Student COVID-19 Insights Survey – A Review of a Year of Surveys

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Office for National Statistics

- What the survey was and
- How the survey changed over time
- What the findings of the survey were
- Impact of our findings
- Our plans for the future

Survey was set up after students returned to university in September 2020

Covid: About 40 universities report coronavirus cases

28 September 2020

Fears grow student Covid infections will spread into local areas in England and Wales

Covid: three universities halt face-to-face teaching as UK strategy unravels

At least 5,000 confirmed cases reported among students and staff at campuses across country

Covid: Manchester Metropolitan students 'feel completely neglected'

Key questions we were initially asked to investigate were:

1. To what extent were students following guidance on coronavirus (social distancing, self-isolation etc.)?
2. Do students feel that the restrictions have had an impact on the quality of education they are receiving?
3. How are the mental health and wellbeing of students being affected by coronavirus restrictions?

SCIS used similar methods to other coronavirus surveys our team produced

Coronavirus and clinically extremely vulnerable people in England: 18 January to 30 January 2021

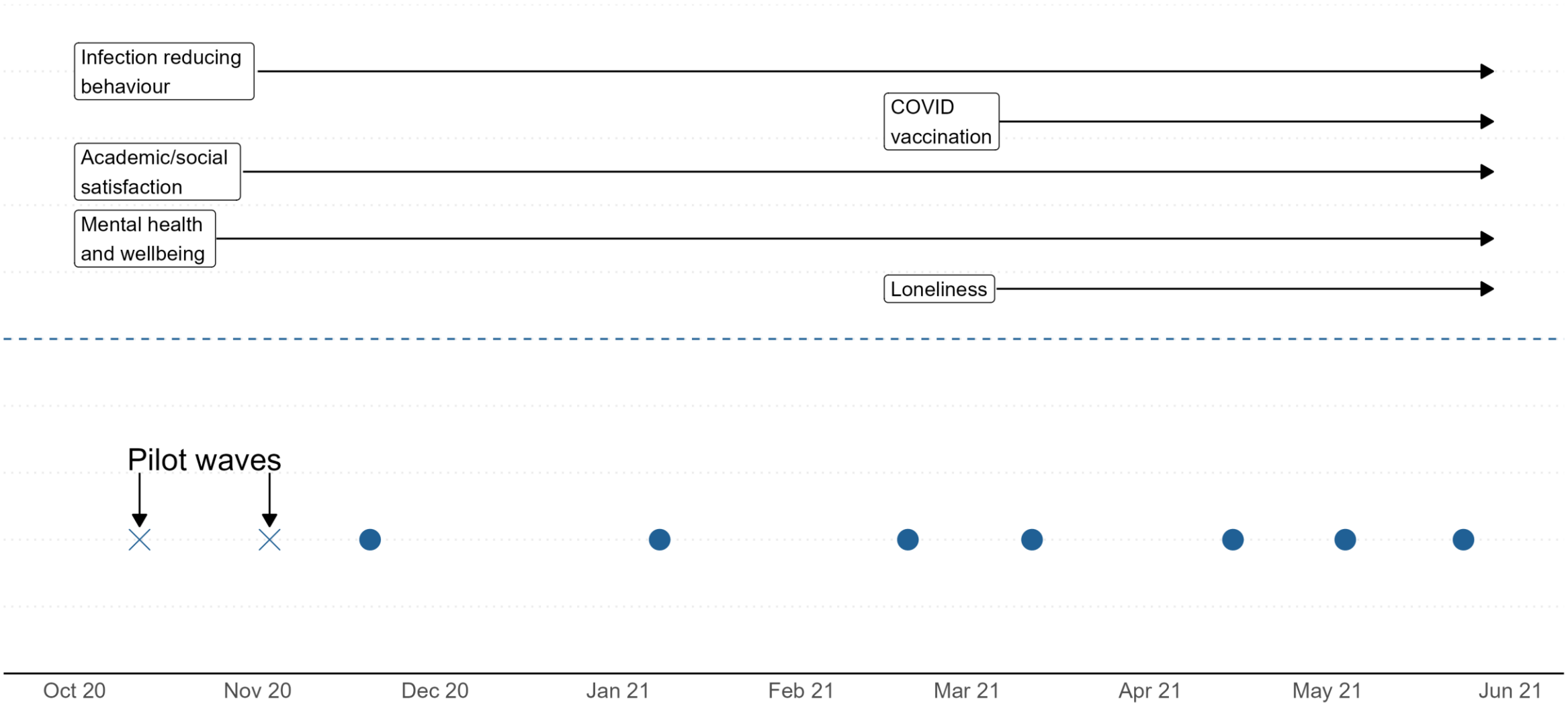
Coronavirus and quarantine after arriving in England from an amber list country: 12 to 17 July 2021

Coronavirus and vaccine attitudes and behaviours in England: over 80s population, 15 February to 20 February 2021

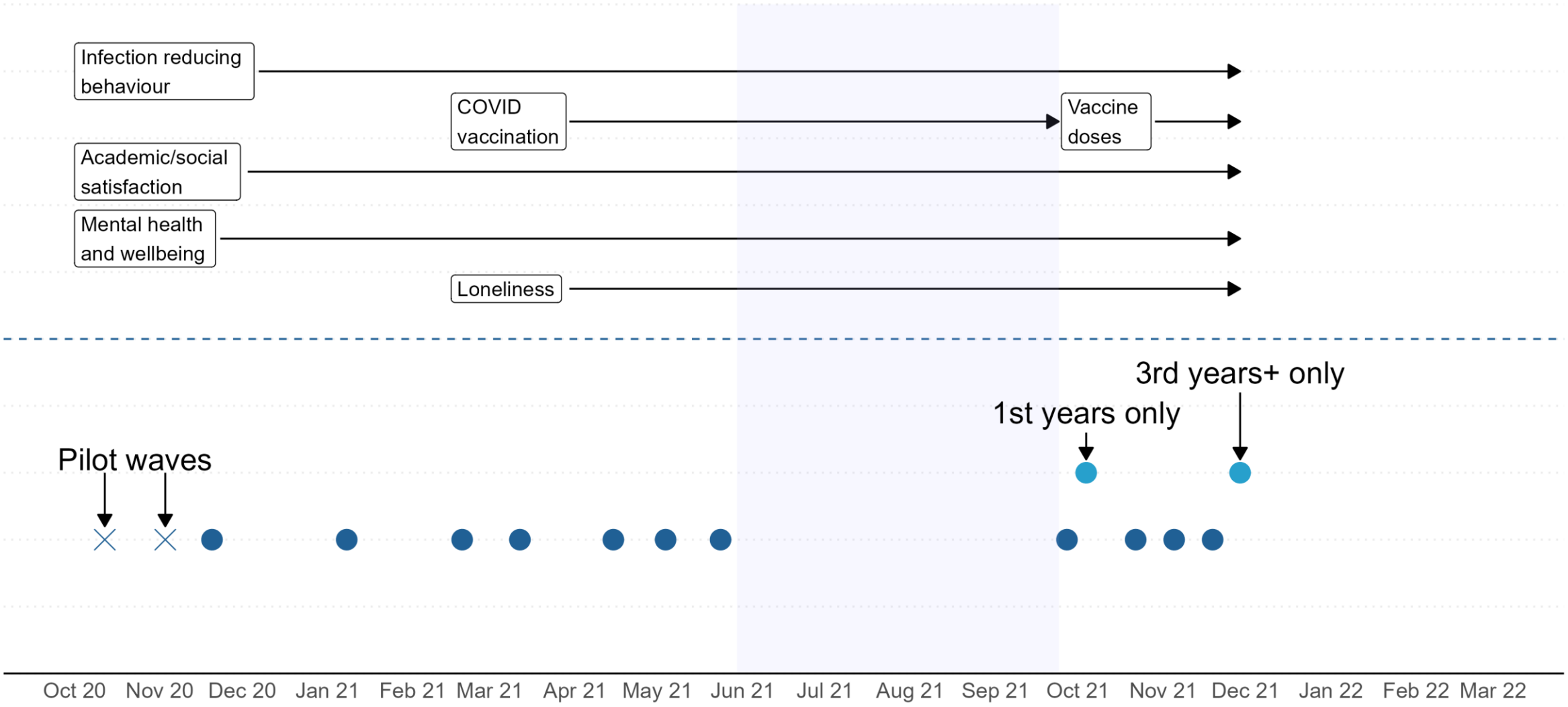
Coronavirus and self-isolation after being in contact with a positive case in England: 1 March to 6 March 2021

- Surveys for individuals to complete, consisting of around 50 questions
- In SCIS' case, survey was conducted online, rather than face-to-face or by phone
- Two special waves of SCIS run on specific groups of students: one on first year students, another on third year students. Published under title Student Experiences Insights Surveys

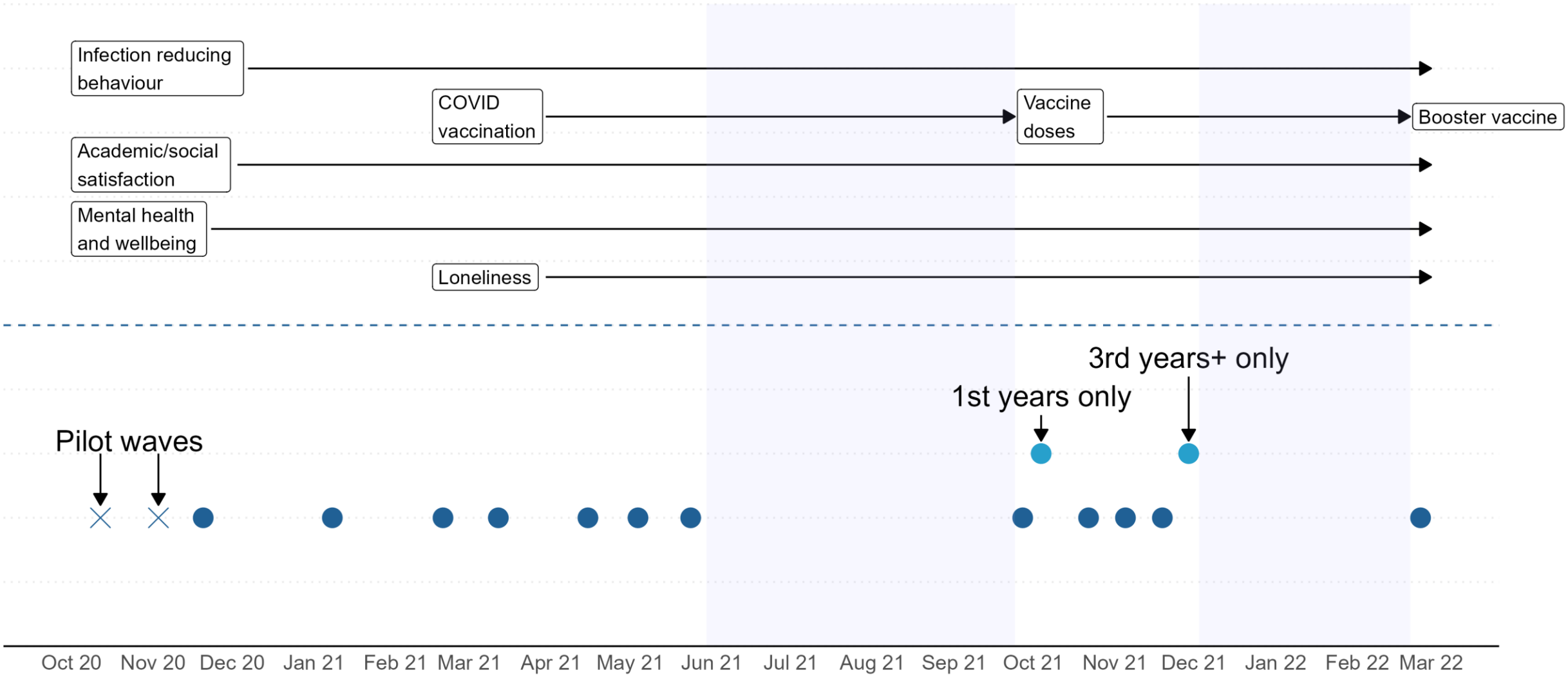
Timeline of publications: Phase 1 from November 2020 to May 2021



Timeline of publications: Phase 2 from September 2021 to November 2021



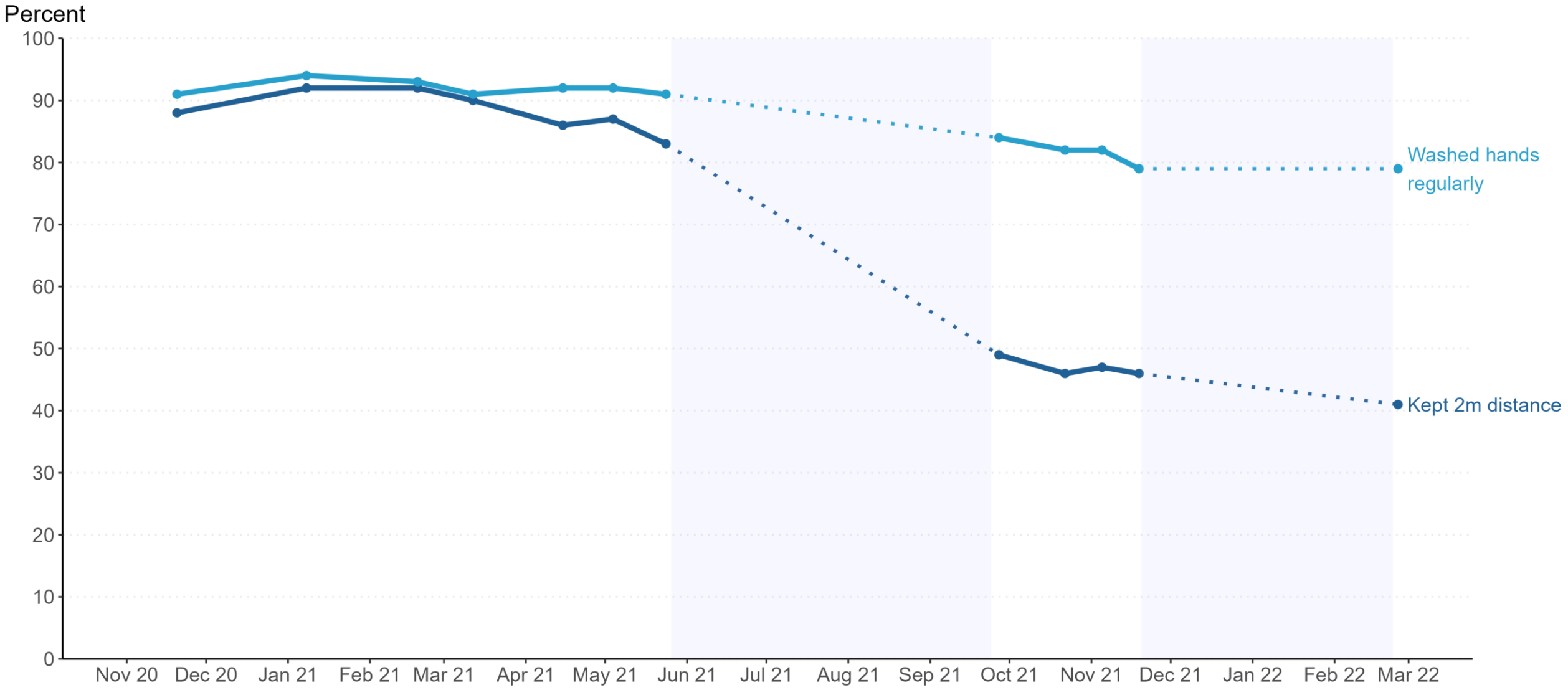
Timeline of publications: one final publication in March 2022



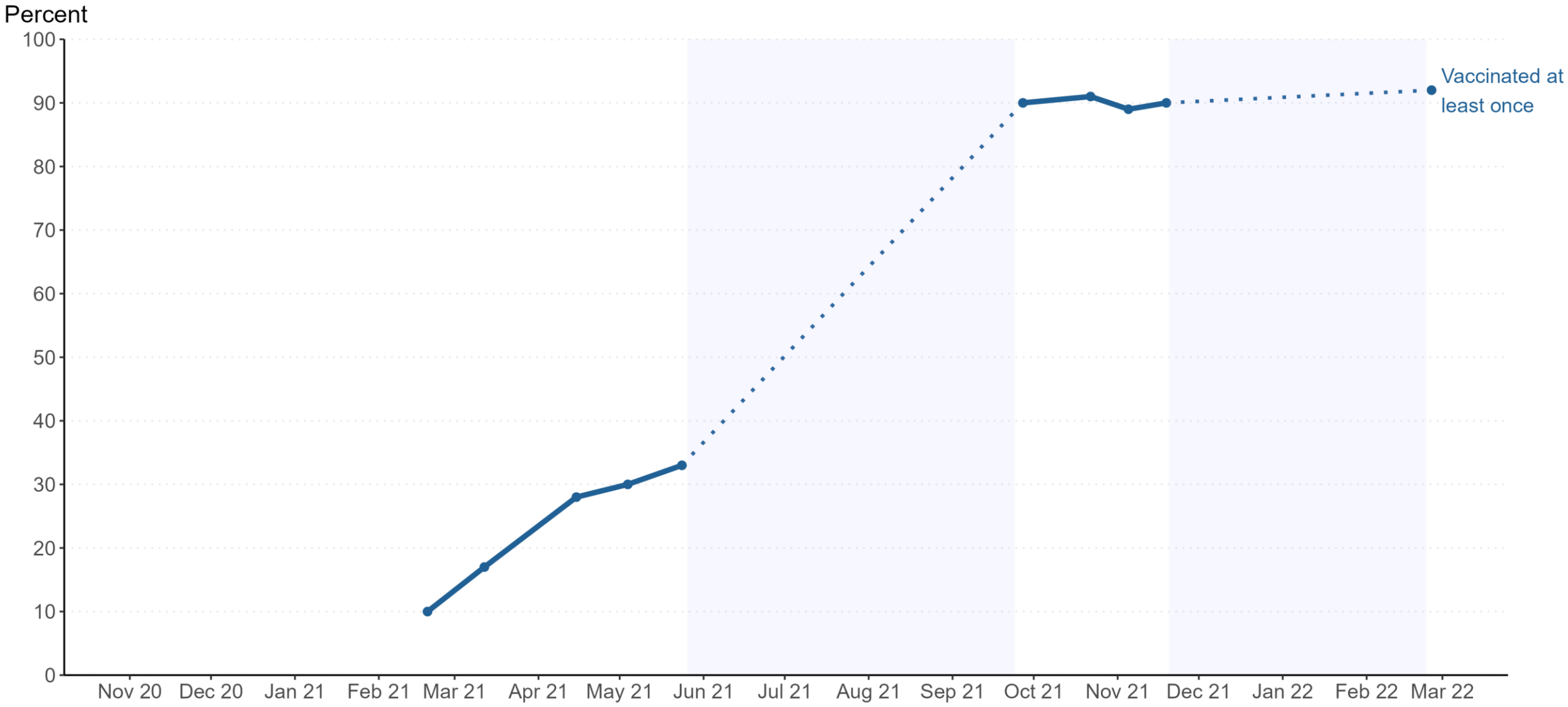
Key findings

1. **To what extent were students following guidance on coronavirus (social distancing, self-isolation etc.)?**
2. Do students feel that the restrictions have had an impact on the quality of education they are receiving?
3. How are the mental health and wellbeing of students being affected by coronavirus restrictions?

Students generally complied with guidance around coronavirus prevention



Students also generally took the coronavirus vaccine when offered to them



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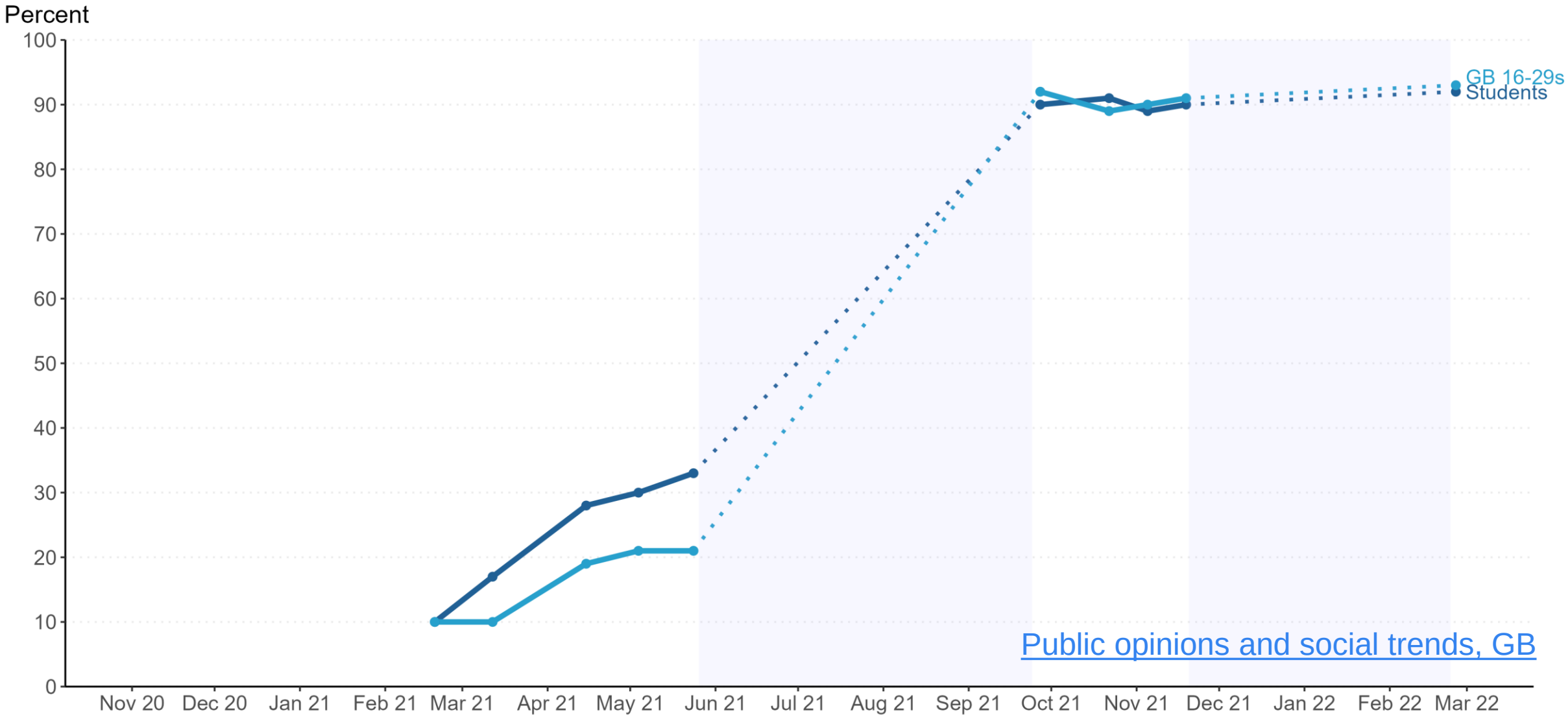
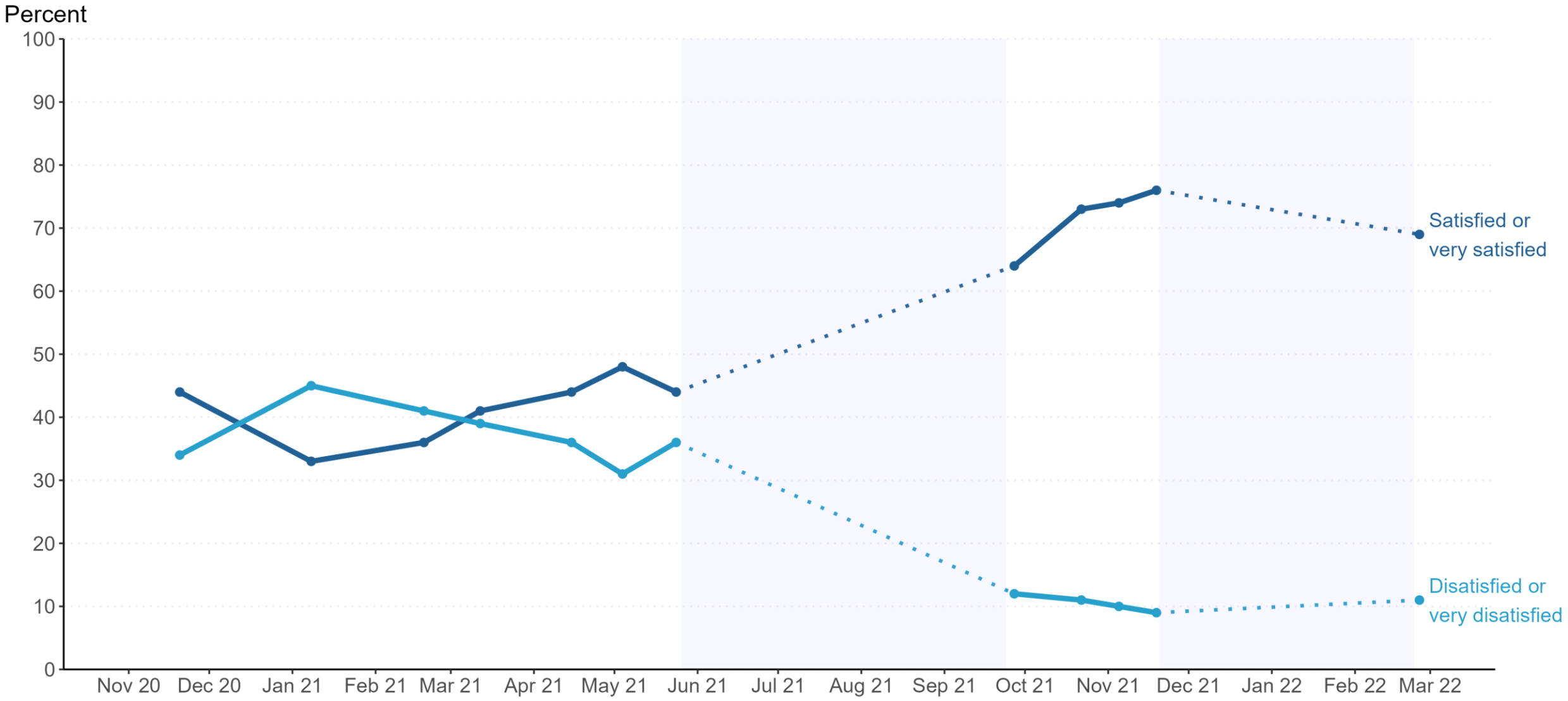
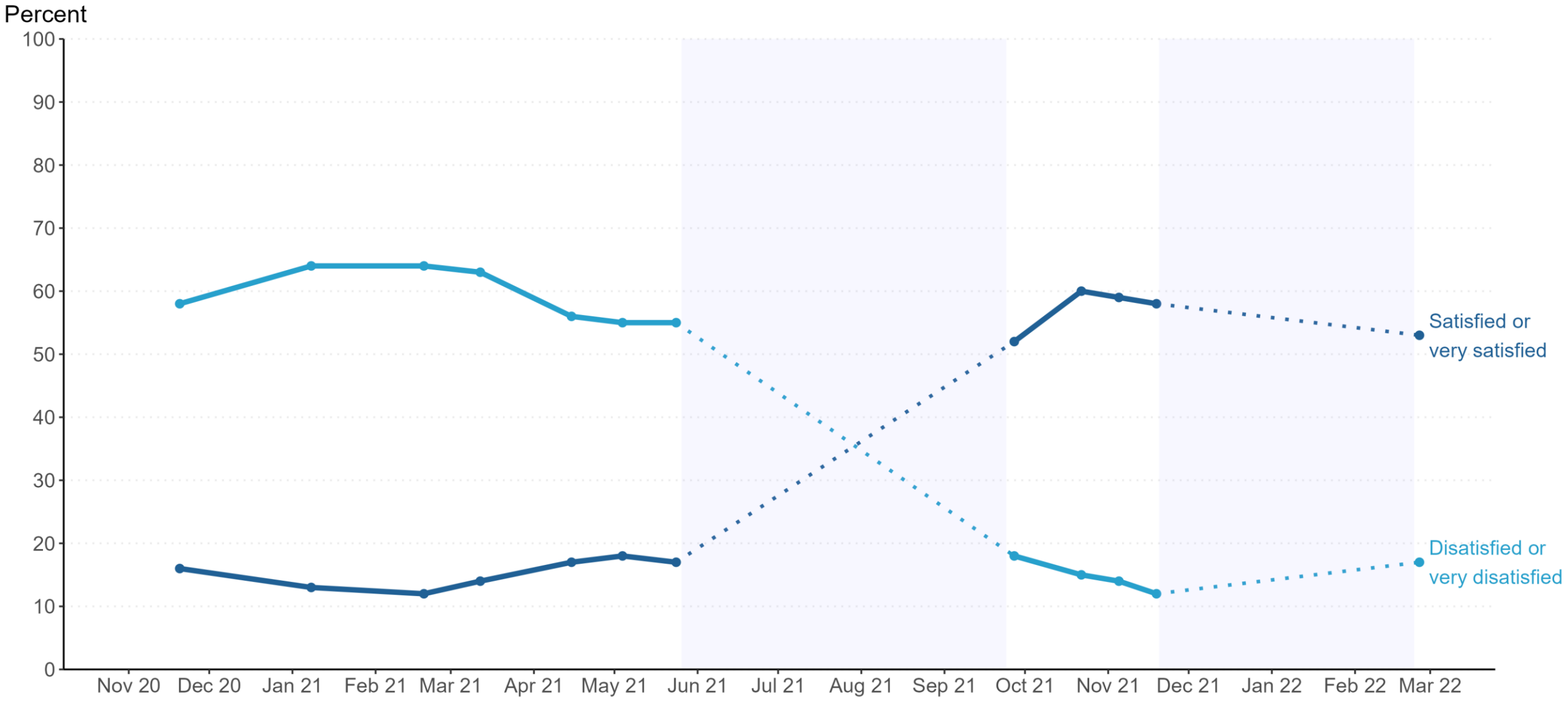


1. Students broadly complying with coronavirus restrictions in same proportion as general population
2. **Do students feel that the restrictions have had an impact on the quality of education they are receiving?**
3. How are the mental health and wellbeing of students being affected by coronavirus restrictions?

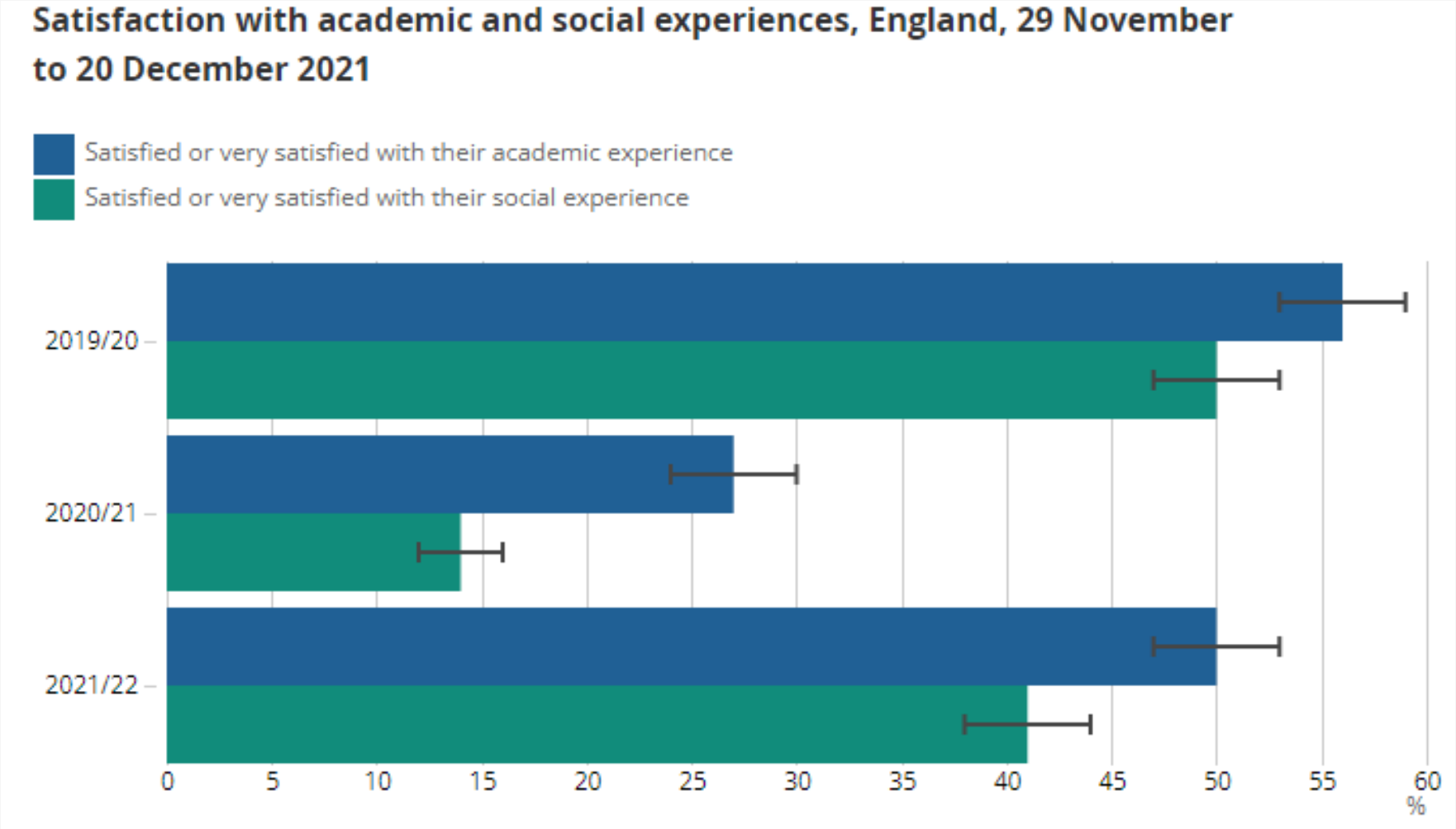
Students satisfaction with academic experience increased after summer 2021



Students satisfaction with social experience also increased after summer 2021

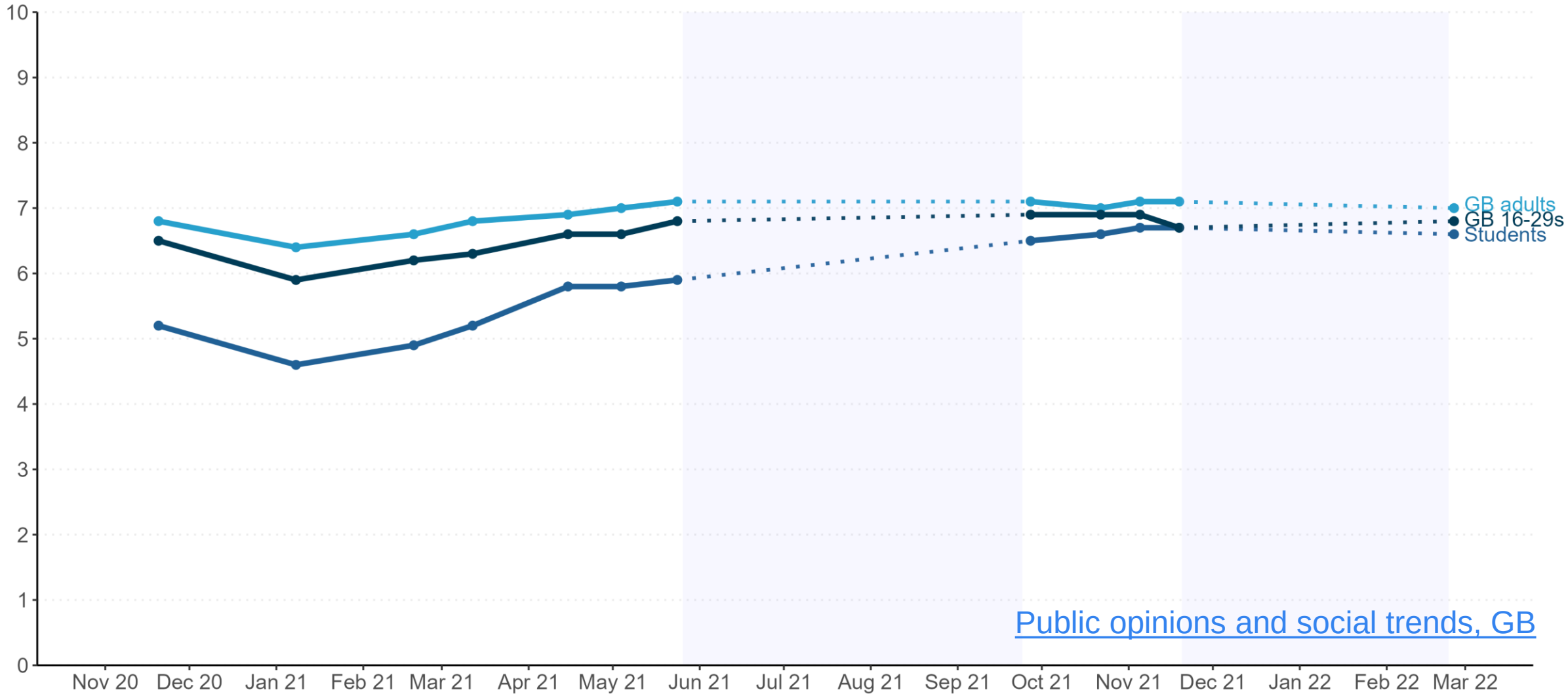


Third year students reported increased satisfaction, but not as high as 19/20



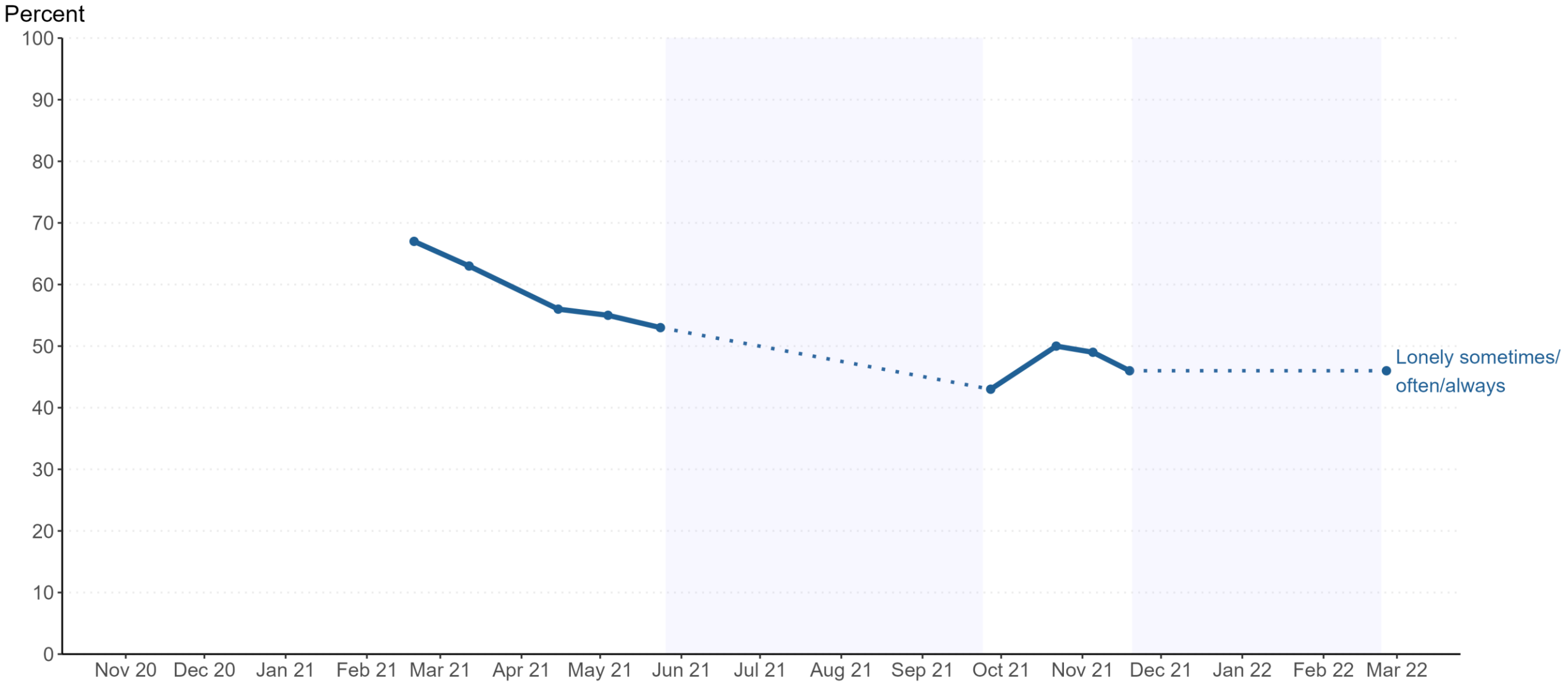
1. Students broadly complying with coronavirus restrictions in same proportion as general population
2. Clear increase in satisfaction with academic/social experience after summer 2021
3. **How are the mental health and wellbeing of students being affected by coronavirus restrictions?**

Students consistently reported lower life satisfaction than UK adults



Public opinions and social trends, GB

Around half of students reported feeling lonely often/always or some of the time



First year students more likely to have signs of anxiety and depression

	Foundation & first year students	16–29-year-olds in GB[1]	Adult population in GB[1]
Anxiety (GAD7)	39%	28%	16%
Depression (PHQ8)	37%	22%	16%
Eating disorder (SCOFF)	27%	-	-
Eating/body image issues (SCOFF)	23%	-	-

1. Source - Depression or anxiety in adults, Great Britain: 22 September to 3 October 2021

First year students asked about engagement with MH services

21% had engaged with wellbeing and mental health services in the last 12 months

	GP/primary care	Private counsellor	NHS/IAPT programme	University services	Don’t know
Past use	47%	30%	28%	26%	
Hypothetical future use (in the first instance)	16%	12%	5%	23%	24%

70% would prefer face-to-face support should they need it in the future, compared to 13% who would prefer online support

Impact and future work

10:18 22 Oct 2021

78% of students in England fully vaccinated, survey suggests

A survey by the Office for National Statistics suggests that 90% of students at university in England have had at least one Covid vaccine dose and 78% have had two.

Third of new students in England show signs of depression, survey suggests

'Experimental' ONS survey of first-years finds 37% have symptoms of depression and 39% of anxiety

27% of students had no in-person teaching during first week in March – study

Figures also show student mental health has become significantly worse since November 2021.

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Final-year students fear impact of Covid-19 on grades

Do a quarter of students have an eating disorder?

Using the same methods to look at impact of rising cost-of-living on students

Release:

Cost of living and higher education students: England, 24 October to 7 November 2022

This release is not yet published

Contact:	Release date:	Next release:
	23 November 2022 09:30	To be announced

Special thanks to:

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Nuri Alam

Lynsey Owens, Jo Stanton

Department of Health & Social Care

Department for Education

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Sources:
Coronavirus and higher education students
Coronavirus and first year higher education students
Coronavirus and third year or higher students in higher education students
Depression or anxiety in adults, Great Britain: 22 September to 3 October 2021
Public opinions and social trends, GB