

Consumer Handwashing Tracker

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)
Planned completion: 25 August 2022
Project status: Completed
Authors: Food Standards Agency and Ipsos UK
Conducted by: Food Standards Agency and Ipsos UK
Date published: 25 August 2022
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46756/sci.fsa.wiy863>

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Results available: Results available
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Research topics: [Food hygiene](#)
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Executive Summary

Between April 2020 and January 2022, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned a quarterly survey on consumer handwashing. Key findings from this survey are:

Across all waves of the handwashing tracker, participants were most likely to report washing their hands with soap and warm water. However, the proportion who reported handwashing with soap and warm water 'always' or 'most of the time' declined over time (79% April 2020, compared to 68% in January 2022).

Most participants reported washing their hands for between 20 and 24 seconds across all waves. However, the proportion who reported this significantly declined over time (was 35% in April 2020, down to 27% in January 2022).

Over time, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands in the following scenarios inside the home:

- before cooking/preparing food (72% in April 2020, 62% in January 2022)
- before eating (48% in April 2020, 42% in January 2022)
- after handling rubbish (73% in April 2020, 65% in January 2022)
- when arriving home, after a trip outside of the home (55% in April 2020, 47% in January 2022)

Reported handwashing after contact with animals (including pets) remained broadly stable over time. On average, across all waves, 36% of participants with a pet reported washing their hands 'always' after contact with animals, (whilst 26% reported doing this 'most of the time', 30% reported doing this 'sometimes' and 7% reported 'never' washing their hands after contact with animals).

Over time, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands in the following scenarios outside of the home:

- when eating a picnic (35% in July 2020, 29% in January 2022)
- when consuming a takeaway outside of the home (35% in July 2020, 30% in January 2022)

Since a peak in October 2020 (43%), the proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing into their hands gradually declined and was significantly lower in January 2022 (35%).

The proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands after using the toilet also declined over time. In April 2020 87% of participants reported 'always' washing their hands after using the toilet, decreasing significantly to 80% in January 2022.

Across all waves, most participants reported carrying and using hand sanitising gel as a hand washing alternative in a range of scenarios, but the proportion who reported doing this declined over time. For example:

- 55% of participants reported using hand sanitising gel after using public transport in October 2020, declining significantly to 44% in January 2022
- 54% of participants reported using hand sanitising gel when attending a social event in October 2020, declining significantly to 45% January 2022.

Consumer handwashing: Background and Methodology

Background

The FSA has a vested interest in hand hygiene behaviours as poor hygiene can be a key contributor to foodborne disease (FBD), such as [E Coli](#) and [norovirus](#), whilst good hand hygiene can reduce the risks of cross contamination. As a result, hand hygiene is included in the [FSA's business guidance](#). Guidance on consumer hand hygiene is available from the [NHS](#), [Public Health England \(PHE\)](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), including information on when and how to wash hands.

The FSA has previously published qualitative and quantitative findings on [handwashing during the pandemic](#), including findings from the first four waves (April 2020 to January 2021) of this quarterly handwashing tracker. This report summaries the latest findings from the tracker survey, providing commentary on key changes between the first and final waves of the quarterly handwashing tracker (April 2020 to January 2022).

Methodology

In April 2020, the FSA commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct a quarterly tracking survey to measure consumer's self-reported handwashing behaviour over a period of just under two years (from April

2020 until January 2022). This tracking survey provides self-reported information on:

- the frequency of handwashing behaviours in different scenarios inside and outside the home
- handwashing practices (for example, handwashing methods, and time spent handwashing)
- the actions taken by participants when handwashing facilities are not available in a range of scenarios
- demographic differences in handwashing behaviours
- trends in handwashing behaviour over time

The quarterly handwashing tracker survey was conducted using Ipsos UK's online i: Omnibus. In each wave of the survey, Ipsos UK surveyed a representative sample of approximately 2,000 adults aged 16-75 living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (fieldwork dates and specific sample sizes available in Appendix 1). This report summarises findings across all eight waves of data, with the first quarterly survey conducted in April 2020 and the final wave conducted in January 2022.

Over the course of the data collection period, the restrictions imposed on the public varied because of rising and falling COVID-19 cases. Appendix 2 provides a summary of the changes in restrictions from March 2020 to March 2022. This contextual information should be considered carefully alongside the findings of this report, although it is not possible to make inferences about the impact of the restrictions on handwashing behaviour based on the tracker findings.

Interpreting the data in this report

Where appropriate, comparisons between waves found to be statistically significant at the 5% level ([footnote 1](#)) are presented. This report does not provide commentary on demographic differences, but detailed demographic breakdowns are available in the published data tables, available to download via the [FSA data catalogue](#). Weighting is applied to the data, based on the overall profile of England, Wales and Northern Ireland with weights for region/nation, gender, age, social grade and working status. A full list of survey questions is provided in the Appendix 3. Survey questions were informed by handwashing guidance available from [NHS](#), [PHE](#) and [CDC](#).

Base sizes are indicated beneath each figure in this report. In most cases the base is 'all adults' (aged 16-75 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland) who took part in the survey. Some survey waves took place when COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, restricting people's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In addition, some people may have not felt safe carrying out these activities, even when restrictions were not in place. For this reason, in some survey questions participants were given the option to report that 'they were not doing this activity at the moment'. For these questions, participants who reported not doing the activity were removed from the base. The reduced base is noted beneath all relevant figures in this report (see figure 5 for example). The [data tables](#) provide a full breakdown of respondents including those who reported that 'they were not doing this activity at the moment' for each question.

Results should be interpreted with care. All surveys are subject to a range of potential sources of error including sample imbalances which are not easily identified and corrected through weighting. Surveys are also subject to errors in respondents' interpretation of survey questions and response options. The data reported within this report relies on respondents' self-reported behaviours. Errors could occur due to imperfect recollection, or respondents' tendency to overreport behaviours which are perceived as being desirable and underreport undesirable behaviours. The risk of these biases is greater in topics that are personal or sensitive in nature (such as hand hygiene).

1. The differences reported have no more than a five per cent probability of occurring by chance.

Consumer handwashing: Main Findings

Handwashing methods

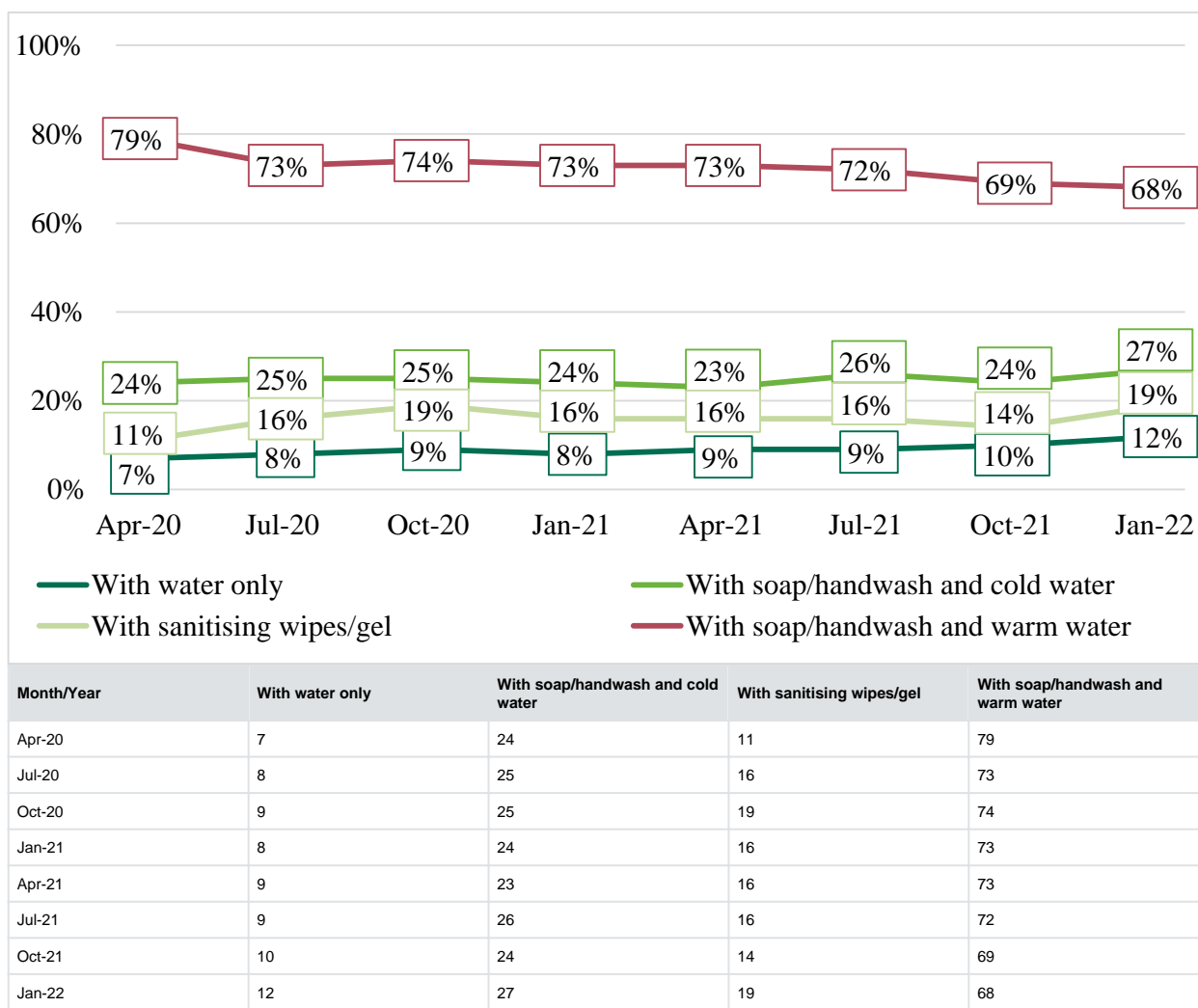
Handwashing guidance from [CDC](#) states that handwashing should use either warm or cold water with soap. Guidance from [NHS](#) and [CDC](#) state that use of hand sanitising gel should be used if you do not have access to soap and water.

Across all waves of the handwashing tracker, participants were most likely to report washing their hands with soap and warm water when compared to other methods (with water only, with hand sanitising wipes/gel, with soap and cold water). However, the proportion who reported handwashing with soap and warm water 'always' or 'most of the time' declined over time (79% April 2020, compared to 68% in January 2022). In contrast, handwashing with water only significantly increased over the same period (7% April 2020 to 12% in January 2022), although this has remained the least common method of handwashing throughout all waves of the tracker (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Participants who reported washing their hands using various methods 'always' or 'most of the time' (April 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051); 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Combined 'always' and 'most of the time' responses shown.

Time spent handwashing

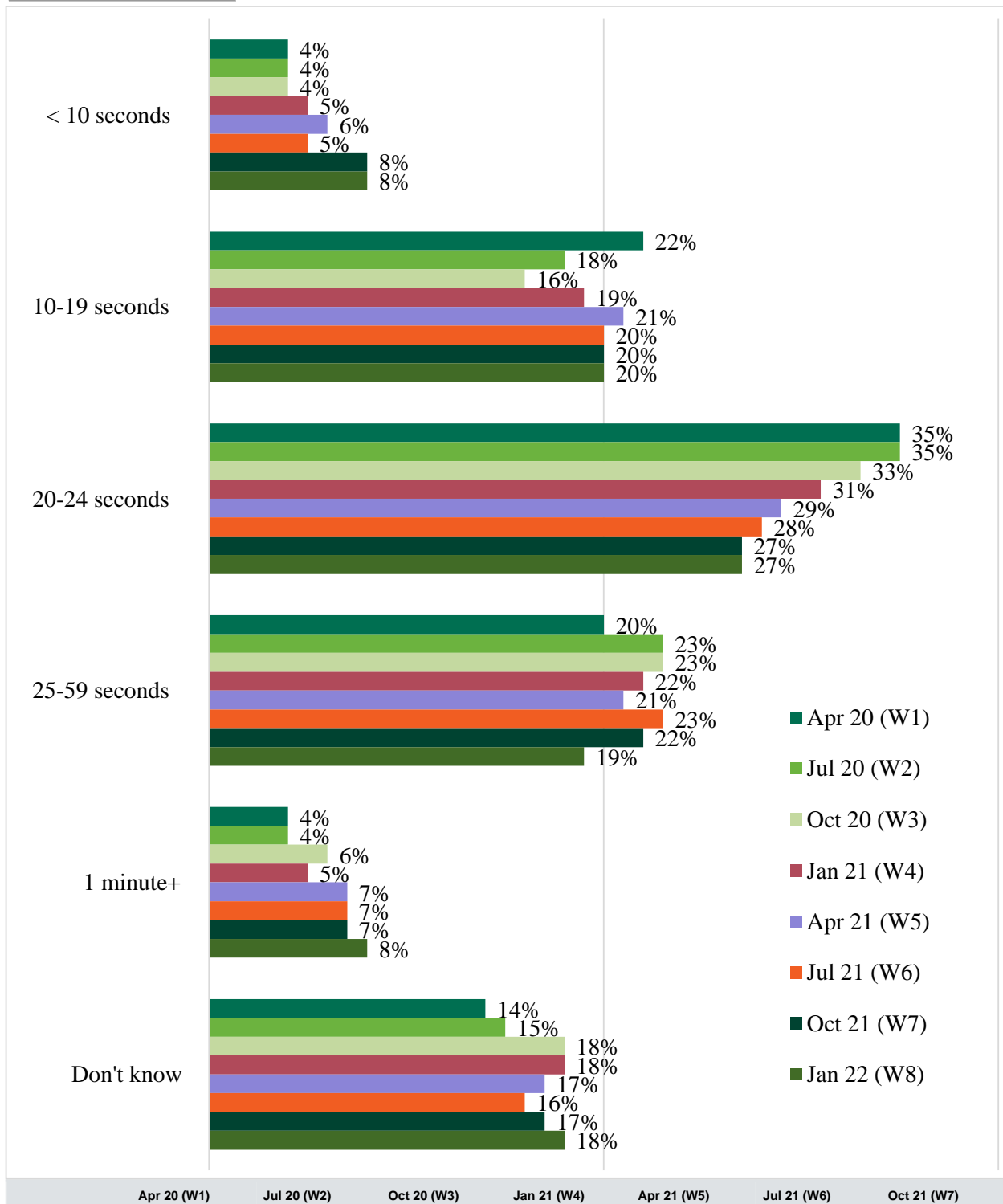
Guidance from [NHS](#) and [CDC](#) indicates that handwashing should last for at least 20 seconds.

In the handwashing tracker survey, participants were asked how long they spend washing their hands each time they do so. Most reported washing their hands for between 20 and 24 seconds across all waves, however, the proportion who reported this significantly declined over time (from 35% in April 2020, to 27% in January 2022). The proportion of participants who reported washing their hands for one minute or more, or for 10 seconds or less also significantly increased (see Figure 2). Throughout the tracker, a sizeable proportion of participants also reported that they 'don't know' how long they wash their hands for (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Reported time spent washing the hands each time – Quantitative handwashing tracker survey (April 2020 to January 2022)

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< 10 seconds	4	4	4	5	6	5	8
10-19 seconds	22	18	16	19	21	20	20
20-24 seconds	35	35	33	31	29	28	27
25-59 seconds	20	23	23	22	21	23	22
1 minute+	4	4	6	5	7	7	7
Don't know	14	15	18	18	17	16	17

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066).

Handwashing scenarios

Guidance from [NHS](#) and [CDC](#) states that handwashing should take place before/after a variety of scenarios. For example:

- after using the toilet or changing a nappy
- before and after handling raw foods like meat and vegetables
- before eating or handling food
- after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
- before and after treating a cut or wound
- after touching animals, including pets, their food or pet waste
- after touching garbage (rubbish)

[CDC](#) guidance also stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional handwashing should also be done during the following scenarios:

- before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- after touching your mask
- after leaving a public place
- after touching objects or surfaces that may be frequently touched by other people (for example, door handles and shopping carts)

The handwashing tracker survey asked participants about their handwashing in a variety of scenarios. The results below are divided into 'inside the home', 'outside the home' and 'personal hygiene'.

Inside the home

Over time, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands in the following scenarios inside the home:

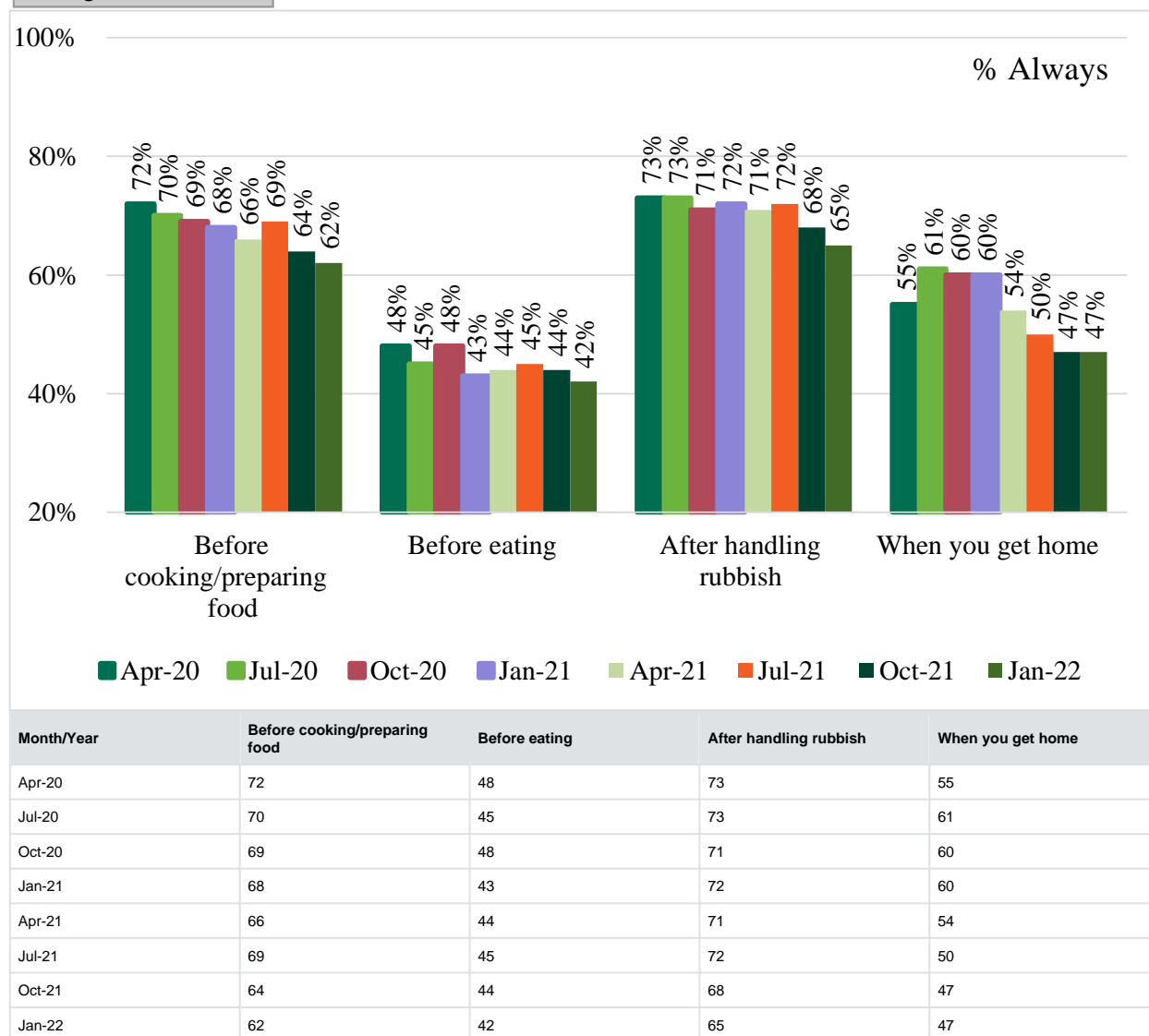
- before cooking/preparing food (72% in April 2020, 62% in January 2022)
- before eating (48% in April 2020, 42% in January 2022)
- after handling rubbish (73% in April 2020, 65% in January 2022)
- when arriving home, for example after a trip outside of the home (55% in April 2020, 47% in January 2022)

Figure 3 illustrates these trends over time. More detailed graphs (which include 'most of the time/sometimes' and 'never' responses) are included in Appendix 4.

Figure 3: Participants who reported ‘always’ washing their hands in different scenarios inside the home (April 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066).

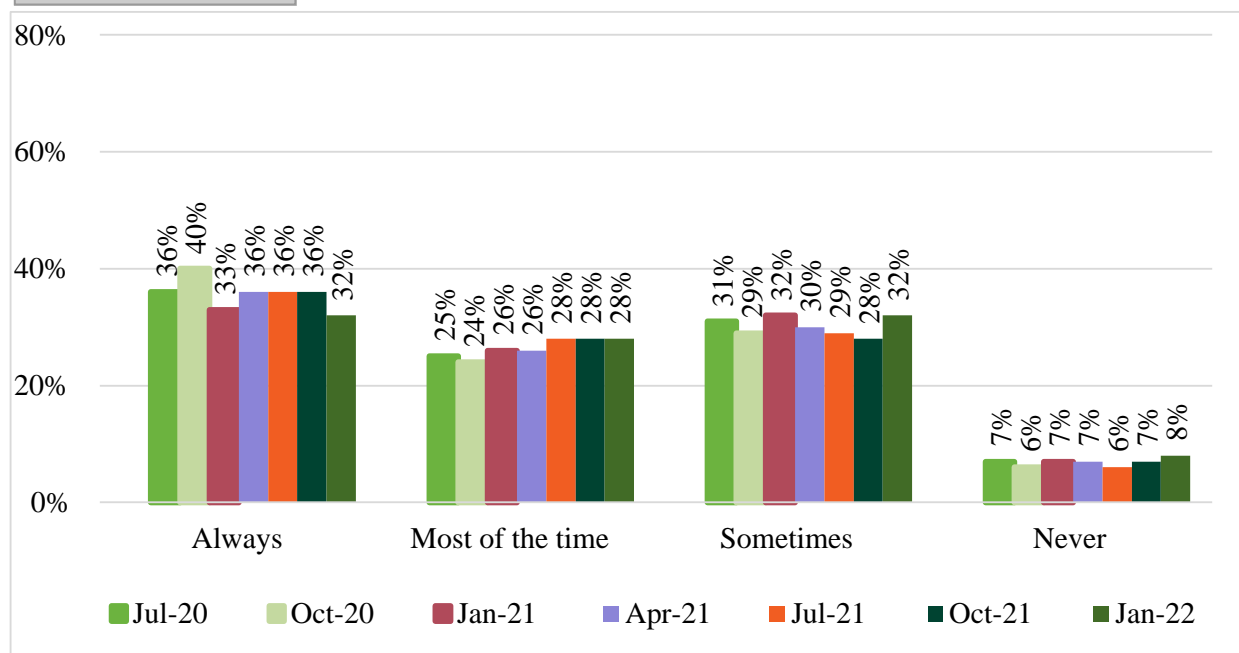
Reported handwashing after contact with animals (including pets) remained broadly stable over time. On average, across all waves, 36% of participants with a pet reported washing their hands ‘always’ after contact with animals, whilst 26% reported doing this ‘most of the time’ and 30%

reported doing this 'sometimes'. On average across all waves, 7% of participants with pets reported 'never' washing their hands after contact with animals (Figure 4). Please note, comparable data is only available for this question from July 2020 onwards.

Figure 4: Frequency of reported handwashing after contact with animals (including pets) (July 2020 to January 2022). Based on participants who reported having a pet.

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Month/Year	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
Jul-20	36	25	31	7
Oct-20	40	24	29	6
Jan-21	33	26	32	7
Apr-21	36	26	30	7
Jul-21	36	28	29	6
Oct-21	36	28	28	7
Jan-22	32	28	32	8

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults who have a pet 16-75, 10-14 July 2020 (1,067), 16-20 October 2020 (1,017), 15-18 January 2021 (1,070), 16-19 April 2021 (1,056), 16-19 July 2021 (1,023), 15-19 October 2021 (1,054), 14-18 January 2022 (1,075). Values may not add to 100% as 'not applicable' responses are not shown. Comparable data not collected in April 2020.

Outside the home

Due to the changing COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, participants were asked about handwashing outside their home. For these survey questions participants could also select 'I am not doing this activity at the moment', and these participants were removed from results. Therefore, only participants who reported doing these activities at the time of the survey are included in these findings. This data is only available from July 2020 (Wave 2) onwards, as the option to select 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' was introduced from July 2020. Over time, there was a significant decrease in the proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands in the following scenarios outside of the home:

- when eating a picnic outside the home (35% in July 2020, 29% in January 2022)
- when consuming a takeaway outside of the home (35% in July 2020, 30% in January 2022)

The proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands before eating in a restaurant significantly increased in October 2020 (49%), but otherwise remained relatively stable over time.

The proportion of participants who reported 'always' washing their hands before eating snacks with their hands gradually declined between July 2020 (30%) and October 2021 (25%) but increased slightly again in the final wave (28%, January 2022).

Figure 5 illustrates these trends. More detailed graphs (which include 'most of the time/sometimes' and 'never' responses) are included in Appendix 5.

Figure 5: Participants who reported 'always' washing their hands in different scenarios outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 1](#)). Sample sizes for each wave are included beneath the graphs in Appendix 5. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

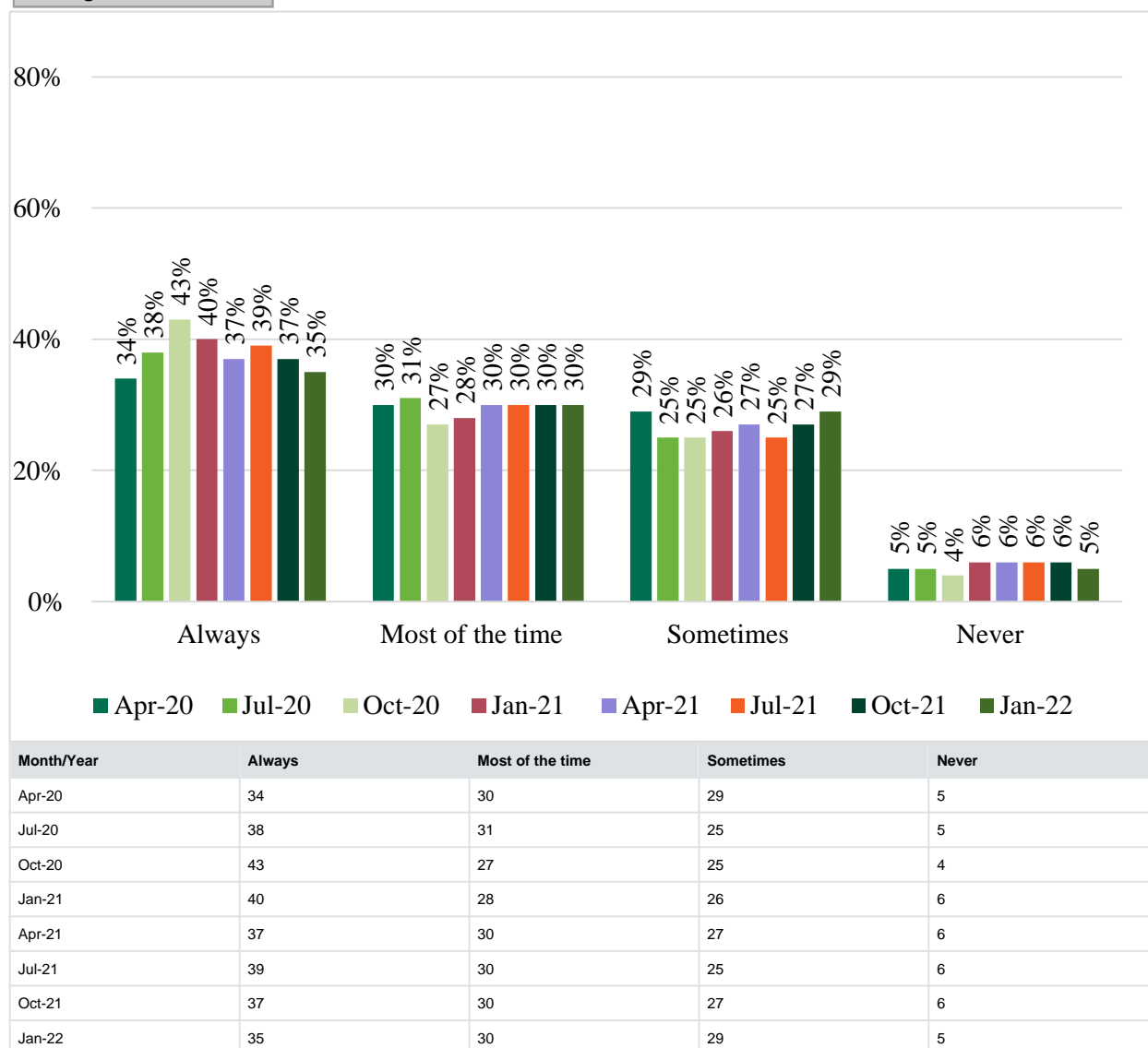
Personal hygiene

Participants were asked how often, if at all, they washed their hands after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing into their hands. On average, across all waves 38% of participants reported 'always' washing their hands in this scenario. This proportion varied over time; 34% said they always washed their hands after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing in April 2020, increasing significantly to 43% in October 2020. Since October 2020, the proportion decreased gradually over time, and was significantly lower in January 2022 (35%) than the peak in October 2020 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Frequency of reported handwashing after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing into your hands (April 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Values may not add to 100% as the “Prefer not to say” option is not charted.

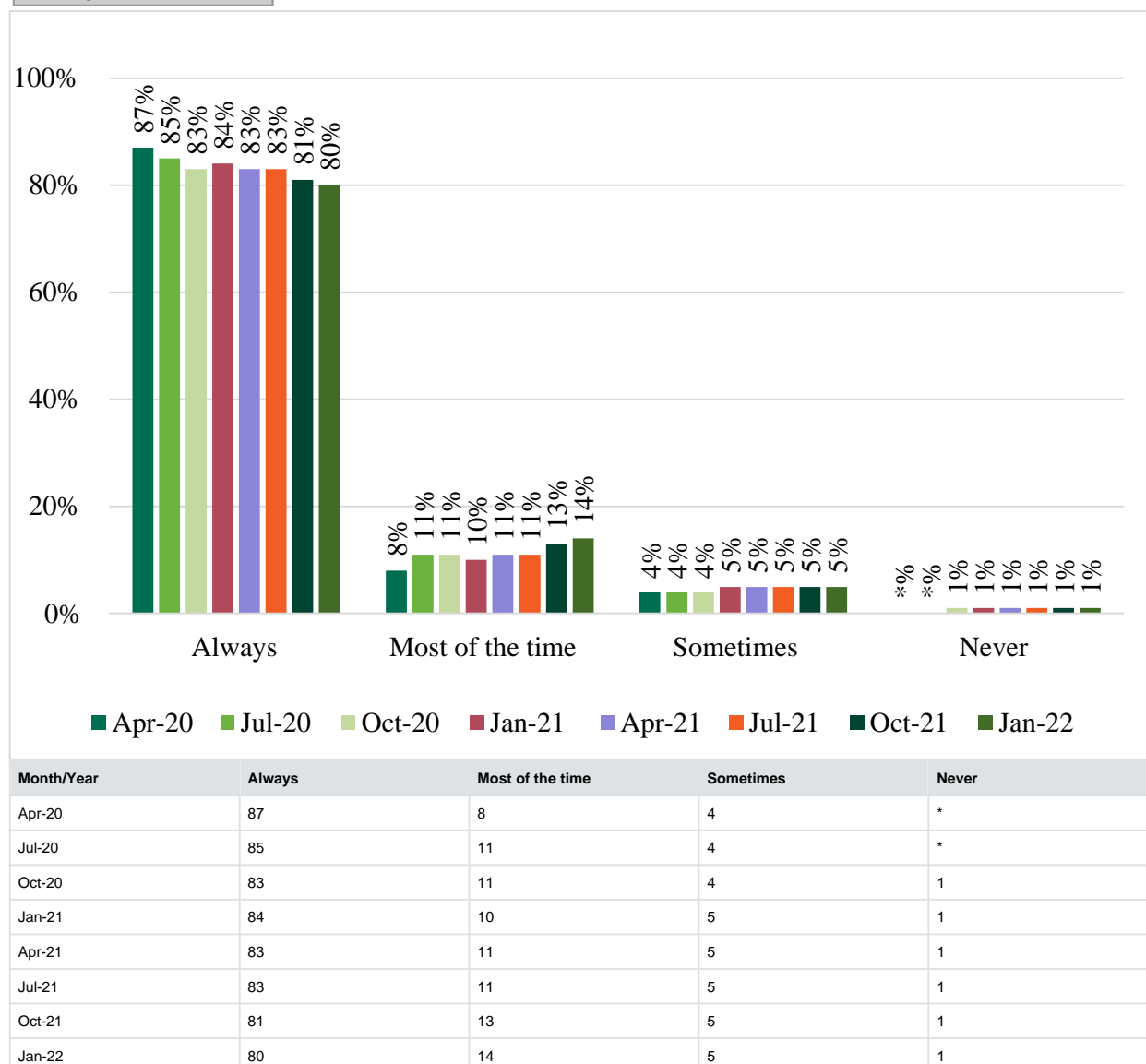
The proportion of participants who reported ‘always’ washing their hands after using the toilet also declined over time. In April 2020 87% of participants reported ‘always’ washing their hands after

using the toilet, decreasing significantly to 80% in January 2022. Meanwhile, the proportion of participants who reported washing their hands after using the toilet 'most of the time' significantly increased (8% in April 2020, 14% in January 2022) (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Frequency of reported after using the toilet (April 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). *% indicates less

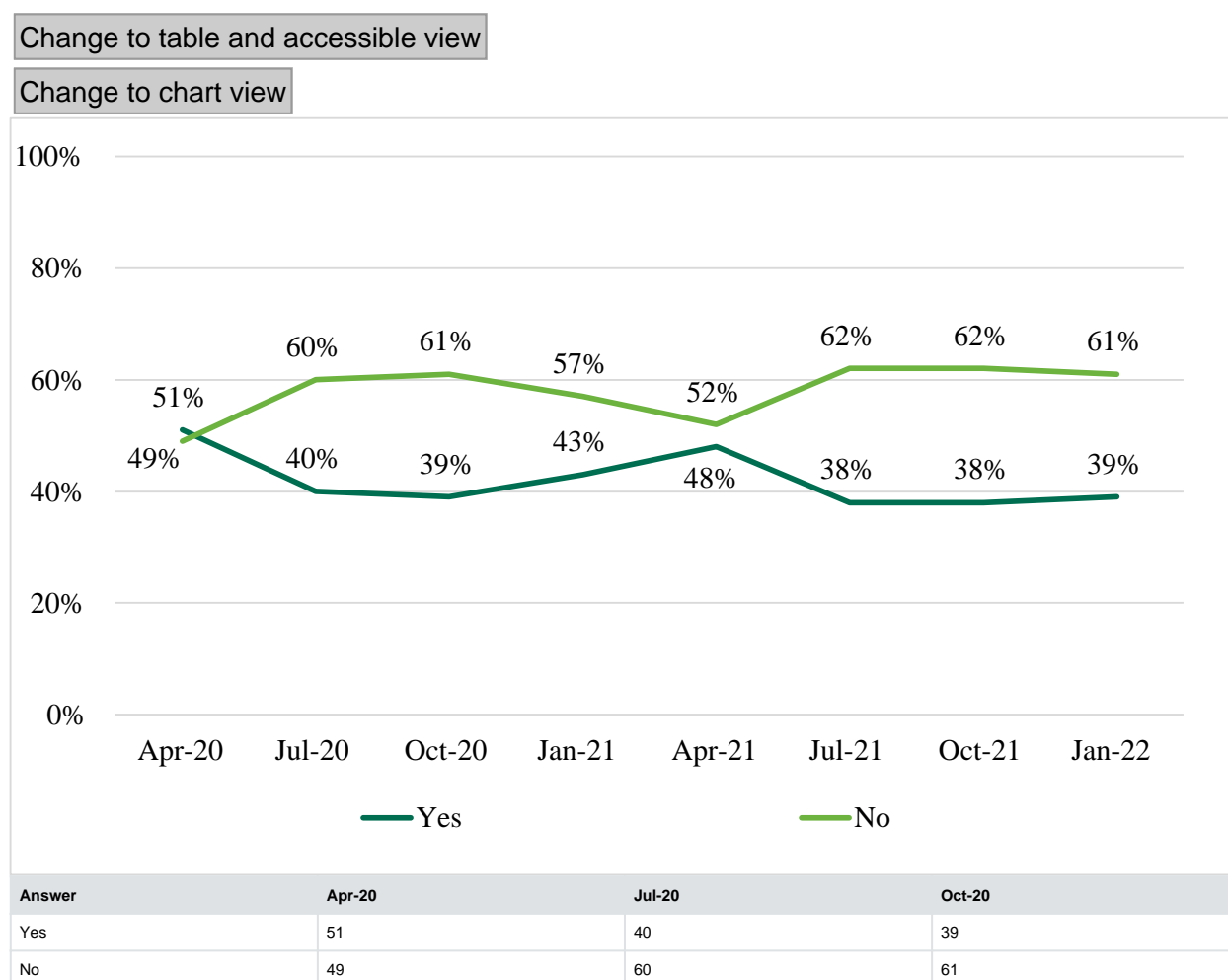
than 1%. Values may not add to 100% as the “Prefer not to say” option is not charted.

Barriers to handwashing

Sore hands

Participants were asked if they experienced sore hands because of handwashing. In April 2020, 51% of participants reported having sore hands because of handwashing, and this was the only wave where most participants said this was the case. In all other waves, most participants reported that they did not have sore hands due to handwashing. The proportion of participants who reported having sore hands was significantly higher in April 2020 (51%), January 2021 (43%) and April 2021 (48%) compared to the other waves but has remained stable since July 2021 (38%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Participants who reported having, or not having, sore hands as a result of handwashing (April 2020 to January 2022)



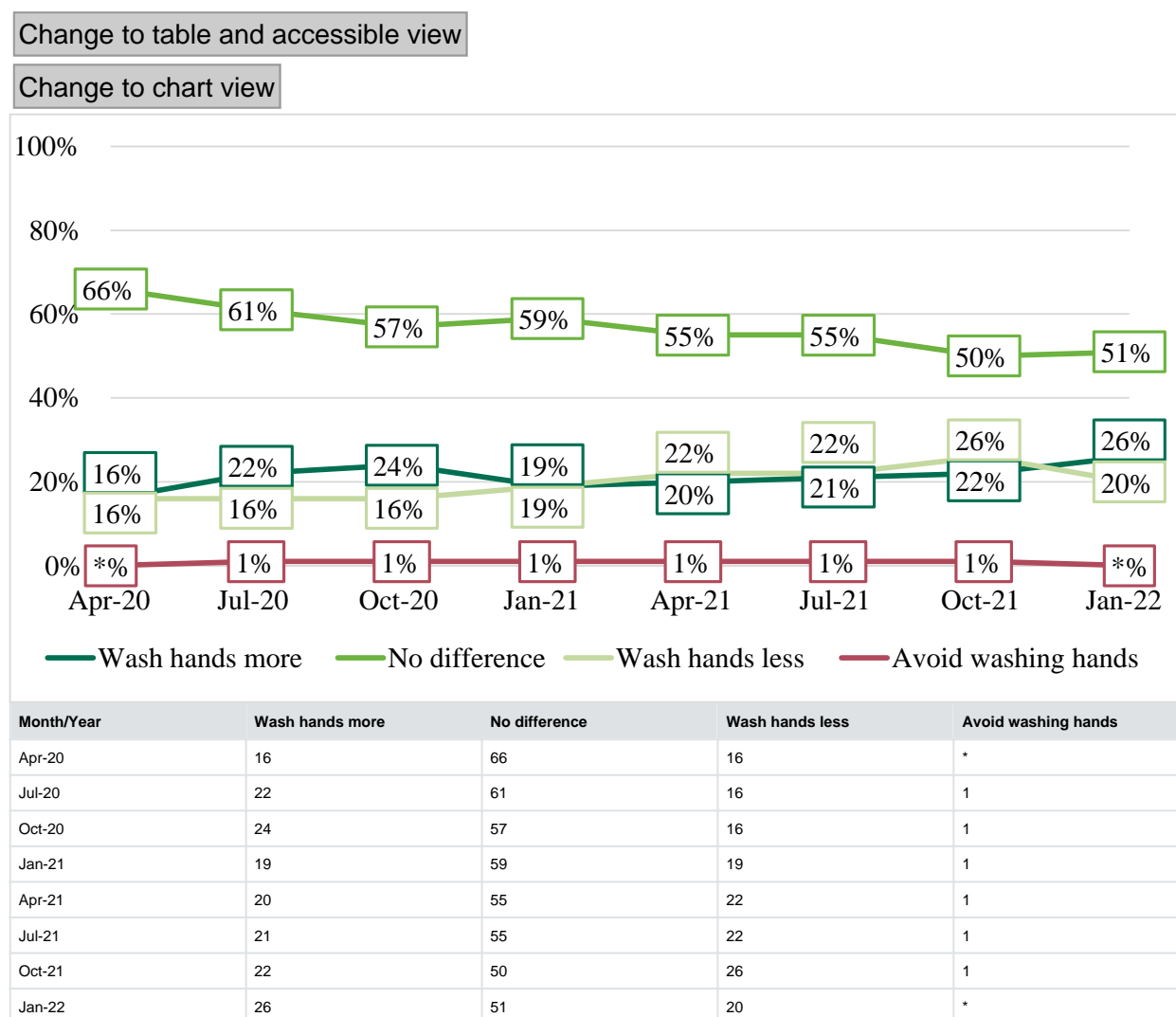
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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066).

Participants who reported having sore hands were asked how this impacted the frequency that they washed their hands. Across all waves, the majority of participants who experienced sore hands as a result of handwashing reported that it made 'no difference' to how frequently they washed their hands. The proportion who reported that it made 'no difference' to their handwashing significantly decreased over time (66% in April 2020, 51% in January 2022) (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Impact of sore hands on the frequency of handwashing (April 2020 to January 2022)



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Base: Online British adults 16-75, with sore hands from washing 10-13 April 2020 (1,044), 10-14 July 2020 (835), 16-20 October 2020 (803), 15-18 January 2021 (913), 16-19 April 2021 (986),

16-19 July 2021 (790), 15-19 October 2021 (782), 14-18 January 2022 (841). Values may not add to 100% as 'don't know' responses not charted. * % indicates less than 1%.

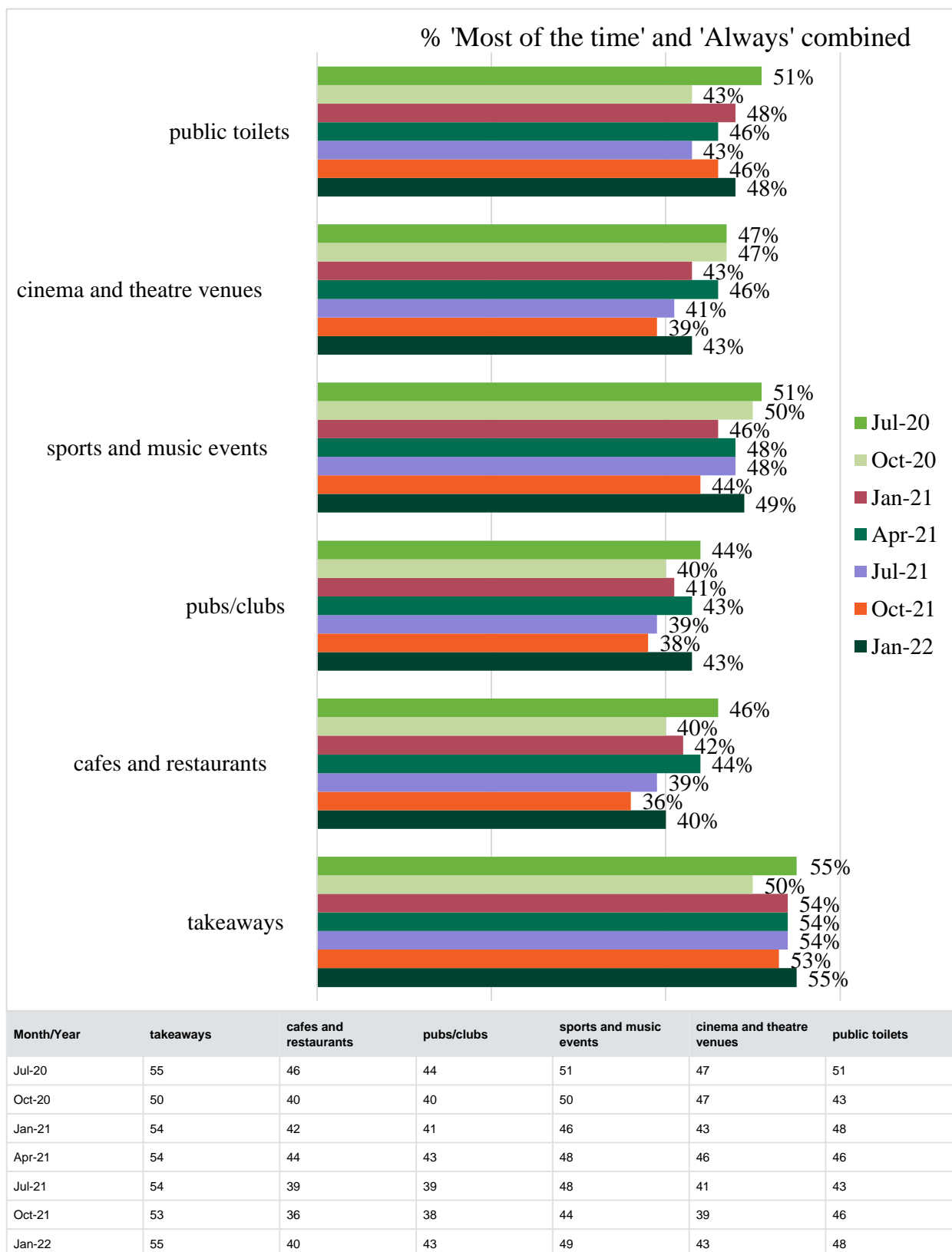
Facilities being unavailable

Participants were asked if they ever noticed that handwashing facilities were unavailable in a range of locations outside their home. Across all reported survey waves (July 2020 – January 2022), takeaways were most likely to be reported as having handwashing facilities unavailable 'most of the time', or 'always' (50-55%). In all settings, at least a third of participants reported handwashing facilities to be unavailable or unusable 'most of the time' or 'always' across all waves (Figure 10). This indicates that a lack of handwashing facilities outside the home is a common issue for participants.

Figure 10: Participants who report handwashing facilities being unavailable or unusable 'most of the time' or 'always' in a range of scenarios outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022).

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 2](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix

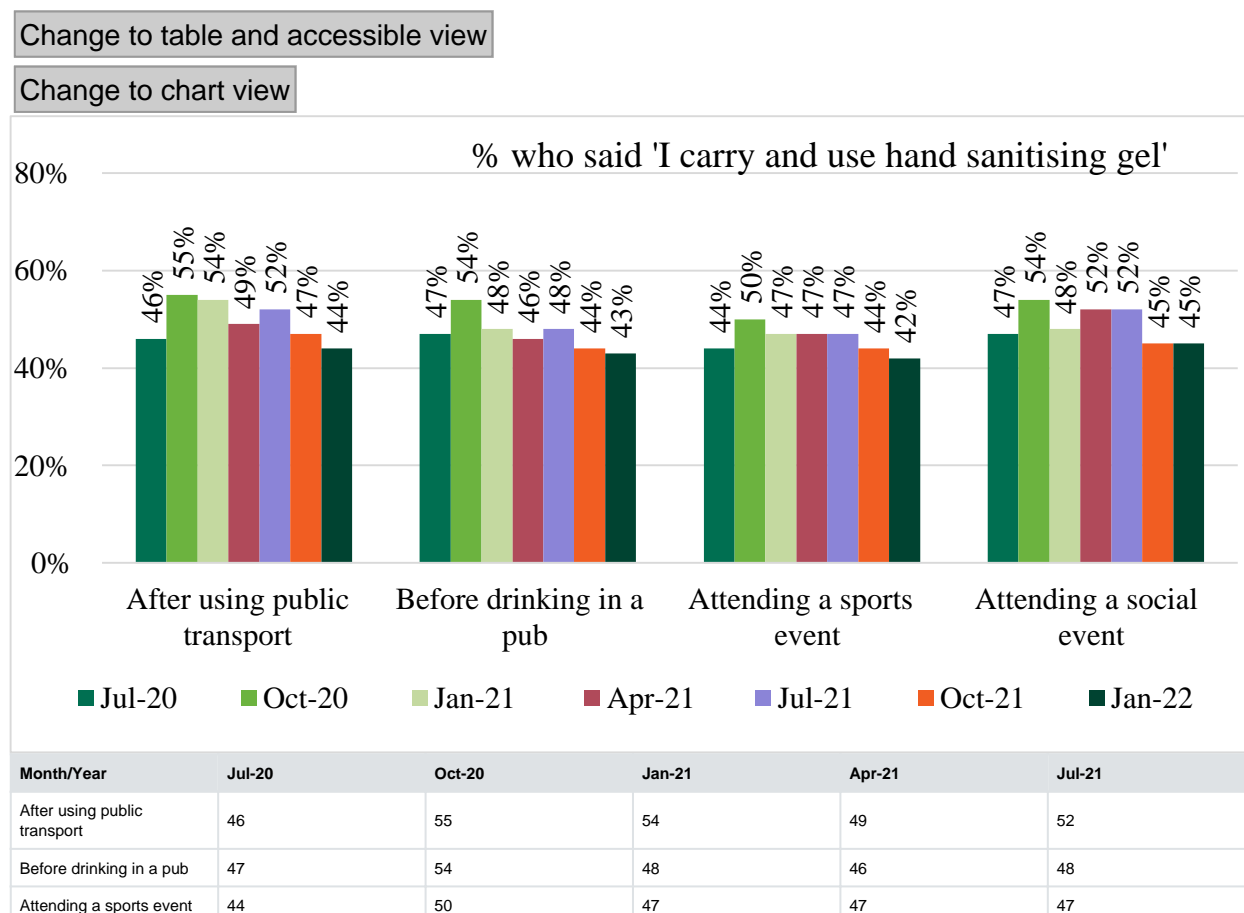
6. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Participants were also asked what action they took, if any, when handwashing facilities were not available in the following scenarios:

- after using public transport
- before drinking in a pub
- attending a sports event
- attending a social event

Across all waves (July 2020 – January 2022), most participants reported carrying and using hand sanitising gel as a hand washing alternative. The highest proportion reported using hand sanitising gel in October 2020, but the proportion of participants then significantly decreased over time. For example, 55% of participants reported using hand sanitising gel after using public transport in October 2020, declining significantly to 44% in January 2022. Similar trends are noted for all scenarios included in the tracker; before drinking in a pub (54% October 2020 vs 43% January 2022), attending a sports event (50% October 2020 vs 42% January 2022), attending a social event (54% October 2020 vs 45% January 2022) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Participants who reported carrying and using hand sanitising gel in a range of scenarios when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)



Month/Year	Jul-20	Oct-20	Jan-21	Apr-21	Jul-21
Attending a social event	47	54	48	52	52

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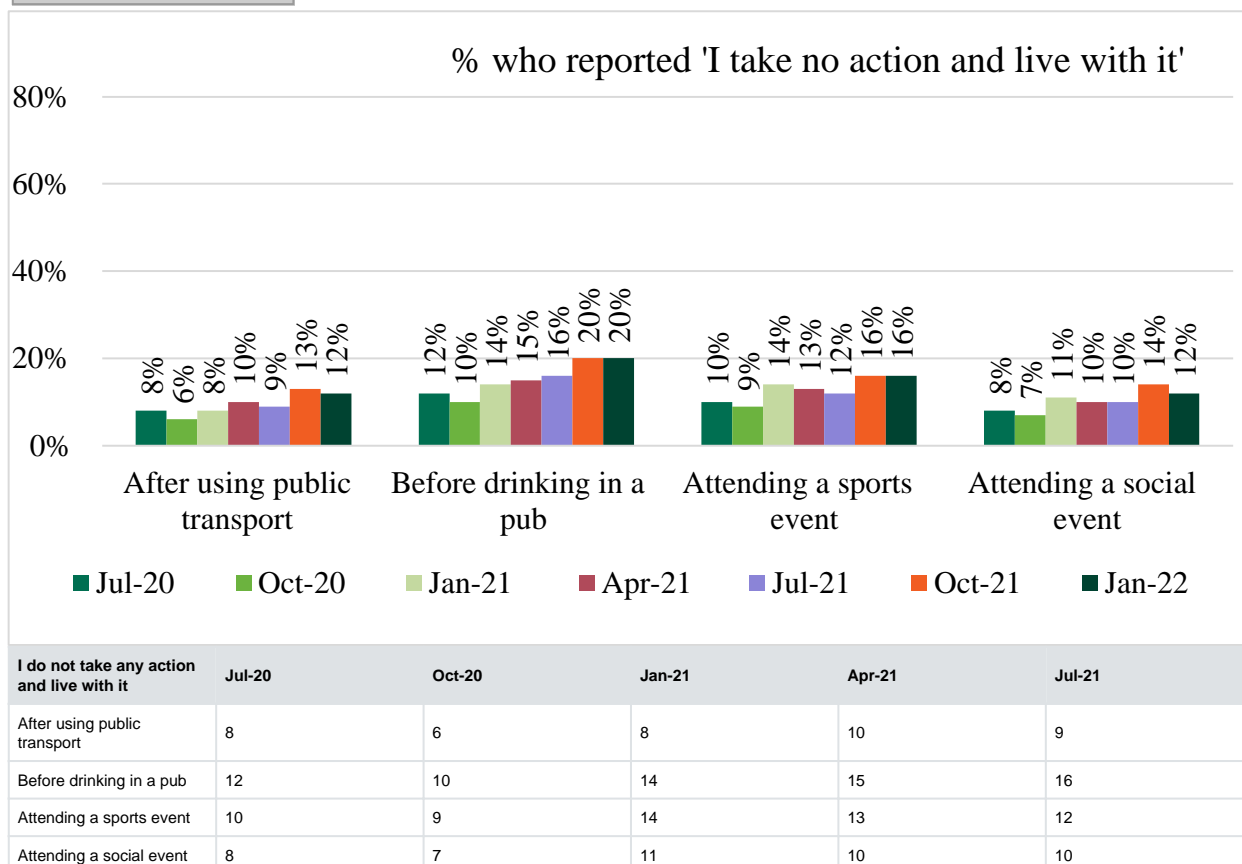
Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 3](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Meanwhile, the proportion of consumers who reported that they ‘take no action and live with it’ when handwashing facilities were unavailable increased significantly over time in all scenarios. For example, 8% of participants reported that they ‘take no action and live with it’ after using public transport in July 2020, increasing significantly to 12% in January 2022. Similar trends are noted for all scenarios included in the tracker; before drinking in a pub (12% vs 20%), attending a sports event (10% vs 16%), attending a social event (8% vs 12%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Participants who reported ‘taking no action and live with it’ in a range of scenarios when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 4](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Some participants also reported carrying and using wet wipes/tissues, or washing their hands at the next available opportunity, but these figures do not show significant changes over time. Detailed graphs are available in appendix 8 for further information.

1. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
2. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.
3. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.
4. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.

Consumer handwashing: Conclusions

This tracking survey indicates that a variety of hand hygiene behaviours were high earlier in the tracker (particularly in April, July and October 2020). Since then, many handwashing behaviours have declined over time (to January 2022) including the frequency of handwashing and the use of hand sanitising gel in a range of scenarios. This indicates that some handwashing behaviours established during the COVID-19 pandemic have declined.

There are a small number of scenarios where minimal changes were noted over time, for example handwashing after handling pets. It is possible that these handwashing habits were ingrained and not influenced by the pandemic, which would explain why they have remained consistent over time.

Consumer handwashing: Appendices

Appendix 1: Fieldwork dates and sample sizes

Survey Wave number	Data collection dates	Sample size
Wave 1	10 to 13 April 2020	2,039
Wave 2	10 to 14 July 2020	2,068

Survey Wave number	Data collection dates	Sample size
Wave 3	16 to 20 October 2020	2,067
Wave 4	15 to 18 January 2021	2,062
Wave 5	16 to 19 April 2021	2,049
Wave 6	16 to 19 July 2021	2,051
Wave 7	15 to 19 October 2021	2,017
Wave 8	14 to 18 January 2022	2,066

Appendix 2: Key changes to lockdown restrictions

Table 2: Key changes to lockdown restrictions

Information sourced from [Institute for Government](#). Key information for England, Wales and Northern Ireland has been included (as these 3 nations were included in the sample for the Handwashing consumer tracker survey).

Date or period	Event
23 March 2020	Start of first national (UK) lockdown and 'stay at home' order. Legally came into force 26 March.
10 May 2020	PM announces a conditional plan for lifting lockdown, those who cannot work from home return to work but avoid public transport. Guidance applies in England whilst Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can apply their own rules and guidance.
June 2020	1 June - phased re-opening of schools. Re-opening of non-essential shops 23 June - PM announces relaxing of restrictions and 2m social distancing rule.
July 2020	More restrictions eased (reopening of pubs, restaurants, hairdressers). First localised lockdowns coming into force in UK in Leicester and parts of Leicestershire Advice on self-isolation changed from 7 to 10 days. Face coverings mandatory on public transport in Northern Ireland.
August 2020	3 August - 'Eat out to Help Out' scheme begins in the UK. 14 August - Further easing of lockdown restrictions (reopening indoor theatres, bowling alleys and soft play). Face coverings mandatory in shops, schools and public transport in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
September 2020	'Rule of Six' with indoor and outdoor social gatherings above six banned. Return to working from home. Schools re-opened in rest of the UK. 23 September - Localised lockdowns in Northern Ireland.
October 2020	A new three tier lock down system introduced in England. 16 October – four week 'circuit breaker' lockdown in Northern Ireland.
November 2020	5 November - second national lockdown comes into force in England. 9 November - Welsh 17-day 'firebreak' national lockdown comes to an end. 27 November - National lockdown in Northern Ireland.
December 2020	2 December - second national lockdown ends after four weeks, England returns to three-tier system. Vaccination programme begins in care homes. 19 December - Tier 4 restrictions in London and South East England. Single-day Christmas restrictions announced.
January 2021	UK enters third national lockdown. Vaccination programme rolled out to people aged 70-79.
February 2021	Beginning of 'Roadmap out of lockdown' starts.
March 2021	Beginning of March - Schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland reopen, Phase 2 of school opening in Scotland. 'Stay at home' order remains in place until 29 March, when outdoor gatherings of either six people or two households are also allowed. Mid-March - first stages of lockdown easing in Wales and Northern Ireland. Phased re-opening of schools. Ending of coronavirus border controls into the UK.
April 2021	Beginning of April: non-essential retail, hairdressers, public buildings and gyms re-open. Outdoor venues including pubs, restaurants open. Outdoor venues re-open in Wales. All students return to face-to-face education. No indoor mixing between different households allowed.

Date or period	Event
May 2021	Mid-May indoor venues reopen, including pubs and restaurants. Limit of 30 people allowed to mix outdoors in England.
July 2021	19 July - all legal limits on social contact removed and the final closed sectors of the economy reopen.
August 2021	Wales no legal limits on social contact.
December 2021	Omicron variant. 'Plan B' measures in England introduced (face masks compulsory in most public venues, NHS Covid Pass mandatory in specific settings) and work from home guidance reintroduced.
January 2022	England to move to 'Plan A' (face coverings no longer compulsory, including in schools). Restrictions in other nations lifted. Work from home guidance lifted. Isolation period reduced from seven to five days.
February 2022	England: all Covid restrictions lifted. Wales: Facemasks no longer compulsory in all settings. Northern Ireland: remaining restrictions lifted.
March 2022	Covid travel rules end. Wales: Face coverings only required in health and care settings.

Appendix 3: Survey questions

The list of survey questions provided is based on the most recent collection (Survey wave 8, January 2022). Some small changes were made to the survey between survey waves 1 (April 2020) and survey wave 2 (July 2020), these are denoted in footnotes. Since survey wave 2, the questions have remained consistent. Full survey scripts for each wave are available on request.

1) Thinking about when you are at home at the moment. How often, if at all, do you wash your hands? Please select one answer for each statement.

- a) Before cooking a meal or preparing food
 - b) Before eating
 - c) After contact with animals, including pets
 - d) After handling rubbish
 - e) When you get home, for example, after a trip out of your home
- i. Never
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Most of the time
 - iv. Always
 - v. Not applicable

2) Thinking about when you are at home at the moment, how often do you wash your hands in each of the following ways? Select only one per statement

- a) With water on its own
 - b) With soap/handwash and warm water
 - c) With soap/handwash and cold water
 - d) With hand sanitising wipes or gel
- i. Never
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Most of the time
 - iv. Always
 - v. Prefer not to say [\(footnote 1\)](#)

3) Thinking about when you are at home at the moment. How many seconds do you spend washing your hands each time? [\(footnote 2\)](#) Please type your answer using whole numbers (whole numbers only no ranges)

4) Thinking about eating outside of your home at the moment. How often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising wipes or gels before eating in the following situation? [\(footnote 3\)](#) Please choose one per situation

- a) a picnic outside of the home
 - b) eating in a restaurant
 - c) consuming a take-away outside of the home
 - d) eating snacks (like crisps, nuts, raisins or an ice cream) with your hands outside of the home
-
- i. Never
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Most of the time
 - iv. Always
 - v. I am not doing this activity at the moment

5) Does frequently washing your hands result in you having sore hands? Please select only one.

- a) Yes – to go question 6
- b) No – skip to question 7

6) [Only ask if 'yes' at Question 5] What impact, if any, does getting sore hands have on the frequency with which you wash your hands? Please select only one

- a) I wash my hands a lot more often
- b) I wash my hands a little more often
- c) It makes no difference to how often I wash my hands
- d) I wash my hands a little less often
- e) I wash my hands a lot less often
- f) I avoid washing my hands
- g) Don't know

7) At the moment, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands ...? [\(footnote 4\)](#) Please select one answer for each statement.

- a) After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing into your hands
 - b) After using the toilet
-
- i. Never
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Most of the time
 - iv. Always
 - v. Prefer not to say [\(footnote 5\)](#)

8) At the moment what action, if any, do you usually take if handwashing facilities are not available? [\(footnote 6\)](#) Please select one answer for each situation

- a) after using public transport
 - b) before drinking in a pub
 - c) attending a sports event
 - d) attending a social event
-
- i. I don't take any action and live with it
 - ii. I carry and use hand sanitising gel
 - iii. I carry and use wet wipes or tissues
 - iv. I wash my hands at the next available opportunity

v. I am not doing this activity at the moment

9) How often, if at all, do you find handwashing facilities are not available, or not usable, in the following places at the moment? [\(footnote 7\)](#) Please select one answer for each place

- a) takeaways
- b) cafes and restaurants
- c) pubs/clubs
- d) sports and music events
- e) cinema and theatre venues
- f) public toilets

- i. Never
- ii. Sometimes
- iii. Most of the time
- iv. Always
- v. I am not doing this activity at the moment [\(footnote 8\)](#)

10) As part of your current job role, do you handle open food? (This might be a voluntary or paid role). By open food, we mean food products or ingredients that will be consumed by other people which are not protected by packing. [\(footnote 9\)](#) Please select only one

- a) Yes – I am currently in a role that handles food
- b) Yes - but I'm not working due to furlough
- c) No

11) Do you have any pets at home? [\(footnote 10\)](#) Please select only one

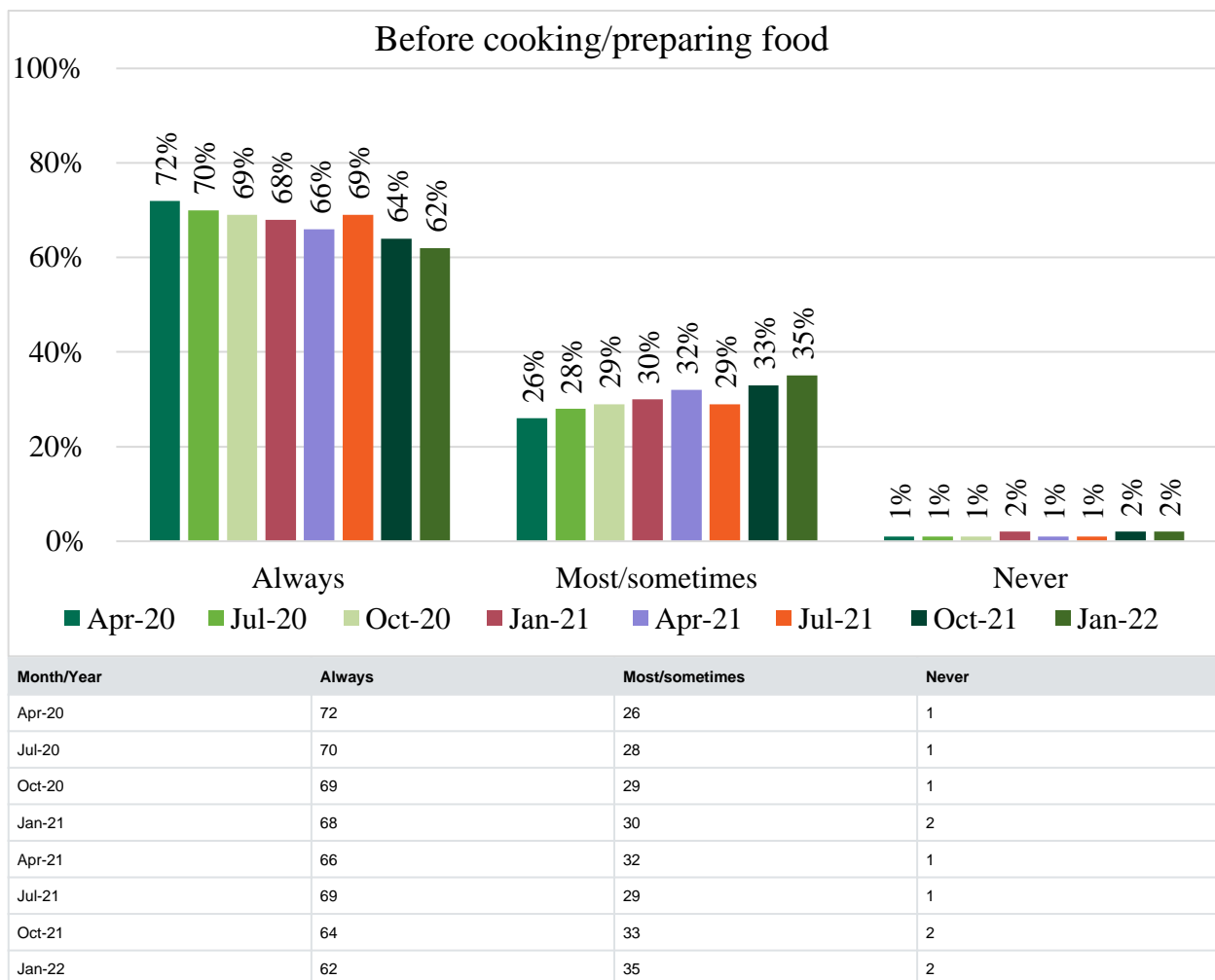
- a) Yes
- b) No

Appendix 4: Detailed graphs for handwashing inside the home

Figure 13: Frequency of reported handwashing before cooking/preparing food (April 2020 to January 2022) including 'always', 'most of the time/sometimes' and 'never' responses

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Values may not add to 100% as 'not applicable' responses are not shown.

Figure 14: Frequency of reported handwashing before eating food (April 2020 to January 2022) including 'always', 'most of the time/sometimes' and 'never' responses

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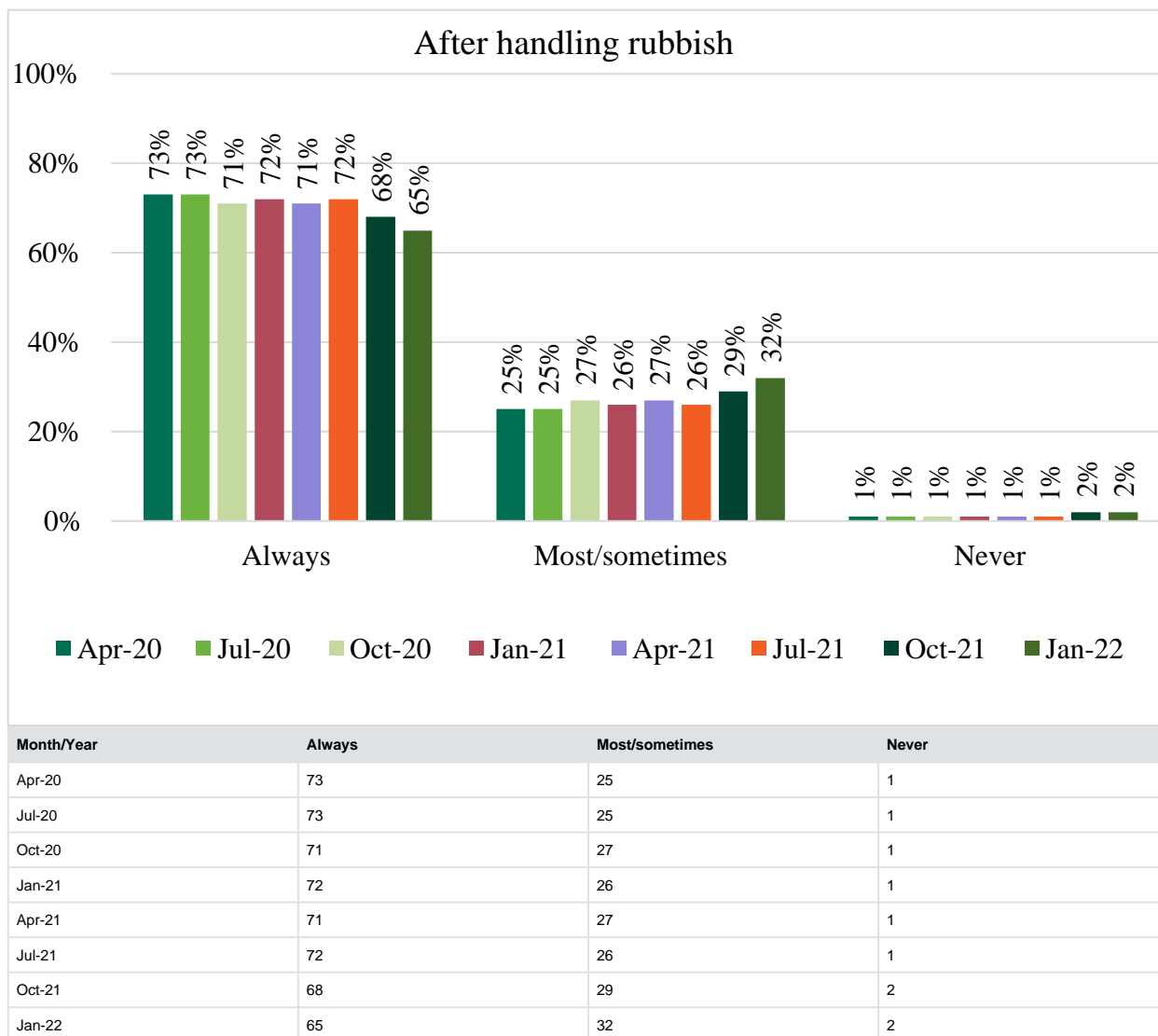
[Image .csv](#)

Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Values may not add to 100% as 'not applicable' responses are not shown.

Figure 15: Frequency of reported handwashing after handling rubbish (April 2020 - January 2022) including 'always', 'most of the time/sometimes' and 'never' responses

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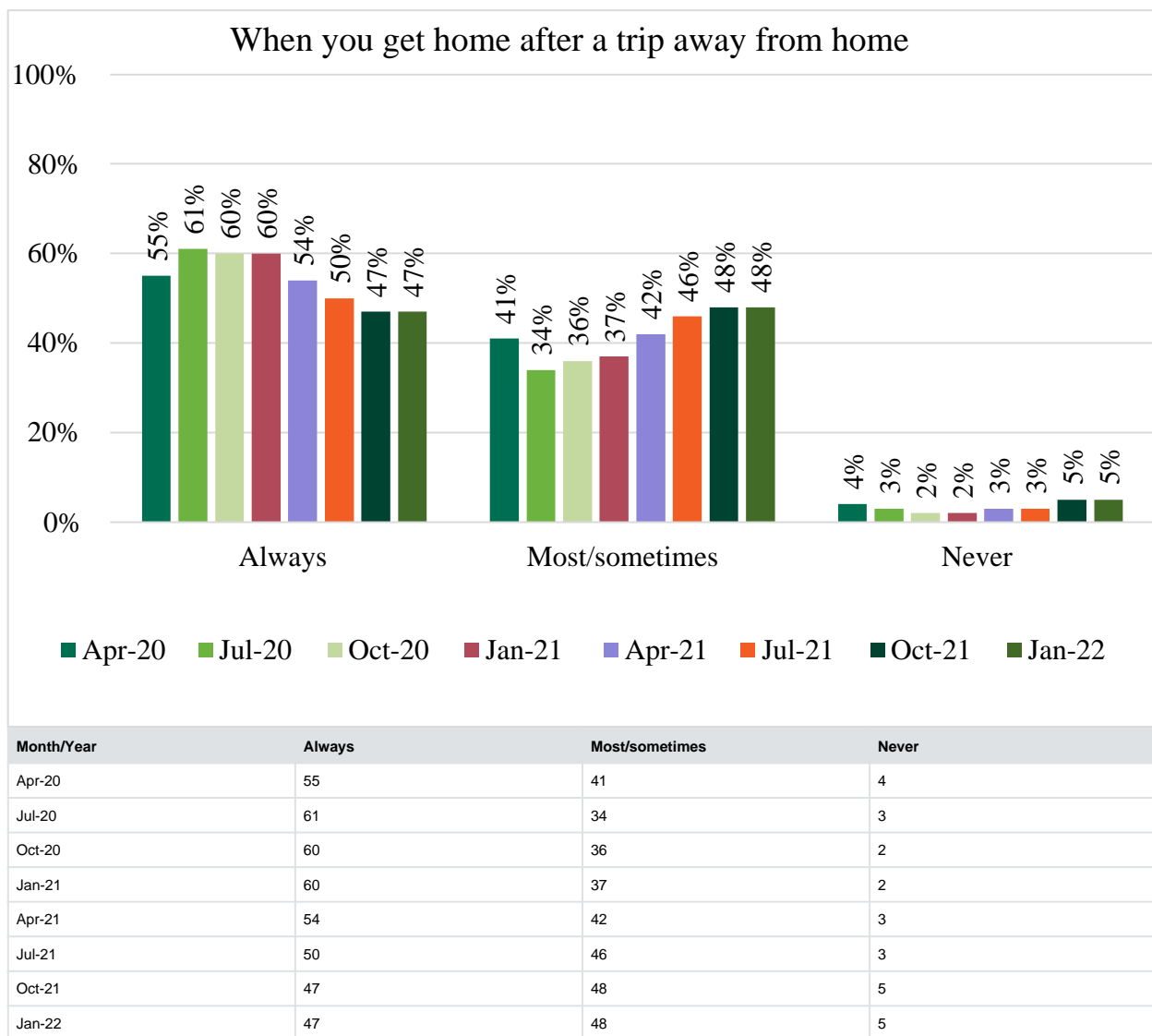
[Image .csv](#)

Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Values may not add to 100% as 'not applicable' responses are not shown.

Figure 16: Frequency of reported handwashing when returning home from a trip outside the home (April 2020 to January 2022)

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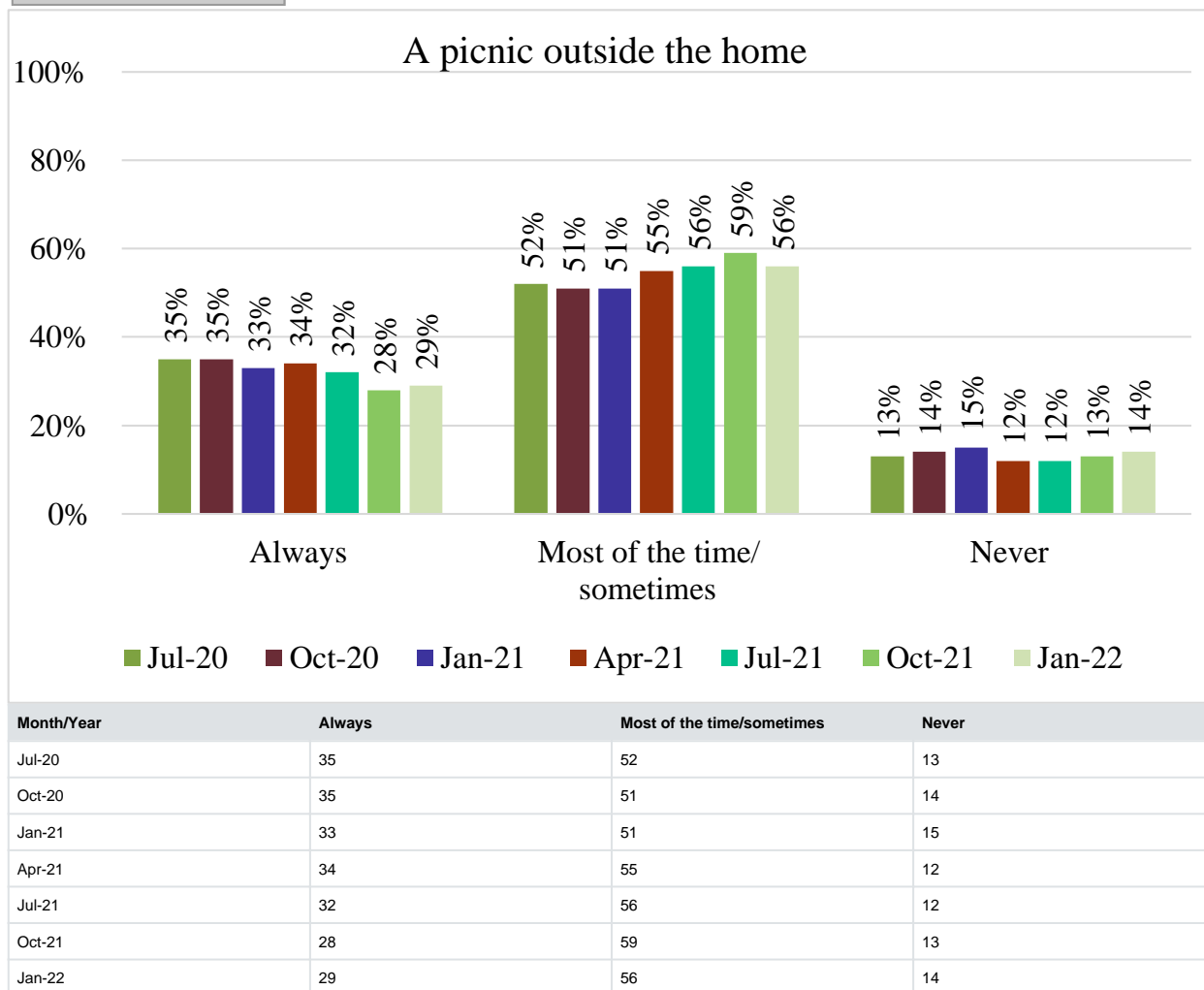
Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75, 10-13 April 2020 (2,039), 10-14 July 2020 (2,068), 16-20 October 2020 (2,067), 15-18 January 2021 (2,062), 16-19 April 2021 (2,049), 16-19 July 2021 (2,051), 15-19 October 2021 (2,017), 14-18 January 2022 (2,066). Values may not add to 100% as the “Not applicable” option is not charted.

Appendix 5: Detailed graphs for handwashing outside the home

Figure 17: Participants who reported washing their hands ‘always’, ‘most of the time/sometimes’ and ‘never’ when eating a picnic outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 11](#)). 10-14th July 20 (1,139), 16-20th Oct 20 (1,114), 15-18th Jan 21 (1,041), 16-19th Apr 21 (1,300), 16-19th Jul 21 (1,473), 15-19th Oct 21 (1,409), 14-18th Jan 22 (1,413). Comparable data available from July 2020 only.

Figure 18: Participants who reported washing their hands ‘always’, ‘most of the time/sometimes’ and ‘never’ when eating in a restaurant outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022)

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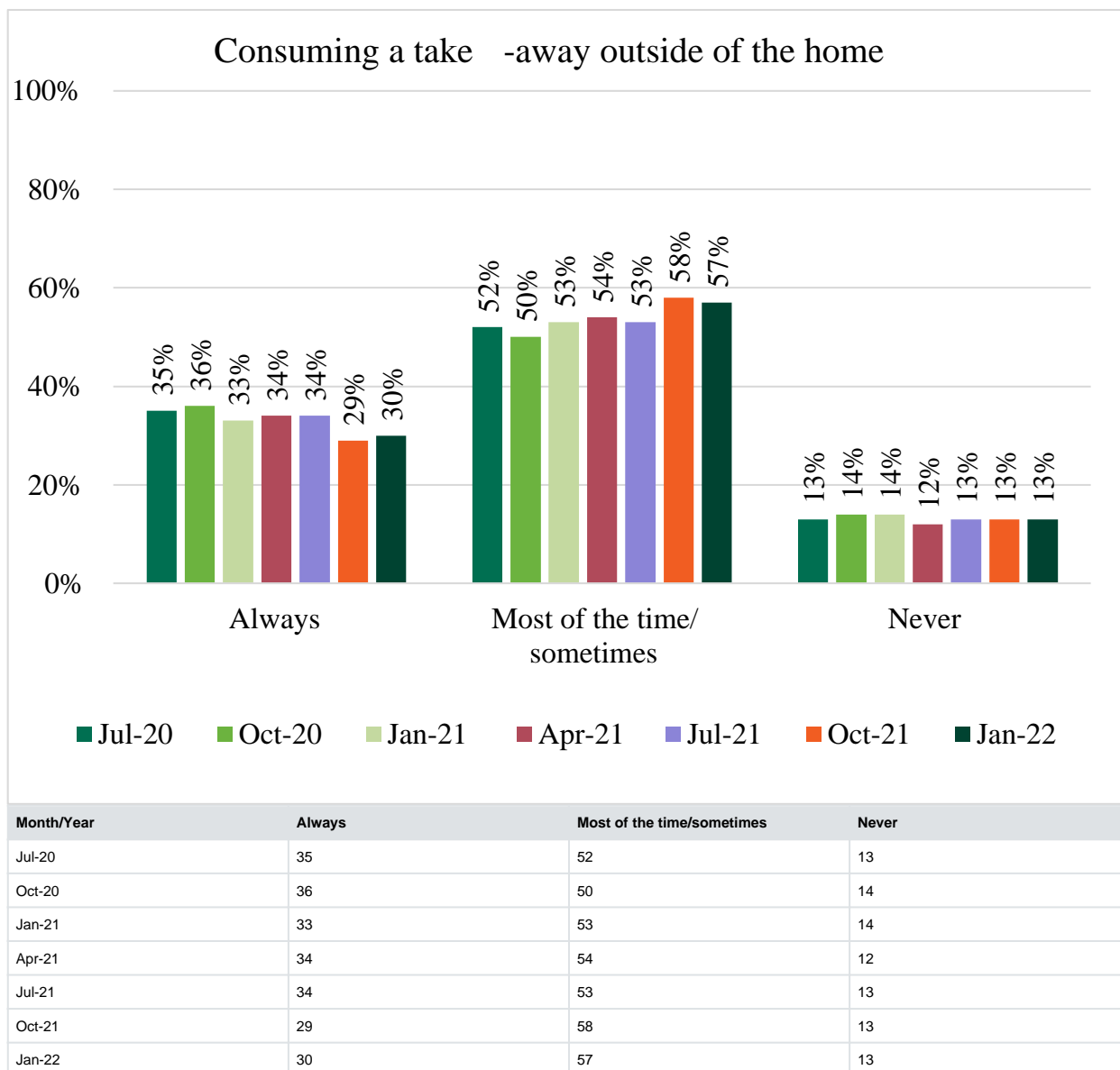
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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 12](#)). 10-14th July 20 (1,049), 16-20th Oct 20 (1,365), 15-18th Jan 21 (1,085), 16-19th Apr 21 (1,278), 16-19th Jul 21 (1,600), 15-19th Oct 21 (1,664), 14-18th Jan 22 (1,736). Comparable data available from July 2020 only.

Figure 19: Participants who reported washing their hands ‘always’, ‘most of the time/sometimes’ and ‘never’ when consuming a takeaway outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022)

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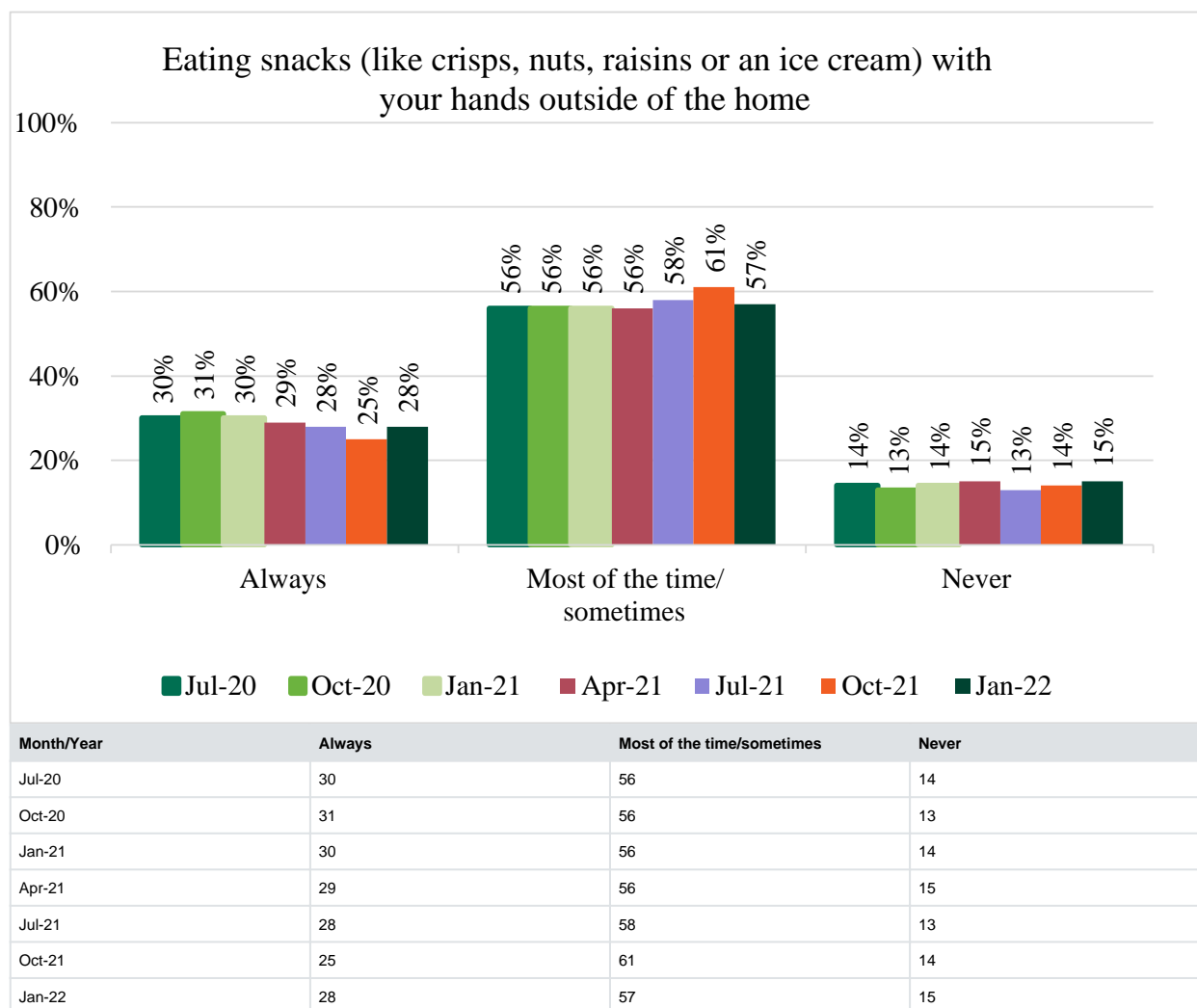
[Image .csv](#)

Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 13](#)). 10-14th July 20 (1,114), 16-20th Oct 20 (1,173), 15-18th Jan 21 (1,133), 16-19th Apr 21 (1,335), 16-19th Jul 21 (1,457), 15-19th Oct 21 (1,475), 14-18th Jan 22 (1,510). Comparable data available from July 2020 only.

Figure 20: Participants who reported washing their hands ‘always’, ‘most of the time/sometimes’ and ‘never’ when eating snacks outside the home (July 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 14](#)). 10-14th July 20 (1,338), 16-20th Oct 20 (1,434), 15-18th Jan 21 (1,279), 16-19th Apr 21 (1,552), 16-19th Jul 21 (1,674), 15-19th Oct 21 (1,648), 14-18th Jan 22 (1,701). Comparable data available from July 2020 only.

Appendix 6: Sample sizes for Figure 10

Table 3: Sample sizes for Figure 10. Participants who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 15](#)).

Month	Takeaway	Cafes and Restaurants	Pubs/clubs	Sports and music events	Cinema and theatre venues	Public toilets
July 2020	892	790	670	525	555	869
October 2020	1,003	1,220	852	492	550	1,086
January 2021	983	825	617	617	658	1,000
April 2021	1,201	1,050	717	717	753	1,234
July 2021	1,342	1,509	861	861	978	1,455

Month	Takeaway	Cafes and Restaurants	Pubs/clubs	Sports and music events	Cinema and theatre venues	Public toilets
October 2021	1,362	1,599	953	953	1,133	1,562
January 2022	1,399	1,685	1,063	1,063	1,245	1,065

Appendix 7: Sample sizes for Figures 11, 12 and 21 to 24

Table 4: Sample sizes for Figure 11 and 12. Participants who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection [\(footnote 16\)](#).

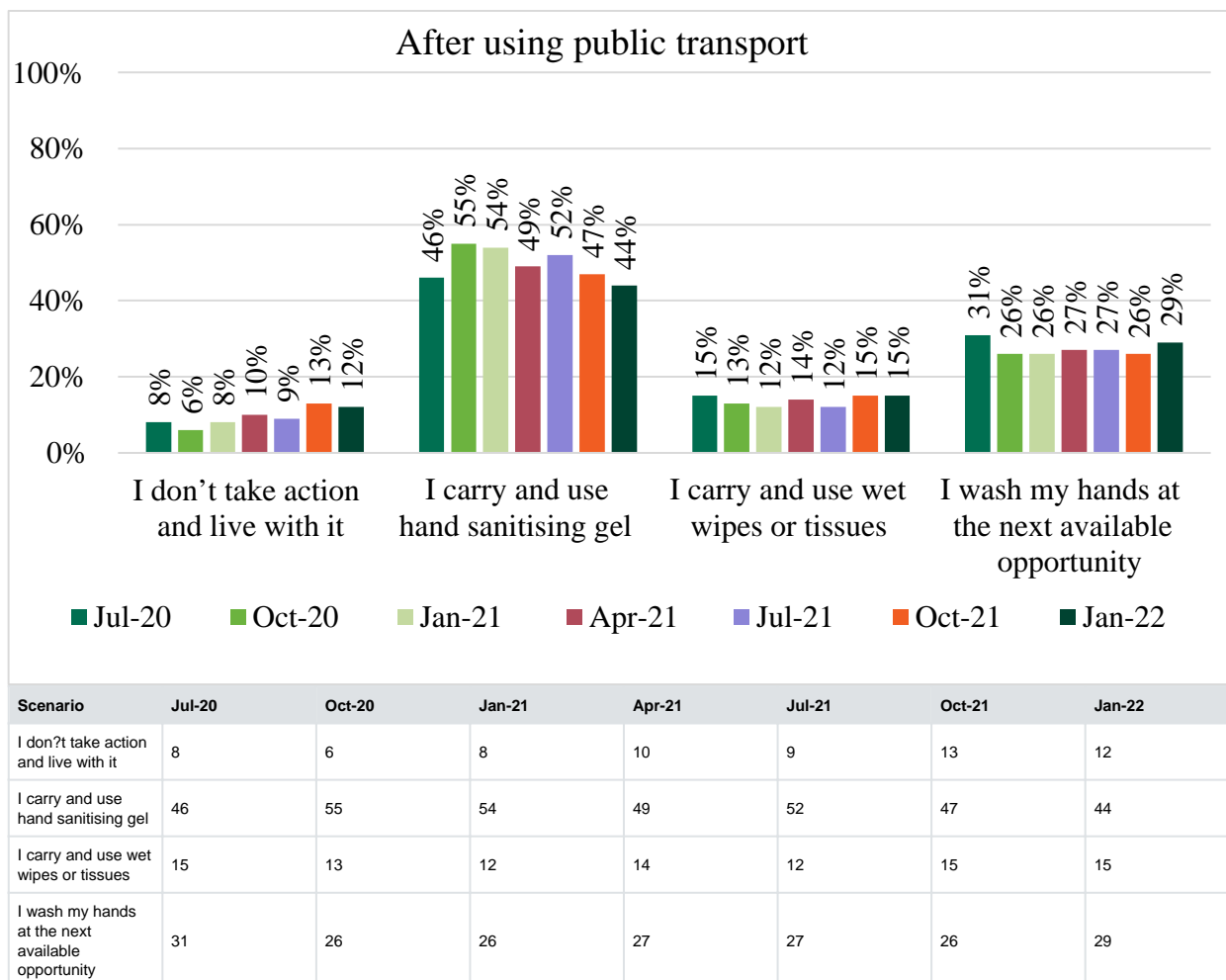
Month	After using public transport	Before drinking in a pub	Attending a sports event	Attending a social event
July 2020	954	769	669	913
October 2020	1,124	949	672	1,011
January 2021	1,037	741	700	849
April 2021	1,237	986	872	1,098
July 2021	1,398	1,241	1,005	1,358
October 2021	1,469	1,321	1,054	1,499
January 2022	1,495	1,346	1,096	1,474

Appendix 8: Detailed graphs for alternatives to handwashing in a range of scenarios outside of the home

Figure 21: Alternatives to handwashing, after using public transport, when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)

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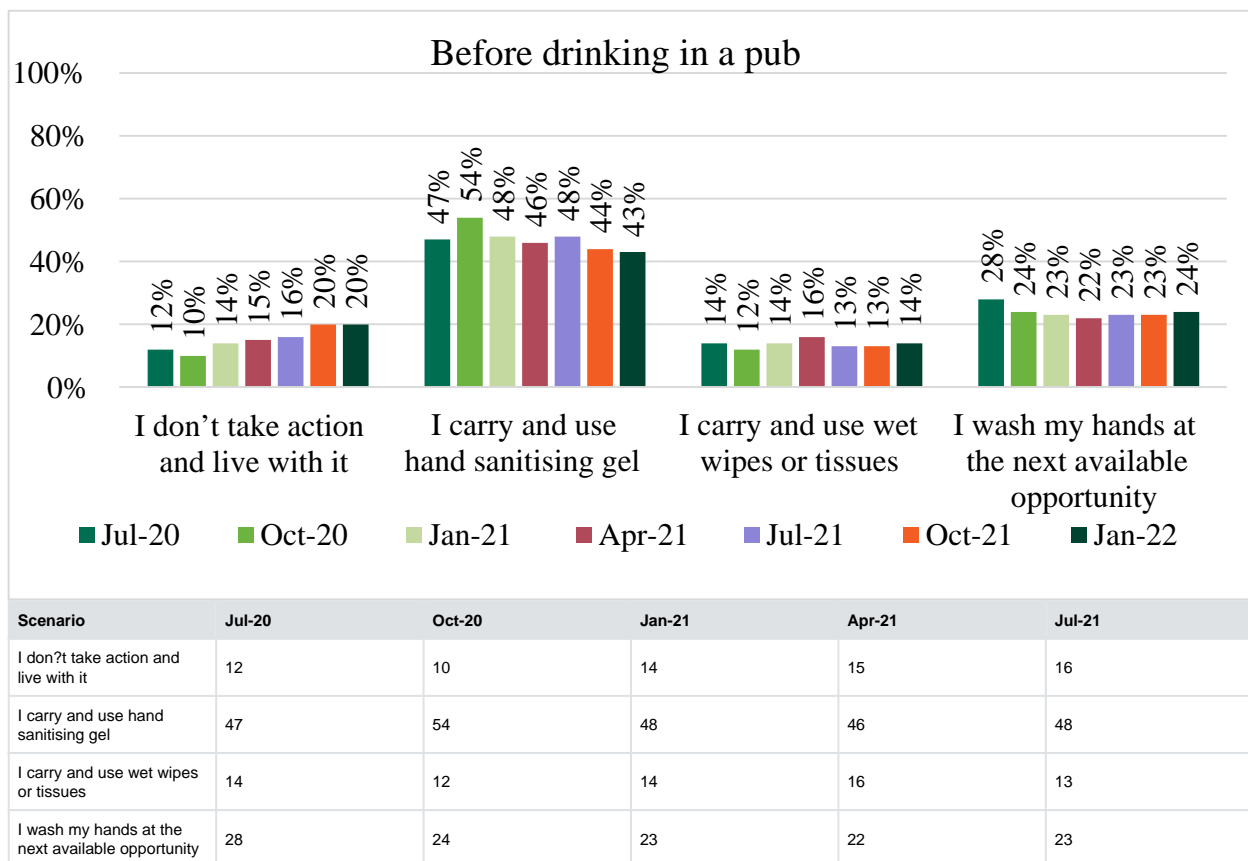
[Image .csv](#)

Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16 to 75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 17](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Figure 22: Alternatives to handwashing, before drinking in a pub, when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)

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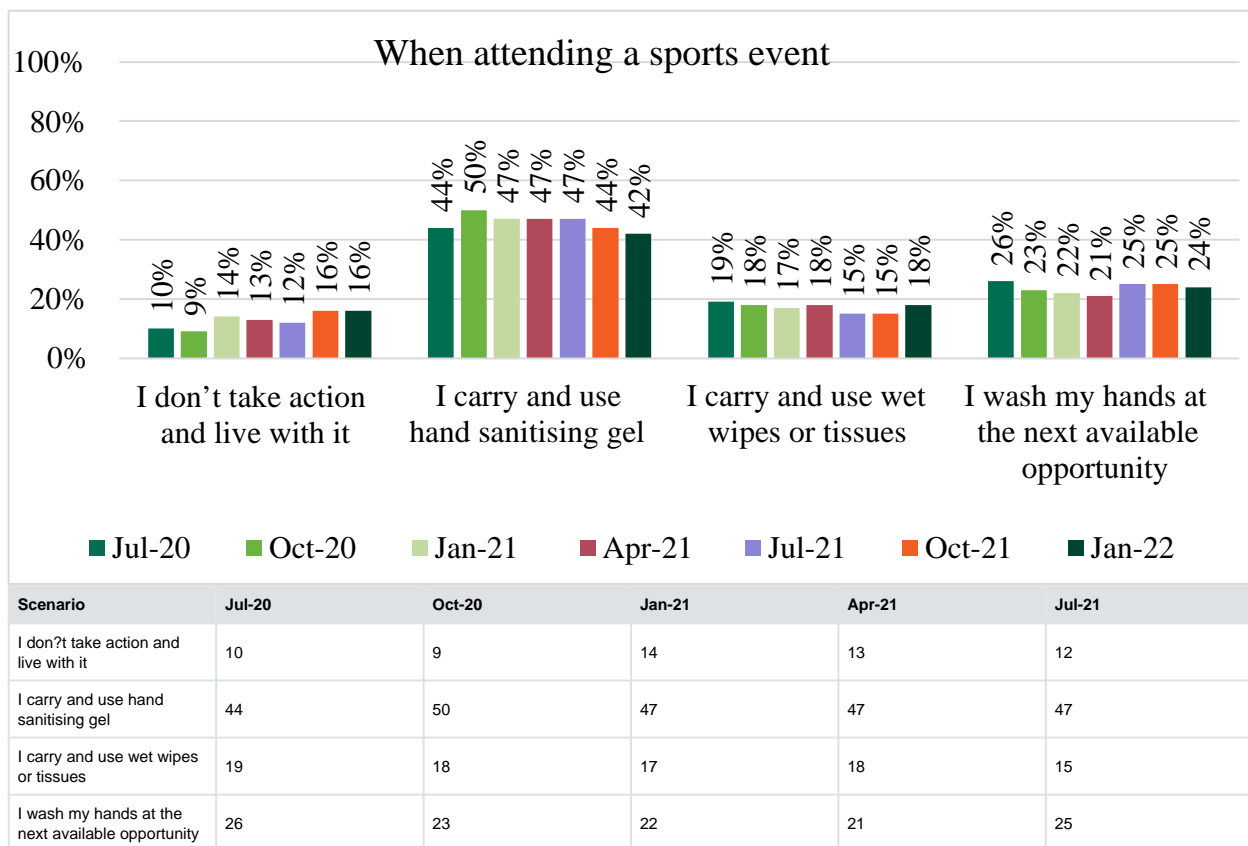
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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 18](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Figure 23: Alternatives to handwashing, when attending a sports event, when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)

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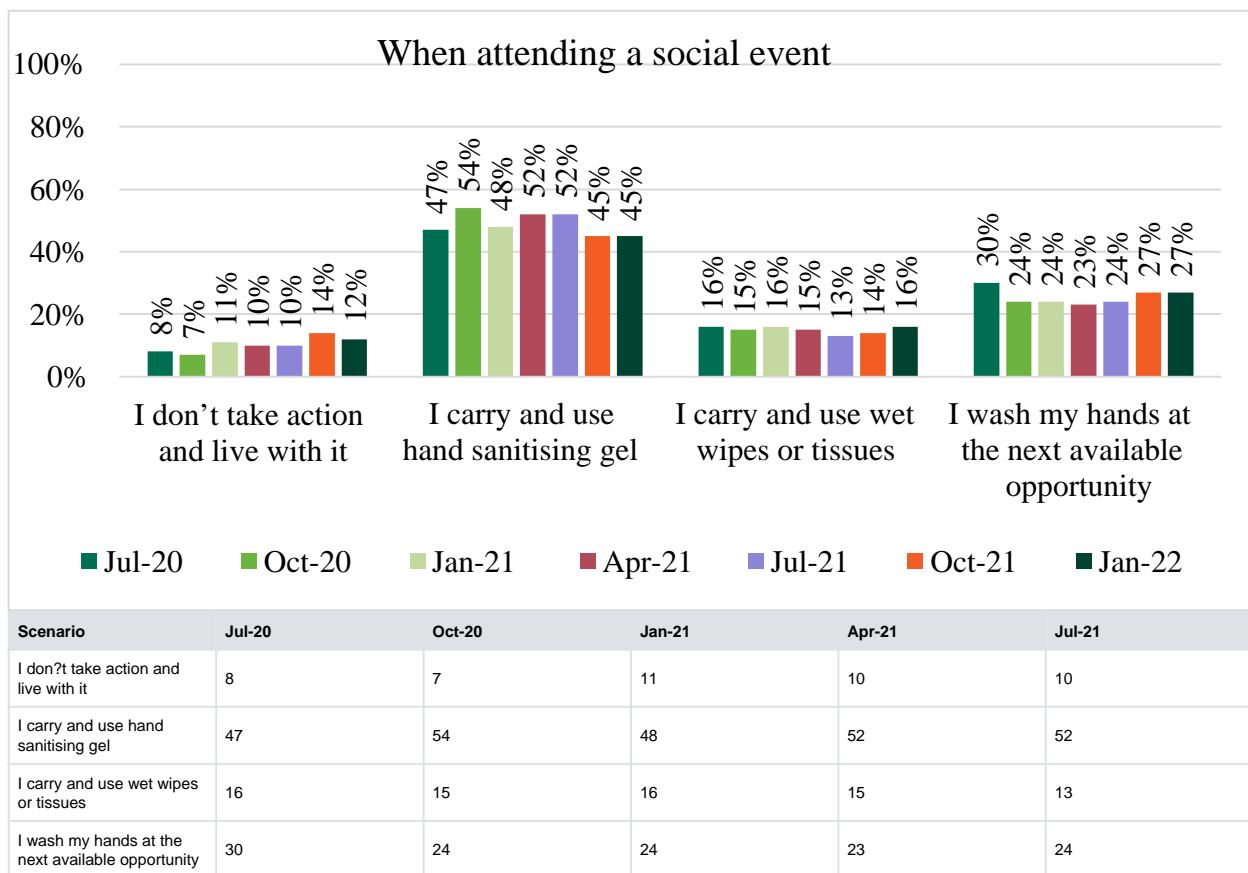
[Image .csv](#)

Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 19](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

Figure 24: Alternatives to handwashing, when attending a social event, when handwashing facilities are unavailable (July 2020 to January 2022)

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Base: Online England, Wales and NI adults 16-75 who reported carrying out these activities at the time of data collection ([footnote 20](#)): A table of sample sizes for each wave are included in Appendix 7. Data is only comparable from July 2020 onwards.

1. 'Prefer not to say' option was added in Wave 2. In wave 1, this option was 'Not applicable'.
2. In wave 1, question 3 was: 'When you are at home, typically how many seconds do you spend washing your hands each time?'
3. In wave 1, question 4 was: 'When eating outside of the home, how often, if at all, do you wash your hands, or use hand sanitising wipes or gels, before eating?. The question in wave 1 did not ask about specific situations, and response options were: 'Never, Sometimes, Most of the time, Always, Only when eating food without cutlery, Don't know'
4. In wave 1, question 7 was: 'How often, if at all, do you wash your hands... a) After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing into your hands? b) After using the toilet?'
5. 'Prefer not to say' option was added in Wave 2. In wave 1, this option was 'Not applicable'.

6. In wave 1, question 8 was: 'If you find yourself in a place where handwashing facilities are not immediately available (e.g. after using public transport, drinking in a pub, attending a live sports event), what action, if any do you usually take?'. In wave 1, question 8 did not ask about specific situations in turn, and answer options were: 'I don't take any action and live with it, I carry and use hand sanitising gel, I carry and use wet wipes or tissues, I wash my hands at the next available opportunity, Don't know, Other (text box to write in)'
7. In wave 1, question 9 was: 'Typically, how often, if at all, do you find handwashing facilities are not available or not usable in the following places?'
8. 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' option was added in Wave 2. In wave 1, this option was 'Not applicable'.
9. Question 10 was added from Wave 2.
10. Question 11 was added from Wave 2.
11. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
12. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
13. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
14. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
15. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' are excluded from the base.
16. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.
17. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.
18. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.
19. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.

20. Participants who reported 'I am not doing this activity at the moment' or 'not applicable' are excluded from the base.