

# Changes to data collection for ONS finance surveys since COVID-19

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# Overview

- Summary of changes to data collection
- Impact on outputs
- Next steps

**Wealth and Assets  
Survey (WAS)**



**Survey on Living  
Conditions (SLC)**

**Living Costs and  
Food Survey (LCF)**

# Response to COVID-19

Face to face  
interviewing was  
paused on 17<sup>th</sup>  
March 2020

Requirement  
to move data  
collection to  
telephone as  
soon as  
possible

Agreed strategy:

- Reduce the length of the questionnaire
- Remove the need for respondents to use Showcards
- Administer the diary over the telephone - receipts/diaries posted back to the Head Office

# Some of the key changes

Phase 1  
Development of a  
compliment slip  
and a chaser letter

Questionnaires  
shortened

Questions using  
showcards were  
reworded

## Phase 2

- Changes to standard advance letter
- Use of standard wording by interviewers for text and answerphone messages
- Use of tele-matching of cases to a list of telephone numbers

New  
coronavirus  
questions  
developed

## Question sets reduced in length

Education

Length of  
residency

## Question sets removed

Country of birth	Nationality	Ethnicity*
Well-being**	Health***	Second job hours
Consumer durables	Material deprivation	What the respondent can afford

\*Ethnicity was reintroduced in June for SLC; August for LCF

\*\*Well-being re-introduced in June for SLC

\*\*\* Subset of health related questions reintroduce in April 2021

# Diary collection for LCF

## Respondents

- Retain paper and electronic receipts and post/email back to HQ
- Annotate paper receipts with weights/measures for food items
- Make a note of non-receipt based expenditure

## Interviewers

- Explain the diary keeping task to respondents at the end of the telephone interview
- fill in non-receipt based expenditure in papers diaries and post back to HQ
- Make contact with respondents at least 3 times during the 2 week diary period by phone

## Coding and editing team

- Match up the diaries (returned by interviewers) and receipts (returned by respondents) when received at HQ
- Carry out the final diary check usually completed by interviewers- contact the interviewer where additional information is needed from respondents
- Code the case as normal

# Actions taken to improve diary data collection

Delays in receiving paper diaries/receipts back to HQ: postal service and distributing diaries to the Coding team working at home

Implemented a new approach to enable electronic transfer of data

- Excel version of the paper diary for interviewers
- Encourage respondents to take photographs/scans of paper receipts and email them to interviewers for checking
- Interviewers to email Excel diaries and receipt images to HQ for processing by the Coding team
- Aim to improve timeliness of delivery and data quality



# Strategies following low response rates



Development on an online portal, in which respondents enter their phone numbers



Use of incentives



Profile of social surveys raised through media presence and social media campaign

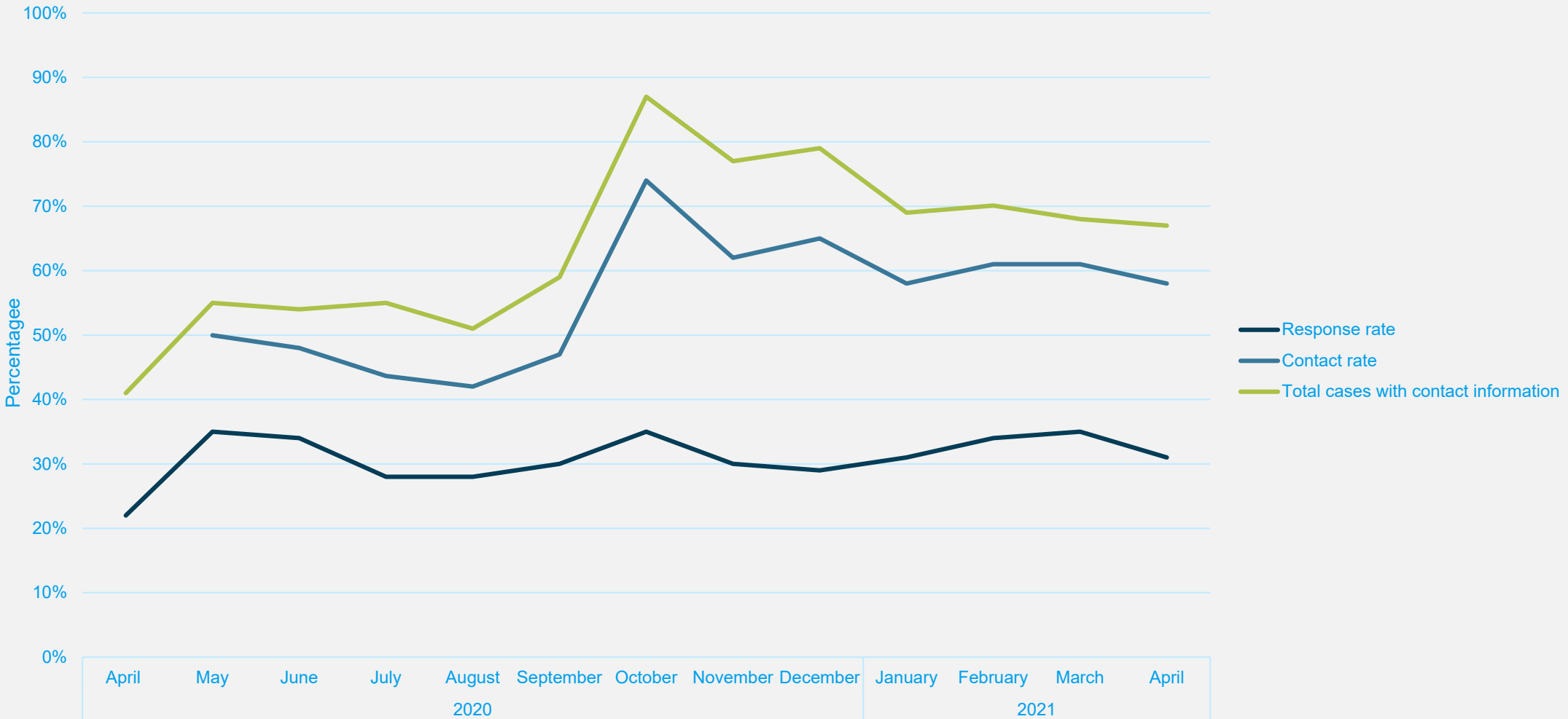


Knock and nudge trial (implemented from October 2020 for the LCF and SLC)

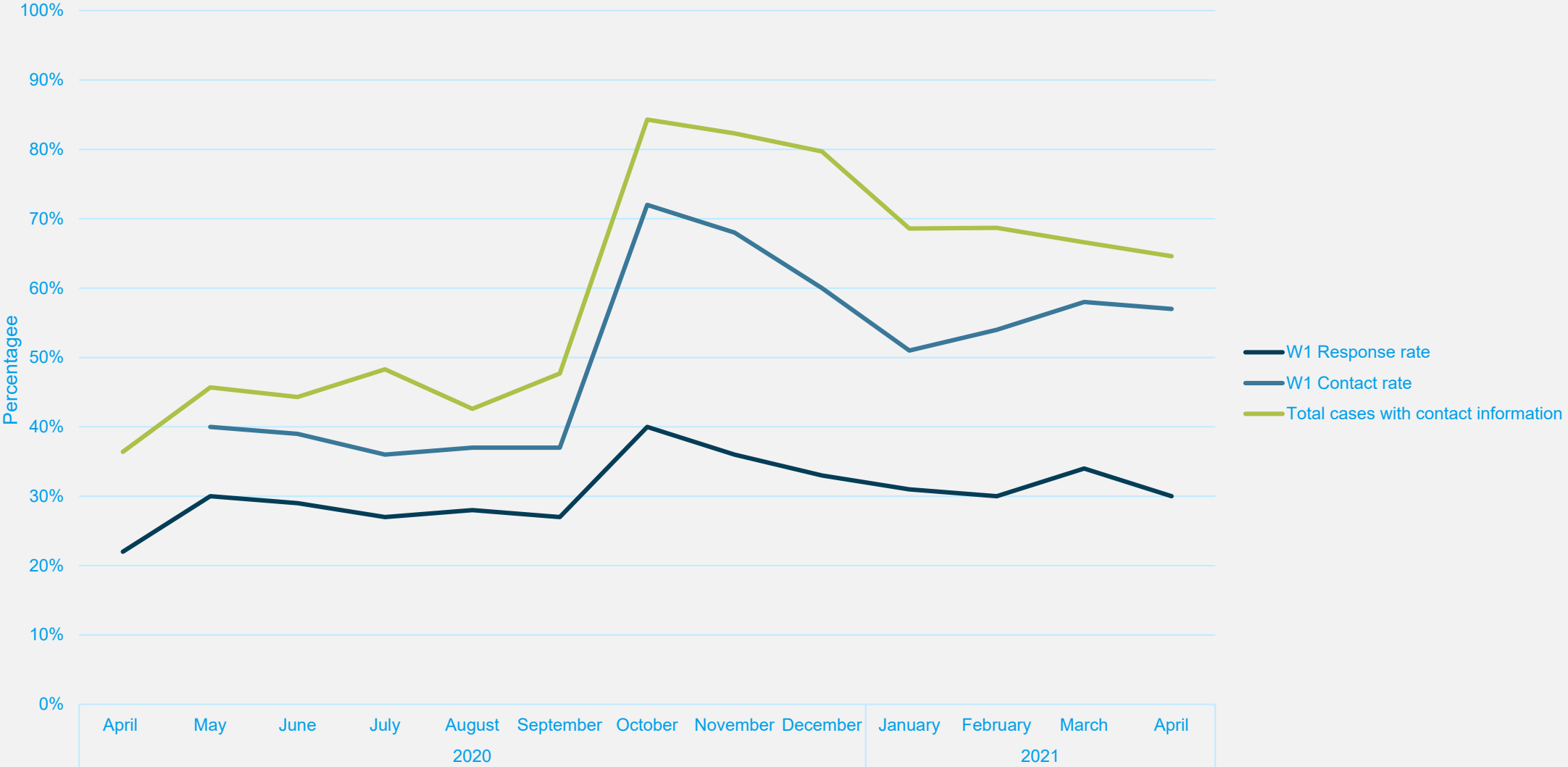


Increase in sample sizes

# Monthly LCF response rates & households with contact information



# Monthly LCF response rates & households with contact information



# Understanding the impact of changes

## Potential response bias drivers:

- Interviewers haven't been able to visit households to get respondents phone numbers
- Change of mode
- Covid situation and its impact on people

Calibration weights under review  
to adjust for response bias

Early analysis of financial surveys (LCF, SLC, WAS) suggest:

- A change in the socio-demographic composition of respondents (age, marital status, employment status)
- A change in the household type and size

# Next steps

- Further analysis to finalise approach to weighting for 2020/21 dataset
- KtN launched in Northern Ireland (SLC and LCF) from July 2021
- Actively exploring options to return to in-person interviewing:
  - Small-scale trial offering respondents option of in-person interview (following a successful KtN interaction) planned for Aug 2021 (SLC)
  - LCF preparing questionnaire for dual mode (telephone/face to face)
- Improvements to diary data collection for LCF- particularly to improve data processing

# Questions

# COVID related income questions added to SLC/LCF, including:

- Whether the household income has changed at all compared to the start of the coronavirus outbreak in the UK.
- The reasons for the decrease or increase in household income.
- Whether people have had any time off work due to coronavirus, self-isolation and whether they were paid during that time.
- The impact of new measures the Government has introduced to protect people's earnings during the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.
- Since April 2021 onwards, the SLC is including a short module of policy-responsive questions. The module will cover topical, current policy areas of interest and will be reviewed every quarter going forward. The topics included so far are digital exclusion and home-schooling. This new set of questions asked at household level collects information relating to digital exclusion, particularly around home internet access and devices available for use by adults for remote-working and children for home-schooling purposes.

# Changes to the WAS questionnaire

- In April demography, asset transfer and opinion based questions were removed.
- In May:

**whole blocks were removed covering:** length of time in current job; company vehicles; knowledge of state pensions; auto enrollment; why not contributing to pension, sources of money for retirement, standard of living in retirement; financial situation and expectations; trusts, including beneficiaries of a trust; annuities and lump sums for occupational pensions; annuities and lump sums for personal pensions; annuities and lump sums from past/retained pensions; other payments worth £500 or more; status of parents when the respondent was a teenager

**parts of blocks were removed covering:** retirement; accommodation; housing tenure; value of main residence; employee pay

- Updated versions of Pension Freedoms questions were introduced from October 2020,
- A smaller number of COVID income and savings questions were added in May 2020 and April 2021 respectively.

## Wave 1 response rates

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
19%	28%	27%	28%	27%	26%	24%	21%	27%	30%	32%	30%



# Sample size changes

Survey	Sample size boost
Living Costs and Food Survey	100% June to September 2020 70% October to December 2020 40% January to March 2021 50% April to August 2021
Survey on Living Conditions	100% June to September 2020 80% October to December 66% January to February 2021 73% March to August 2021
Wealth and Assets Survey	100% June to September 2020 85% October 2020 to January 2021 54% February to March 2021

# Incentives

Survey	Unconditional (household)	Conditional (adult)
Living Costs and Food Survey	£5 voucher included in the advance letter (June to September increased to £10)	£50 per person who completed face to face interview and diary (stated in the advance letter) (e-voucher since April 2020)
Survey on Living Conditions	WAVE 1 £5 voucher included in the advance letter (June to September increased to £10)	WAVE 2 £10 voucher (e-voucher since April 2020)
Wealth and Assets Survey	WAVE 1 £5 voucher included in the advance letter (June to September increased to £10)	WAVE 1 & 2 £10 voucher (e-voucher since April 2020)