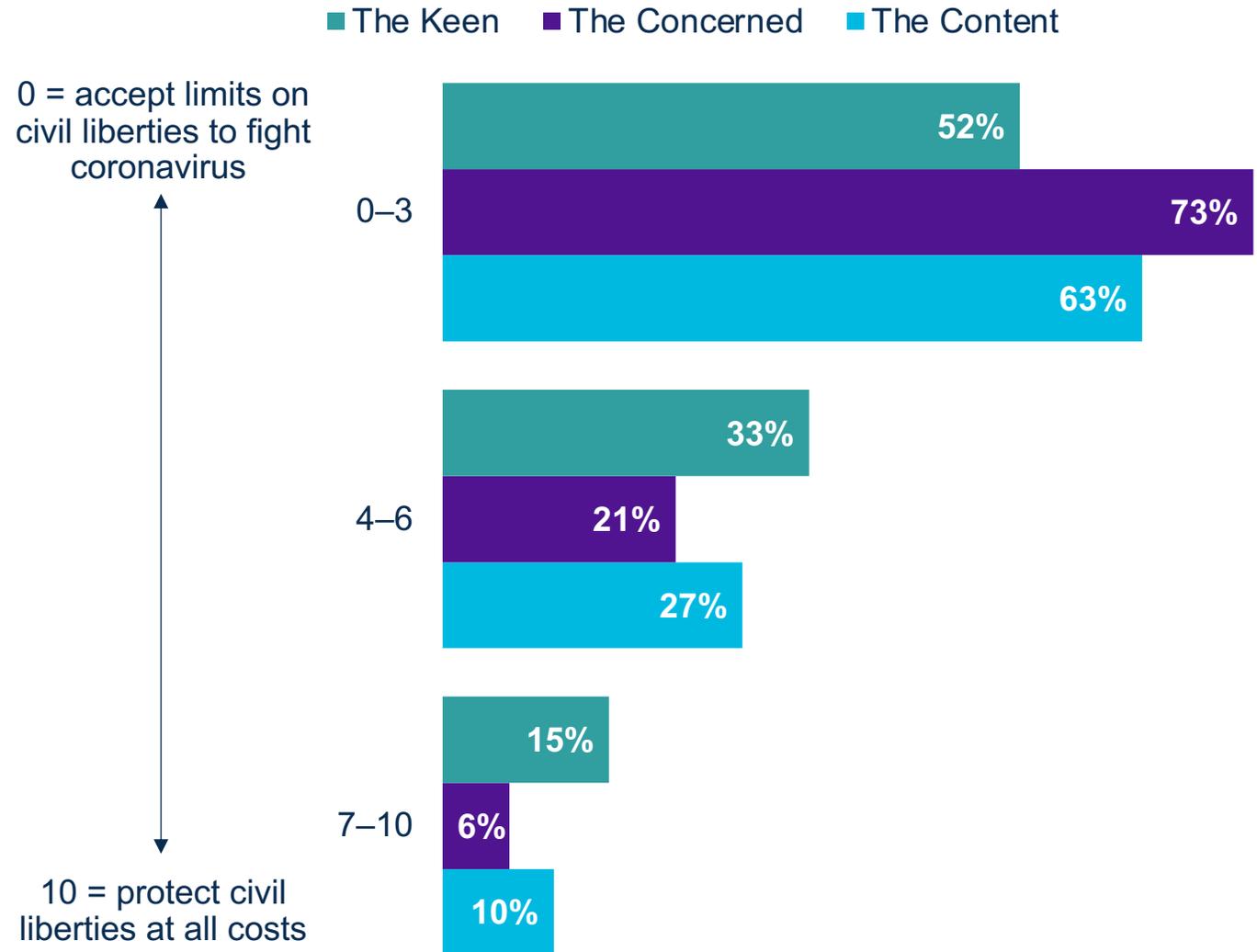


The three groups have different views of the tension between civil liberties and the lockdown rules required to fight Covid.

73% of the Concerned heavily prioritise controlling the virus over protecting civil liberties, compared with 63% of members of the Content and 52% of the Keen who feel the same.

And the Keen are more likely to take a particularly libertarian view, with 15% heavily prioritising civil liberties over fighting Covid – higher than the 10% of the Content and the 6% of the Concerned who feel the same.

Some people feel that, in order to fight coronavirus, we have to accept limits on civil liberties; others feel that civil liberties are to be protected at all costs. Where would you place yourself on this scale?



Base: 4,885 UK adults aged 16-75, interviewed online, 1–16 April 2021

## Technical note

Ipsos MORI interviewed a sample of 4,896 adults aged 16-75 in the United Kingdom between 1 and 16 April 2021. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions for age within gender, government office region, working status, social grade and education. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

Multiple correspondence analysis was used to find underlying patterns in people's perception of obstacles to returning to life as normal. This analysis suggested that there were two main axes of opinion: on the one hand, keenness or reluctance to return to life as normal, and on the other hand, contentment with lockdown versus concern about the dangers of relaxing lockdown as reasons for being reluctant to return to life as normal. A machine learning approach called k-means clustering was then used to divide respondents into groups according to where they fell on those two axes.

For the purpose of calculating the percentage of Leavers and Remainers in each group, we ignored those who did not or could not vote in the 2016 EU membership referendum, as well as those who couldn't remember or didn't want to say how they voted.

**Daniel Allington**  
Senior Lecturer in Social and  
Cultural Artificial Intelligence  
King's College London

**Bobby Duffy**  
Director  
The Policy Institute  
King's College London

**Vivienne Moxham-Hall**  
Research Associate  
The Policy Institute  
King's College London

**Siobhan McAndrew**  
Senior Lecturer in  
Quantitative Social  
Science  
University of Bristol

**George Murkin**  
Acting Head of  
Communications  
The Policy Institute  
King's College London