

WORCESTER U3A
MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
JUNE 2021

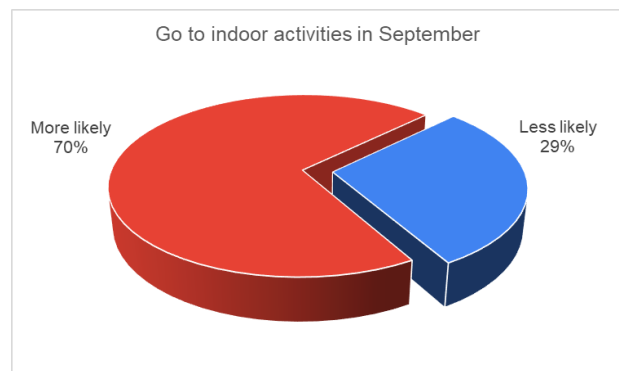
COVID-19: WHEN TO RE-START ACTIVITIES

Introduction and summary

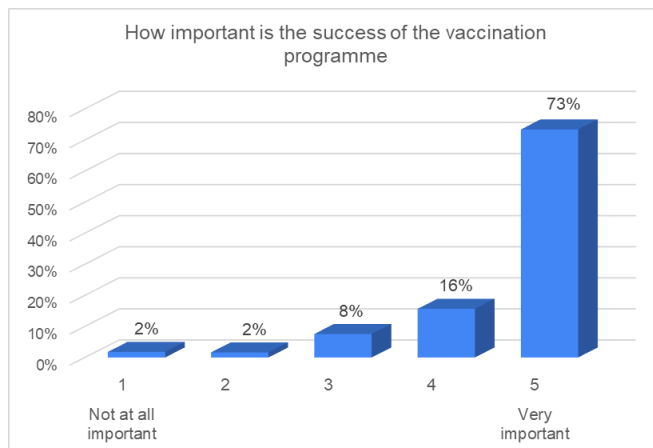
In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic struck and Worcester u3a activities were suspended. One year ago in July 2020, we asked members to tell us when they thought we may be able to start meeting again. That survey was just as the country was emerging from the first lockdown. This year as we are emerging from the third lockdown and the lifting of social contact restrictions, we asked members again.

All 810 Worcester u3a members were asked to contribute to the survey (780 online and 30 by post) and almost 70% of members responded. With over 100 individual comments and suggestions, the survey provides a rich insight into prevailing opinions.

Asked when members think we might be able to restart meeting in person, half say we might be able to start before the end of the year whilst one-third of respondents suggest that we wait and see. Despite some caution, over two-thirds of all respondents say they are likely or very likely to attend indoor activities in September if they were available, suggesting there is a willingness to get back together, perhaps sooner rather than later.



Sixteen months ago we had no groups that met online. Today over half of respondents to the survey have participated in online interest groups and Main Meetings and there are members, including many of those who will wait and see, who would like online activities to continue after we restart indoor activities, perhaps in parallel, and perhaps as a fallback should the situation with the pandemic deteriorate. This suggests that online activities may continue to be a valued option whilst the situation remains uncertain.



The most significant development since last year has been the successful introduction of a vaccine providing protection against COVID-19. Almost three-quarters of members place great importance on the vaccination programme in deciding when and how to return to meeting in person.

Members also see social distancing and face-coverings as important although slightly less of an incentive to returning to meeting in person than a year ago and made many useful suggestions about how we might restart in-person activities safely.

In June 2021, members are enthusiastic about restarting indoor activities before the end of the year, perhaps in September, and many have indicated their intention to return to meeting in person sooner rather than later. This is, however, an enthusiasm tinged with caution and there is recognition of the continuing uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

Members appreciate that not everyone will want to return to meeting in person immediately and suggest that we remain flexible to support Group Leaders and provide for both the differing needs of members and the potentially unpredictable course of the pandemic.

Survey results

Developments since 2020

The impact of the pandemic on Worcester u3a has been substantial – no interest groups or Main Meetings have been held indoors for 16 months and membership has fallen – the number of new members this year is far lower than usual and fewer existing members renewed at the beginning of the year:

MEMBERSHIP	2021	2020	CHANGE
ONLINE MEMBERS	780	1,015	-23%
POSTAL MEMBERS	30	50	-40%
TOTAL	810	1,065	-24%
NEW MEMBERS	22	153	-84%

Excludes 22 reciprocal & insurance members (2020: 34)

Against this background and the hope that we can soon restart indoor meetings, members were asked for their views on the possibilities of meeting in person again.

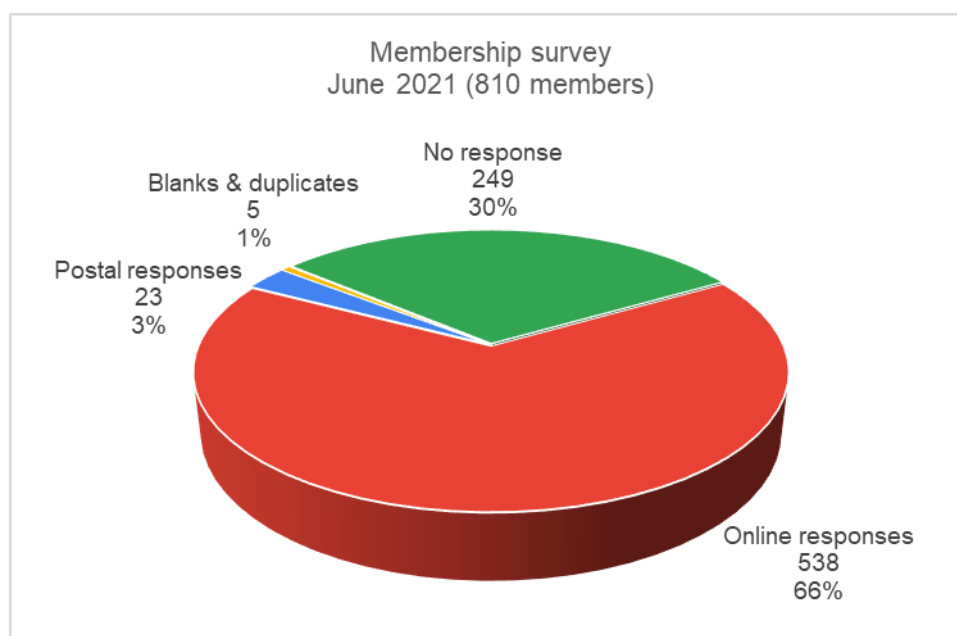
This survey, broadly, repeats a survey carried out in July 2020 when the country was emerging from the first lockdown. At that time, additional social distancing controls were introduced, including the requirement to wear face-coverings in enclosed public spaces.

This year and despite the third national lockdown ending and legally enforceable social contact restrictions being lifted (19 July 2021), considerable uncertainty remains over the future development of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An outline timeline of the key dates in the pandemic is included in Annex A.

[n.b. Respondents completing the survey online are identified in the charts and tables as 'Online'. Members receiving the questionnaire by post are identified as 'Postal'.]

How many responses?



	2021			2020		
	ONLINE	POSTAL	TOTAL	ONLINE	POSTAL	TOTAL
QUESTIONNAIRES ISSUED	780	30	810	1,015	50	1,065
RECEIVED	543	23	566	749	28	777
BLANKS & DUPLICATES	(5)	-	(5)	(22)	-	(22)
COMPLETED	538	23	561	727	28	755
RESPONSE RATE	69%	77%	69%	72%	56%	71%

Blanks & duplicates have been excluded from the analysis

2021: Postal questionnaires (x2) received after 22 June have not been included

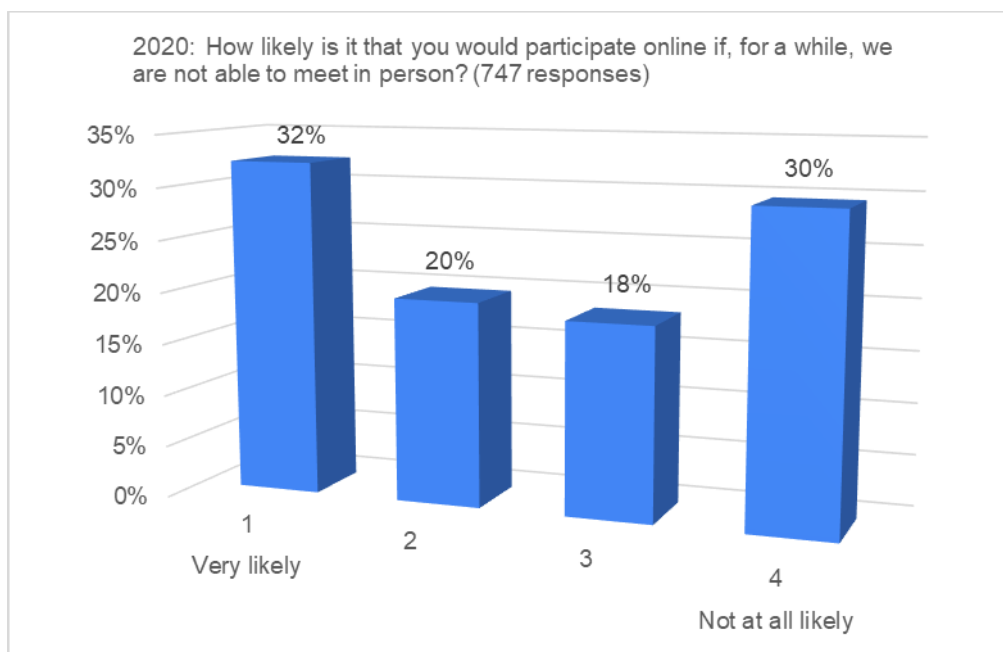
Comment: Almost 70% of members responded – a figure that is very similar to last year’s survey, and along with 110 comments (20%; 2020: 22%) means that the results are likely to be representative of members’ views.

The response rate amongst members receiving the survey by post was over one-third higher than 2020 and matched that of online respondents. The reason for this change is unknown but the lower response rate in 2020 may have been due to the pre-vaccination government stay-at-home advice at that time.

Q1. Have you participated in online groups or Main Meetings?

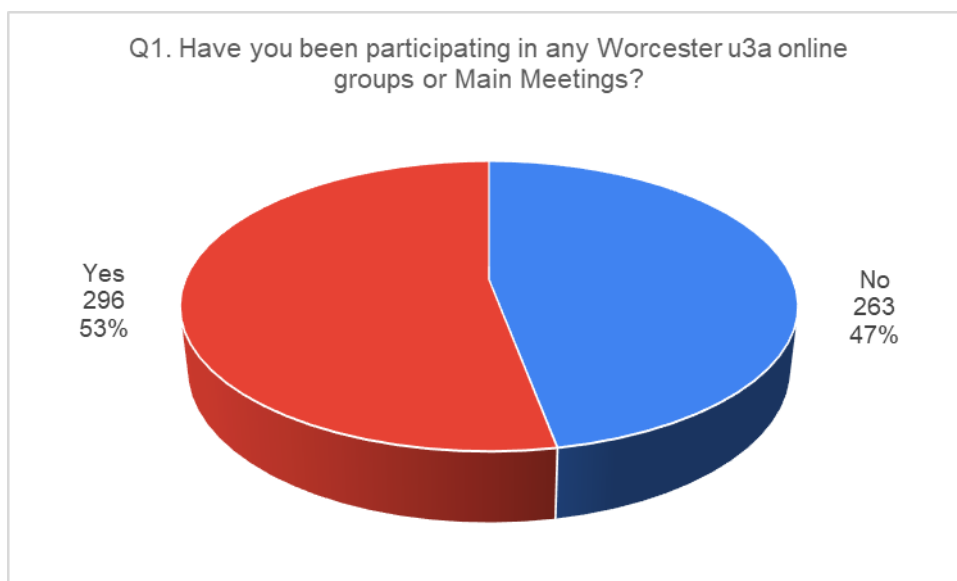
Purpose: In 2020, we asked members how likely it is that they would participate online. In 2021, members with the appropriate technology – laptop, computer, tablet, smartphone, and access to the internet – have had the opportunity to participate in u3a activities online. This question was aimed at identifying how many members have become online users.

In 2020:



2020		ONLINE	POSTAL	TOTAL
VERY LIKELY	1	33%	4%	32%
	2	20%	4%	20%
	3	19%	-	18%
NOT AT ALL LIKELY	4	27%	92%	30%
	RESPONSES	721	26	747

And in 2021:



	2021	ONLINE	POSTAL	TOTAL
YES		55%	3%	53%
NO		45%	87%	47%
RESPONSES		536	23	559

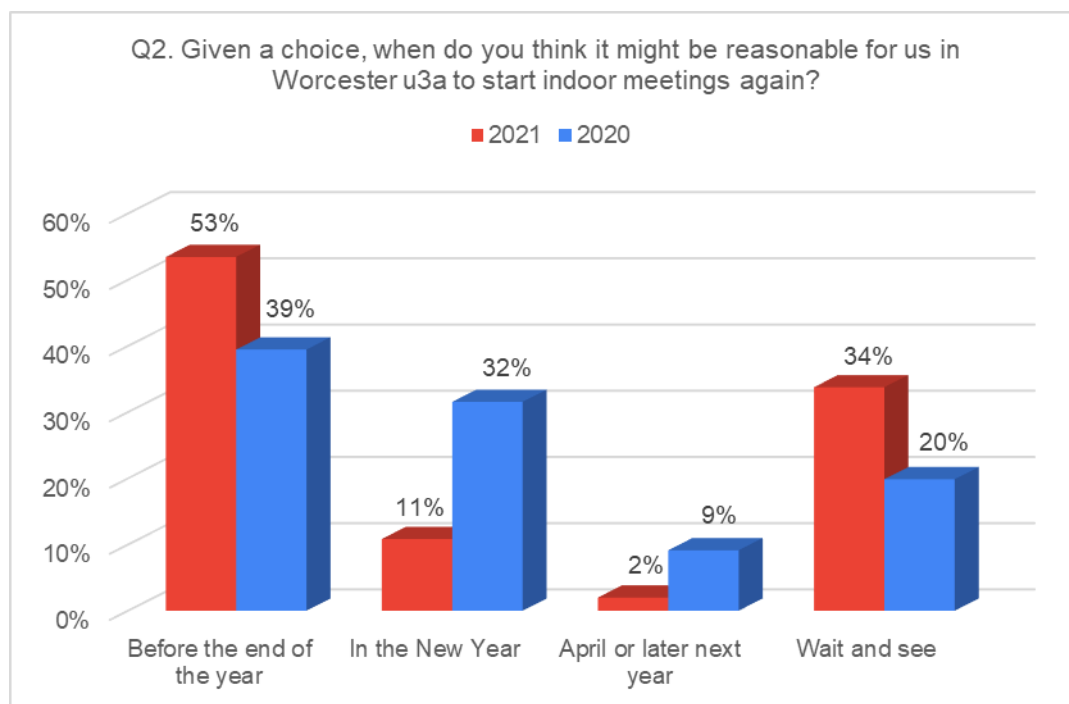
Comment: In 2021 just over half of all respondents (53%) have participated in online activities, almost the same proportion of respondents who last year said they were likely or very likely (score 1 or 2) to participate online (52%). As there were no online activities before the start of the pandemic this represents a marked change in how members have been able to meet.

Of the 23 postal responses, only three say they have participated online. These responses may have come from members who have an email address but prefer to receive paper copies of communications (8/30 postal recipients have provided an email address, 27%).

An analysis of interest groups who have been meeting online is included in Annex B.

Q2. When should we start indoor activities again?

Purpose: This was a general question about when members thought we might be able to start indoor meetings again.



	2021		2020	
BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR	296	53%	294	39%
IN THE NEW YEAR	60	11%	235	32%
APRIL OR LATER NEXT YEAR	11	2%	68	9%
WAIT AND SEE	187	34%	148	20%
NO OPINION	3	<1%	4	<1%
RESPONSES	557		749	

In 2020, the question was: Given a choice, when do you think it might be reasonable for us in Worcester U3A to start meeting again in person, albeit on a gradual basis?

Comment: Over half of respondents say we might be able to meet in person again before the end of the year, up from 39% in 2020, whereas 34% of members will wait and see how things work out (2020: 20%). Fewer members suggest we could restart in the New Year or April or later. This may be because respondents are less likely than last year to make a prediction as to when it might be reasonable to restart meeting indoors.

There was a wide spread of opinions about when we might restart:

I have missed my [U3A group] so much, I would dearly love for it to start again as soon as possible.

It's still a difficult situation but as long as deaths and serious illness has stopped I will be happy to start attending meetings and activities again, but feel if numbers rise quickly during the next few weeks that will stop me attending.

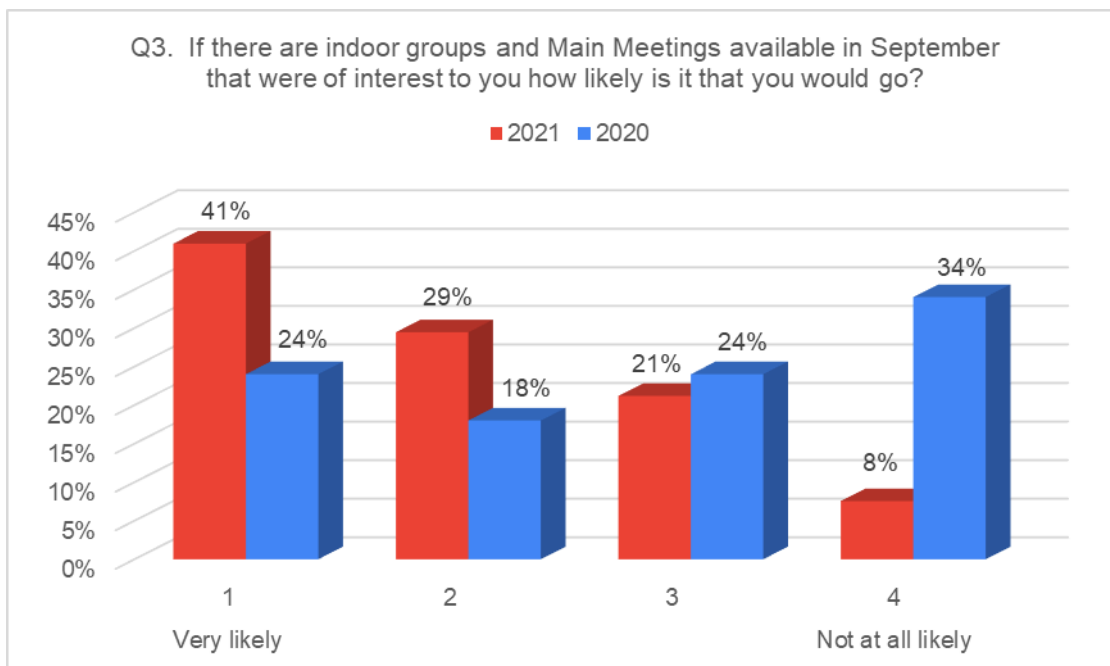
It's incredibly important to wait until such time as the pandemic situation is totally under control.

Some members see the lifting of restrictions as the right time to restart meetings:

I'm concerned that many groups would be too large for the rooms they have been using and that social distancing would mean "rationing" of places. Better to wait until social distancing is not necessary and let people choose whether or not they wish to attend in those circumstances, thus rationing by choice.

Q3. Would you go to meetings in September?

Purpose: This question asked the member to think about their commitment to go to meetings in September if they were available.



		2021		2020	
VERY LIKELY	1	228	41%	183	24%
	2	165	29%	131	18%
	3	118	21%	183	24%
NOT AT ALL LIKELY	4	43	8%	251	34%
RESPONSES		554		748	

In 2020, the question was: If there are groups and Main Meetings available in September that were of interest to you how likely is it that you would go?

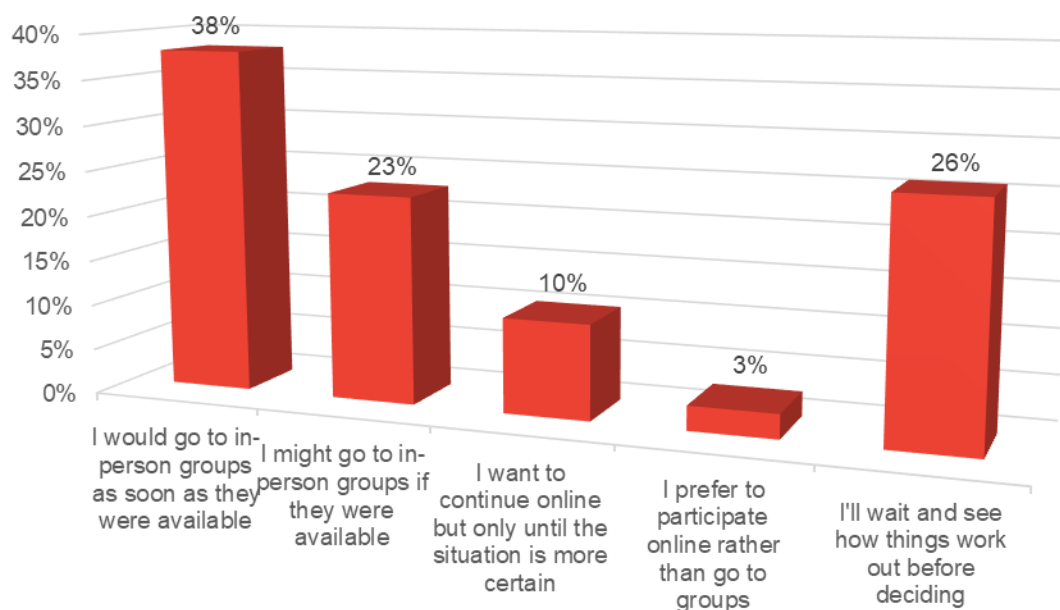
Comment: There is an over-50% increase in members who say it is likely or very likely that they will go to indoor meetings in September compared with last year (score 1 or 2). Equally, the number of respondents who say they are not at all likely to go to meetings in person fell from over a third of responses in 2020 to under 10% (score 4). This is a substantial shift in opinion suggesting that respondents are generally more likely than last year to attend activities if they were available.

I think we are all ready for the next phase whenever we are allowed to meet again. Agree guidelines have to be taken into consideration but I am ready to restart in September.

Q4. Would you prefer to participate in person or online?

Purpose: Given a choice, do members prefer to continue meeting online or to meet in person whilst the pandemic is not fully under control? Do online activities offer an attractive substitute for meeting face-to-face? There was no similar question in 2020.

Q4. Current government guidance suggests that we may be able to restart indoor groups before the pandemic is fully under control. If, as soon as we are allowed, we were to restart indoor groups how do you feel about attending?



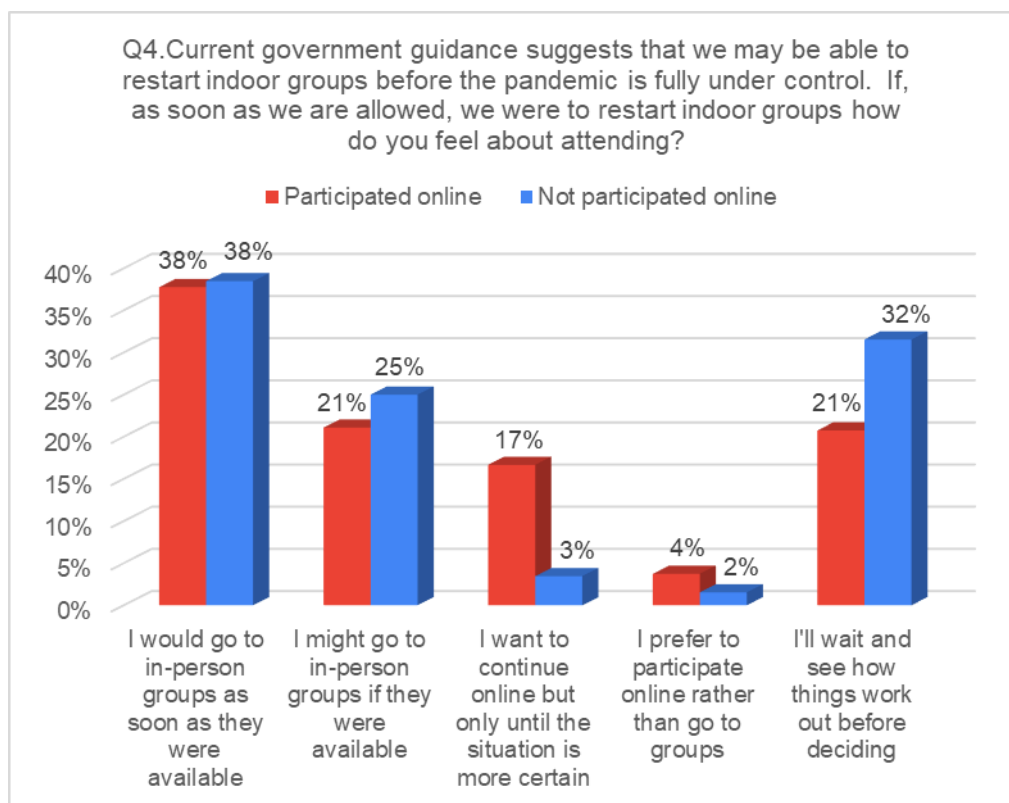
2021	ONLINE		POSTAL		TOTAL	
I WOULD GO TO IN-PERSON GROUPS AS SOON AS THEY WERE AVAILABLE	201	38%	10	45%	211	38%
I MIGHT GO TO IN-PERSON GROUPS IF THEY WERE AVAILABLE	125	23%	2	9%	127	23%
I WANT TO CONTINUE ONLINE BUT ONLY UNTIL THE SITUATION IS MORE CERTAIN	58	11%	-	-	58	10%
I PREFER TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE RATHER THAN GO TO GROUPS	15	3%	-	-	15	3%
I'LL WAIT AND SEE HOW THINGS WORK OUT BEFORE DECIDING	134	25%	10	45%	144	26%
RESPONSES	533		22		555	

Comment: Well over half of members say they might or would go to indoor activities as soon as they are available (61%). Fewer members say they prefer to continue meeting online either as a stopgap or more permanently (13%) suggesting that respondents generally prefer to go to meetings in person if given a choice. None of the members receiving the survey by post selected these online options.

Although postal respondents are as enthusiastic about going to activities in person as online respondents, more postal respondents say they will wait and see before deciding (45% cf 25% online respondents). This result is similar to wait-and-see responses to Q2 *When might we be able to restart* (45% postal cf 33% online wait-and-see respondents), suggesting that postal respondents may be more cautious in deciding when they might return to meeting in person.

In 2021, how important are online activities to members?

We can compare responses from members who have and have not participated in online activities to understand whether they will participate online or in person whilst the pandemic is still with us.



2021	HAVE PARTICIPATED ONLINE		HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED ONLINE		TOTAL	
I WOULD GO TO IN-PERSON GROUPS AS SOON AS THEY WERE AVAILABLE	111	38%	100	38%	211	38%
I MIGHT GO TO IN-PERSON GROUPS IF THEY WERE AVAILABLE	62	21%	65	25%	127	23%
I WANT TO CONTINUE ONLINE BUT ONLY UNTIL THE SITUATION IS MORE CERTAIN	49	17%	9	3%	58	10%
I PREFER TO PARTICIPATE ONLINE RATHER THAN GO TO GROUPS	11	4%	4	2%	15	3%
I'LL WAIT AND SEE HOW THINGS WORK OUT BEFORE DECIDING	61	21%	82	32%	144	26%
RESPONSES	294		260		554	

Comment: There is only a small difference in the intention to go to groups in person between members who have or have not participated online. However, members who have not participated online are more likely to wait and see how the situation unfolds (32%) compared with those who have participated online (21%).

Respondents who have participated in online activities are more likely to see online activities as an option than non-online respondents (21% participated online cf 5% not participated online) suggesting that members may consider online participation to be an alternative to wait-and-see.

How likely is it that respondents will go to activities in person?

Purpose: By analysing responses from Q2 *When do you think we might restart meeting indoors*, and Q3 *Would you go to indoor activities if they were available in September*, we can get an impression of how committed respondents are to returning to indoor meetings.

Comment: Over half of respondents (53%; 2020: 39%) say we might be able to start meeting in person again before the end of the year (Q2) and a substantial majority of these members (90%; 2020: 81%) also say they are likely or very likely to go to meetings if they were available in September (Q3 score 1 or 2). This suggests that respondents are more optimistic about meeting up again in person than a year ago.

In 2021, although more respondents say they would wait and see before making any decisions (Q2 34%; 2020: 20%), only 12% (2020: 45%) of wait-and-see respondents say it is unlikely that they are likely or very likely to attend groups if they were available in September (Q3 score 4), and almost half (49%; 2020: 21%) say they might or would attend (Q3 score 1 or 2). This is a marked change in attitude and suggests that members who are presently undecided consider attending meetings in September to be a real possibility.

As soon as it is deemed safe I would be prepared to attend any indoor group.

Our Zoom meetings are going well, but we are impatient to start face-to-face meetings asap.

I want to get back to meeting in person as I have found zoom meetings rather challenging.

Some members have expressed a preference for online meetings or at least to have a choice between meeting in person and participating online:

I prefer attending Main Meetings online and would like to be able to continue to enjoy the presentations online, even if it is after the event itself.

Would like to continue online as well as in person groups.

And suggest that we might have a combination of face-to-face and online meetings:

Would ideally like to see a mix of in person and online meetings - I personally have enjoyed and made great use of online meetings and for some things like inviting speakers from a distance they are better than [the combination of] dodgy wifi or internet connections in halls and travelling [to meetings] (I rely on public transport). But I also like meeting up with u3a friends and appreciate some people are excluded by online only.

Some sort of hybrid arrangement might be needed for a transition period, e.g. while some members may be reluctant to join a physical meeting in September it would be beneficial if groups could support them remotely as a sub-group via Zoom, on a different date or time, to maintain at least some engagement with the Group's activities.

I think U3A members are able to make informed choices about face to face meetings based upon their own individual situation. It would be nice if in person and Zoom meetings were available so the needs of all members could be catered for.

It is going to be impossible to please everyone and Covid is likely to be with us permanently. If, as I expect, there will be people who want to resume face to face sessions and others who prefer on-line only, perhaps the decision should be the group leader's as to how they want to offer their course.

Support for meeting online is not always a matter of providing choice or down to technical issues:

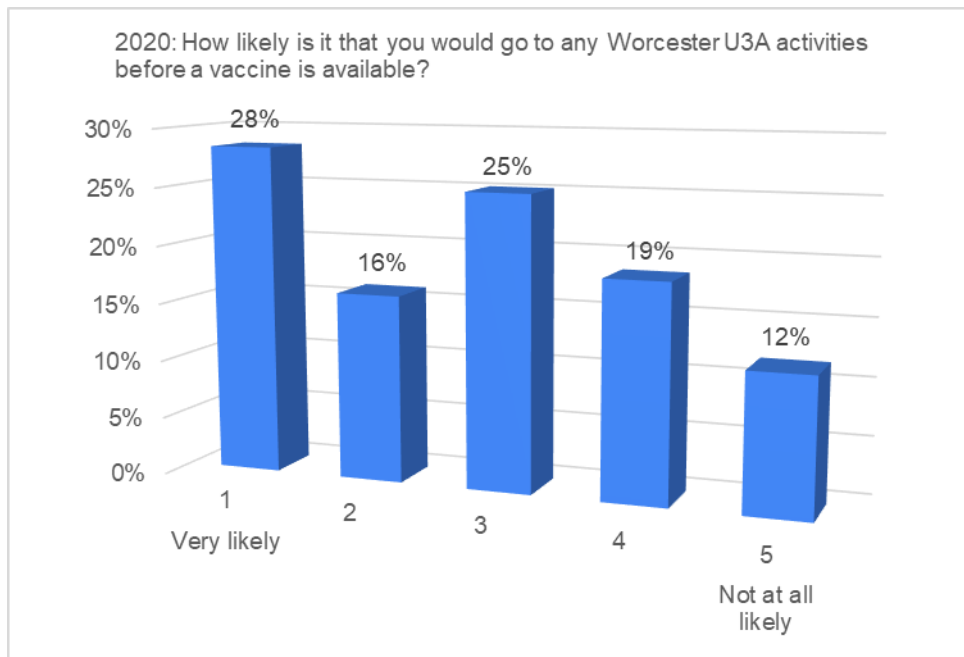
Pandemic has made me lazy – so easy to zoom and not have to drive around [...] Worcester [...]

Q5. The impact of the vaccine

Purpose: In 2020 we were all wondering if there would be a vaccine available. In 2021 a vaccine giving protection against COVID-19 is available and at the time of the survey, all Worcester u3a members are very likely to have been offered their second vaccination. Last year we asked whether

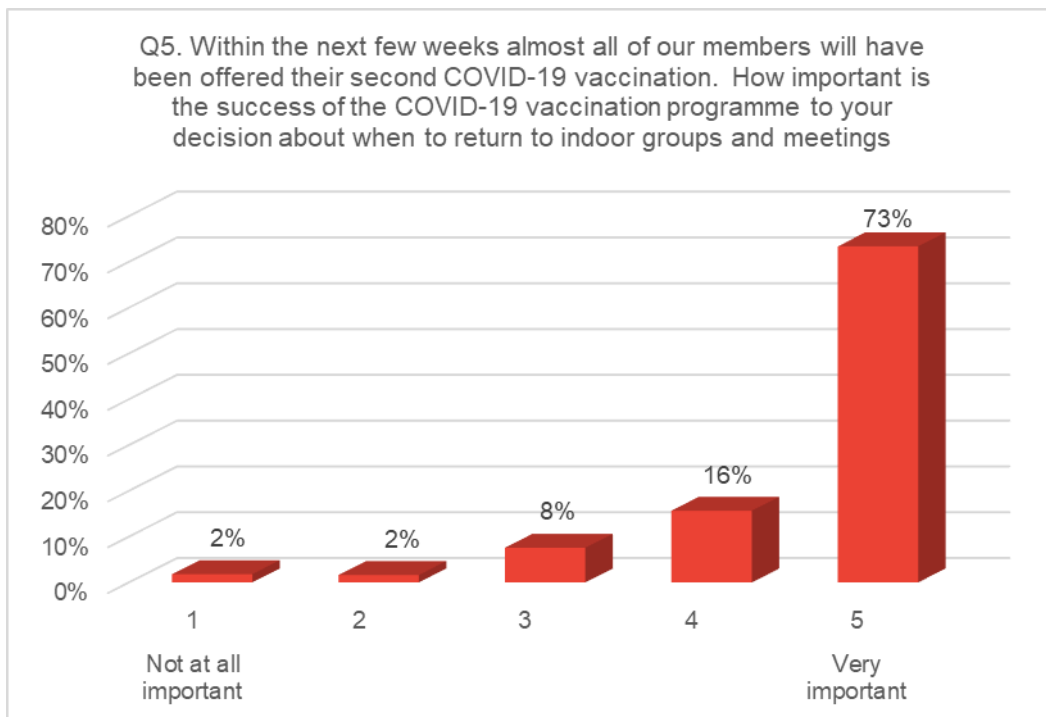
members would go to activities before a vaccine is available. This year we asked how important is the success of the vaccination programme to attending meetings in person.

In 2020:



2020		ONLINE	POSTAL	TOTAL
VERY LIKELY	1	28%	28%	28%
	2	16%	12%	16%
	3	25%	16%	25%
	4	18%	20%	19%
NOT AT ALL LIKELY	5	11%	24%	12%
	RESPONSES	719	25	744

And in 2021:



	2021	ONLINE		POSTAL		TOTAL	
NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	1	9	2%	1	5%	10	2%
	2	8	1%	1	5%	9	2%
	3	40	7%	2	9%	42	8%
	4	85	16%	2	9%	87	16%
VERY IMPORTANT	5	392	73%	16	73%	408	73%
	RESPONSES	534		22		556	

Comment: In 2020 before the introduction of a vaccine, under one-third of members (28%) said it was very likely they would go to meetings before one was available.

In 2021, with the vaccination programme well advanced, almost three-quarters of members say the success of the programme is very important in making the decision when to go to meetings in person.

As most of us will have had 2 jabs I think with care we could consider meeting fairly soon.

I see lots of sensible social mixing and believe that with the vaccines we are all as safe now as we are going to be for the foreseeable future.

Some members expressed their concern about inadvertently being exposed to the coronavirus if the vaccination status of other members is not known:

I am very aware that I will not know the covid vaccination status of other people in the room if I went to a meeting. For me this is a significant negative factor.

I feel all Worcester U3a members should be asked if they have had 2 vaccinations. Other members should be informed of any groups where members of the group have decided not to be vaccinated.

I think that all people attending an indoor group should provide proof that they have had the 2 vaccinations for Covid.

Overall:

I think the Committee needs to give clear guidelines regarding whether members need to declare that they have had their full course of vaccinations. Although it might be considered not inclusive (for now) to bar non-vaccinated members from live meetings, I think we should still ask the question, as being in a room with unvaccinated members could be putting others at risk.

All group leaders should be given the choice as to whether they feel comfortable running indoor groups. I would want to [be] able to insist that all attendees were fully vaccinated.

But there is also a recognition that the COVID-19 vaccination has its limitations:

I don't think any decision can be made at this stage. Even though we've been vaccinated we don't know how long it will be effective for. Cases in the community are currently increasing so although I'm going out and about much more than I did a few months ago, I'm still wary of being close to people I don't know well.

I have had two 'jabs' - [...] - but the virus is capable of varying unlimited times - so we can only hope that our vaccinations are capable of dealing with the variations as they occur.

The need and access to an "Autumn Booster" could be a "game changer".

Respondents acknowledge that the COVID-19 situation may be with us for much longer than just the winter:

Extreme caution is needed to avoid going backwards. This could well happen with a new "nasty" variant. We still do not know how long our immunity will last after vaccination. It is highly likely that an Autumn "jab" will be needed and at least once annually after that. Hopefully it will all work out that we will be able to "live with" coronavirus in the same way as we do with the influenza virus.

And suggest:

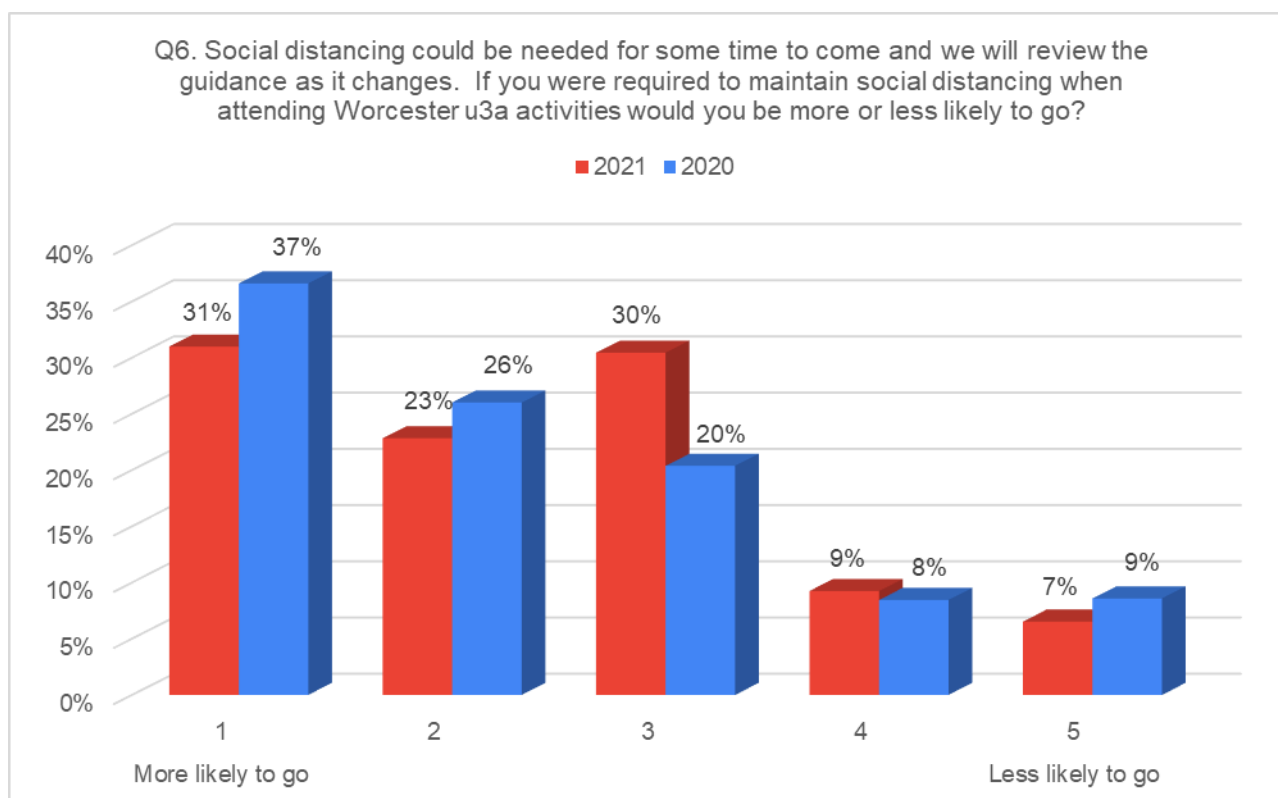
I believe there will be COVID-19 variants around for quite some time, perhaps all people attending could do a lateral flow test prior to the meeting and only attend if negative.

These suggestions might be seen as part of a broader picture:

As we are being told that Covid 19 will be with us forever, we will need to learn to live with it. Therefore as normal a life as possible will have to restart and we will have to accept the risks incurred.

Are social distancing (Q6), and face-coverings (Q7) an incentive?

Purpose: There has now been a year to get used to social distancing and wearing face-coverings in enclosed public spaces. The two questions were aimed at finding out how important these measures are to members' decisions as to when to participate again in face-to-face activities.



In 2020 the question was: If you were required to maintain social distancing when attending Worcester U3A activities would you be more or less likely to go?

		ONLINE		POSTAL		TOTAL	
		2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
MORE LIKELY TO GO	1	30%	37%	39%	35%	31%	37%
	2	23%	26%	13%	15%	23%	26%
	3	30%	20%	30%	23%	30%	20%
	4	9%	8%	4%	8%	9%	8%
LESS LIKELY TO GO	5	6%	8%	9%	19%	6%	9%
	RESPONSES	533	720	22	25	555	746

Comment: Since last year, there has been a modest overall change in opinion and members now see social distancing as slightly less of an incentive to attending meetings than last year.

Whilst some members accept the need for social distancing:

I think that as long as we are all double vaccinated and keep a sensible distance at meetings, there shouldn't be a problem at all. Looking forward to resuming in full.

Others are far more wary:

Horrified by even the thought of being in a crowd indoors.

Like many I guess am wary about face to face meetings indoors. Can't imagine venues where social distancing is possible for larger groups.

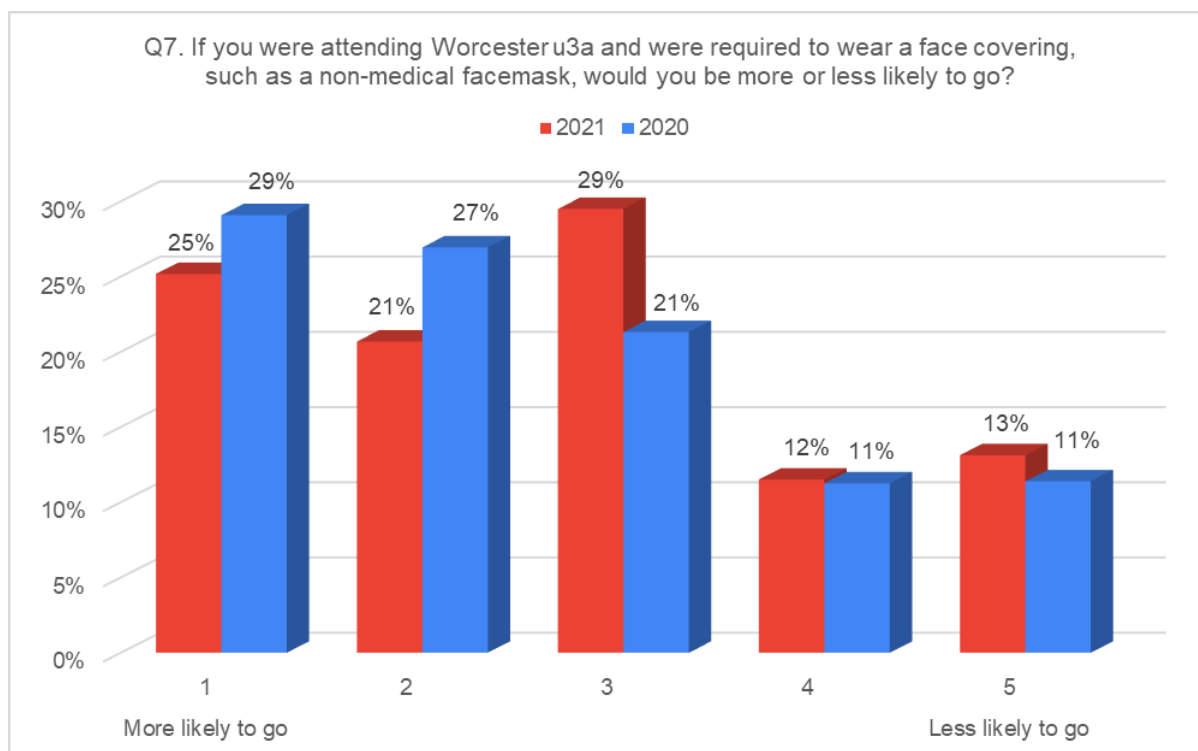
There is recognition that other changes may be required if social distancing must continue:

If social distancing would be in place then some activities would need a change of venue if the level of participation was as high as previously.

[...] by the very nature of this [group's] activity maintaining social distance may be difficult. [shortmat bowls]

Social distancing might be hard for groups which meet in private houses because of limited space. Obviously we would be OK in the garden.

And wearing face-coverings:



		ONLINE		POSTAL		TOTAL	
		2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
MORE LIKELY TO GO	1	24%	28%	48%	46%	25%	29%
	2	21%	27%	13%	15%	20%	27%
	3	29%	22%	17%	8%	29%	21%
	4	12%	11%	-	15%	12%	11%
LESS LIKELY TO GO	5	13%	11%	17%	15%	13%	11%
RESPONSES		534	720	22	26	556	746

Comment: As with social distancing, respondents now consider face-coverings as slightly less of an incentive than a year ago. However, postal respondents continue to see face-coverings as far more of an incentive than online respondents (postal respondents: 48%; online respondents: 24%).

Some members say they have no issue with wearing a face-covering:

I feel confident in returning having received 2 jabs and am absolutely comfortable with wearing a mask if necessary.

[...] it's time to start and live life again. I would prefer not to wear a mask but [...] if it meant meeting face to face again I would.

More cautious attitudes to face-coverings reflect a number of different concerns, from the practicality of participating when wearing a face-covering:

Line dancing would not want to wear a mask, listening to a speaker wouldn't mind wearing one.

It is very difficult to generalise about groups. I would find it difficult to wear a mask, while doing a physical activity, but if just sitting down, I would be happy to wear one. It would also depend on how long we had to wear one! One hour would be ok.....any longer would start to be uncomfortable.

[...] I do not want to go a group wearing a mask for a couple of hours. I participate in [language] groups and it's hard enough to understand [...] without the problem of trying to hear what is being said from behind a mask.

I cannot enjoy a language learning group wearing a mask. So I would prefer to continue on Zoom until groups of up to 8 people can meet in person without wearing a mask.

As I only go to choir it is a little difficult to answer because singing with a mask on would be horrible!

*Concerning meetings, social distancing and mask wearing - my attendance would depend on activity and venue. ie Walking (already doing it). Watching films in the Hive Studio (Yes).
Bridge in a small room (September).*

To the experience of the member when wearing a face-covering:

I am affected by being hard of hearing so face masks make participation more difficult but otherwise approve of them.

I experience difficulty breathing if I wear a mask for a prolonged period.

And there is recognition that face-coverings interfere with the way members can interact:

[...] the use of [...] masks does inhibit communication quite drastically, both speaking and hearing!

If I had to wear a mask for the whole of an indoor meeting I would not go. It would be difficult to take an active part or to see other peoples faces so very impersonal and not sociable.

If [a mask] is removed to have refreshments it defeats the object of wearing one in the first place and enjoying a coffee and biscuit during a meeting adds to the overall experience.

What do members say about going to indoor group activities?

Members have many useful suggestions about how to make going to meetings as safe as possible despite the current circumstances:

I feel more confident when I'm out and about than earlier in the year and, as long as group leaders follow committee guidelines and everyone uses their common sense, I think we are fairly safe to restart meeting inside in September.

There has been a resumption of outdoor activities for some time now & there has been little or no negative Covid issues arising providing that Government & National Body guidelines are rigorously followed.

I am confident that U3A members will comply with government guidelines or better. We are generally sensible people.

Members also suggest that we might need to do more than just follow government guidelines:

I think that different groups will require different measures. We need overall guidelines and then each group can make their own decisions. I would not like to be deprived of meeting in person safely in my group just because another group prefers not to meet in person.

It is important that a risk assessment is done before indoor meetings re-start.

As in 2020, there is concern that venues are properly cleaned and managed:

The issue is how many people will be allowed into venues and any cleaning regimes required before and after meetings.

Running active groups where the equipment is handled I would need to be certain the risks involved are an absolute minimum

Venues will need to convince Group Leaders they comply [with government guidelines].

There are also comments on the rooms where meetings take place:

If the group was small and held in well ventilated area I don't see that there should be a problem.

I attend [a language group], which has been wonderful online. The problem for our group is that the room where we meet is very cramped and we might need a different venue.

If available hire larger rooms for meetings in church halls etc.

The number of members attending a group and the nature of the activity also must be considered:

I think it may be necessary to distinguish between active/non-active groups (eg Pilates v bridge) and venue size.

I attend Ballroom dancing so it is impossible not to be close to your partner. This will only work with our spouse, and numbers will be reduced

There may need to be a limit on the number of people attending meetings. Perhaps a rota if more than a certain number wish to attend.

Members are missing the social side of activities and, perhaps, getting frustrated:

[...] the [group members] are wonderful, interesting and a lovely social group, so I do hope a solution can be found.

Can't wait to get back together again!

I think it would be a very good thing if we try to get back to normal living as soon as we are able to.

I think we should start face to face contact as soon as government permits and people should stop being so paranoid about meeting people. We have all been vaccinated and we need to resume normal life.

If U3A members have had their 2 jabs by September, I think it is time to get back to our classes. In my opinion we can be over cautious and it could end up postponing and postponing a return date. What was the point of producing jabs if it appears we are still not safe. This is absurd and I have had enough.

I do not intend to waste my last years in fear of dying from [COVID-19].

Other than missing out on the enjoyment of going to u3a activities, there are concerns about the impact the pandemic may be having on individuals:

I believe that we should be attempting to return to some normality in a socially responsible manner, both for the sake of our membership & communities. The majority of our members, if not all should now have the benefit of vaccine protection & we need to consider the implications of isolation on mental wellbeing.

Mental health is very much a factor not just our physical well-being. By September it will be 18 months since the majority of U3A groups were able to meet and I'm sure I'm not alone in missing the personal contact with my U3A friends, to say nothing of missing my U3A activities.

I personally think we need to restart indoor activities for both our physical and mental health. Everyone I've spoken to in Worcester U3A has had their vaccinations so will be as protected as we can be. This disease is not going to go away so we need to learn to live with it. I do however think some restrictions need to be put in place such as asking people not to attend if they have symptoms of anything including colds, I would also be happier about keeping social distancing in place. Other than those two requirements I think we need to start indoor groups in September provided this is allowed by government.

And suggest:

I think many people - especially those who live alone would really like to meet people again. After all if you can meet people in church, why not u3a. I am really quite cautious, but we have to try and organise some sort of life for the future, we can't go on concentrating on food, TV and gardening!!!

I think single household people, for whom socialising has been restricted, should be given priority to attend, over couples.

Members also expressed their concern over the potential impact of further delays to restarting groups:

If we don't start up in September it will be 2 years since groups met. In that time, some existing members will have died or become too frail to attend. With no new members coming in, numbers will plummet and some groups cease to be viable.

Feedback from friends in the U3A make me believe that we will lose many members if classes are not resumed in September especially as all our age group will be fully vaccinated before that time.

Commentary

Overall, there is an enthusiasm to get indoor groups going again, but an enthusiasm tempered by caution.

I would like to resume the [groups], but I have concerns not just for myself, but for everyone that would attend.

I am probably more ready to re-commence than the majority. But feel the minority should be considered as well.

Our age group have mostly by now had both jabs and there is also a strong possibility of an autumn booster. At the end of the day it's up to individual members to decide when it feels right for them to resume close contact so I do appreciate your dilemma in gauging when this might be!

There has been a marked shift in the focus of comments since last year. There are fewer suggestions as to the precautions we might adopt and more emphasis on the negative effects of not being able to attend interest groups. This is coupled with a realisation that COVID-19 may be with us for some time to come.

Given that the course of the pandemic is unpredictable, there is acknowledgement of the benefit of remaining flexible in how groups are organised and run. Respondents commented on:

- the possibility of needing larger rooms;
- limiting the number of participants;
- offering the choice to meet online.

And recognise that what may be suitable for one interest group may not be suitable for another. This calls for flexible guidance to support Group Leaders and reassure members.

Equally, there is also the need to keep an eye on how the pandemic continues to unfold:

Should Covid matters worsen then obviously a speedy rethink would be essential.

Thanks

Members recognise and appreciate the efforts of everyone involved in keeping Worcester u3a going through the pandemic:

Thank you for all you are doing to get U3A up and running again.

Best of luck - this is not easy.

Thank you!

Annex A

Timeline

11 March 2020: WHO declares COVID-19 as a global pandemic.

March 2020: All activities within Worcester u3a suspended, shortly followed by the announcement from the government of the first lockdown.

June 2020: Relaxation of the government-imposed lockdown with a phased reopening of shops.

July 2020: Additional social distancing measures introduced, including the mandatory wearing of face-coverings. The announcement requiring face-coverings (14 July) coincided with the first Worcester u3a survey (9-19 July).

July-August: Further lifting of restrictions. Outdoor interest groups of up to six members were able to run.

mid-September: Limited restrictive measures reintroduced.

November 2020: Second national lockdown.

December 2020: Lockdown restrictions eased. First COVID-19 vaccine approved for use.

January 2021: Third national lockdown begins.

March 2021: Strict stay-at-home restrictions eased; limited reopening of non-essential shops. Groups of up to 6 people (or 2 households) allowed to meet outdoors. All those over 60 years' old invited to receive their second vaccination.

April-May 2021: Further relaxation in lockdown restrictions with, for example, the reopening of libraries, lifting of non-essential travel ban, and accommodation allowed to reopen. Groups of 6 permitted to meet indoors or 30 outdoors (17 May); Worcester u3a outdoor interest groups restart. 96% of the over-70 years' old population have received both doses of the vaccine (9 May 2021)¹ and vaccination rates for 60–70 year-olds are more than 85% (Week of 5 July 2021 report).²

June 2021: Restrictions were to be lifted on 21 June but delayed due to a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. The announcement of the delay (14 June) coincided with the second Worcester u3a survey (2-19 June).

5 July 2021: Government announces that all legal limits on social contact to be lifted from 19 July.

Comment: In July 2020 during the first survey, the announcement that face-coverings would be mandatory in enclosed public spaces produced a small, short-lived positive shift in attitude towards seeing face-coverings as an incentive to participate in activities.

In 2021, there was no change in the responses to any of the questions following the announcement of a delay in lifting restrictions from 21 June to 19 July (announcement made on 14 June).

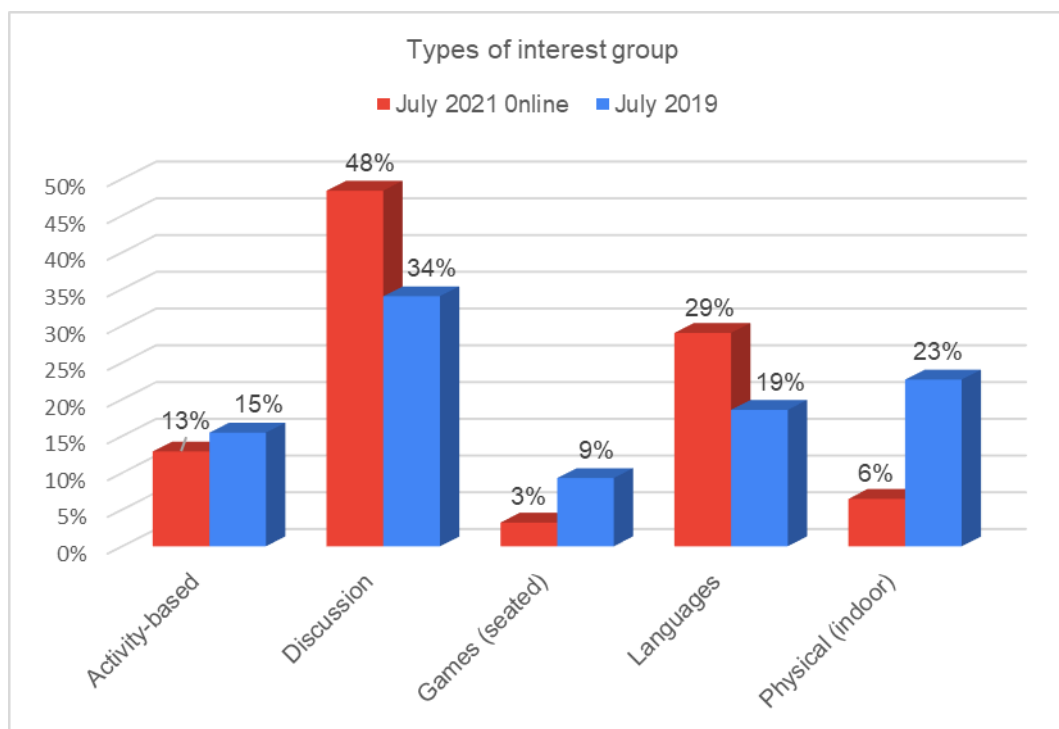
¹ [Coronavirus and vaccination rates in people aged 70 years and over by socio-demographic characteristic, England - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/coronavirus/articles/vaccination-rates-in-people-aged-70-years-and-over-by-socio-demographic-characteristic-england) (retrieved 10.07.2021)

² [COVID-19 vaccine surveillance report - week 27 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/954447/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report-week-27.pdf) (retrieved 11.07.2021)

Annex B

Online interest groups by kind

A high-level analysis of groups meeting at the start of June 2021 and the end of July 2019 – the latest full year of activities prior to the pandemic, was undertaken using data taken from Worcester u3a’s administration system, Beacon.



Type of group	2021 online		2019 in person		2021:2019
	n	%	n	%	
Activity-based	4	13%	15	15%	27%
Discussion/presentation	15	48%	33	34%	45%
Games (seated)	1	3%	9	9%	11%
Languages	9	29%	18	19%	50%
Physical (indoor)	2	6%	22	23%	9%
	31	100%	97	100%	29%
Physical (outdoor)	7	18%	7	7%	100%
	38		104		37%

Activity-based, e.g. crafts, games, computer-based, music-making, etc.

Discussion/presentation, e.g. travel, history, discussion, reading, economics, etc.

Games (seated), e.g. board & card games

Languages

Physical (indoor), e.g. dance, indoor bowls, table tennis, yoga, etc.

Comment:

Indoor groups meeting online have decreased by almost two-thirds compared with the number of in-person groups running in July 2019. Groups that involve discussion and/or presentation appear to have made the transition online more often than other interest groups. Groups involving an activity, whether seated or exercise-based, have seen the largest fall. The number of groups that have been able to meet up outdoors have not changed over the pandemic and two of the groups have expanded their activities to include even longer walks and cycle rides.

Annex C

Methodology

The survey was setup in Google Forms and piloted with the 17 Committee members and 3 other members who work closely with the Committee. There were 17 responses and several comments. As a result of the comments, changes were made to sharpen the focus on indoor meetings, minor adjustments were made to wording to improve clarity, and the order of the questions changed to place the question about online participation first.

The amended questionnaire was circulated to the same group as before. There were 7 responses and no further comments.

The questionnaire distributed online to members is shown in Annex D. The postal questionnaire also included the return name and address.

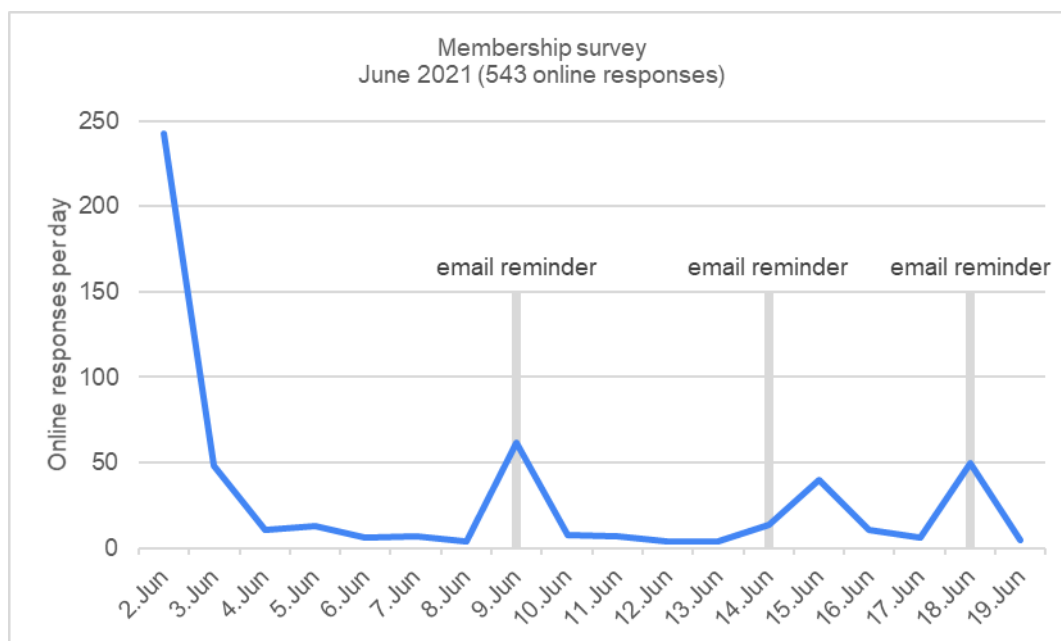
A link to the online questionnaire was sent to 780 members by email (reciprocal and insurance members were not included). Members accessing the questionnaire online additionally received email reminders to encourage responses.

The 30 members who have not provided an email address or have requested a paper copy of the newsletter received the questionnaire along with the June newsletter. To encourage responses, a stamped addressed envelope was included with the survey. A copy of the questionnaire was provided for each member residing at the same address.

Members were given 17 days to complete the questionnaire.

Members were not required to sign-in or identify themselves to complete the survey.

Timetable:	Online contact	Postal contact
Draft questionnaire piloted with Committee	23-27 May	
Revised questionnaire piloted with Committee	27-28 May	
Questionnaire circulated to members	2 June	posted 30 May (received 2 June)
Survey reminder	9 June (email with link)	no reminder sent
Survey reminder	14 June (email with link)	no reminder sent
Survey reminder	18 June (email with link)	no reminder sent
Closing date for survey	end of 19 June	19 June (3 additional days allowed for return of questionnaires)
Days for survey completion	17 days	~17 days



*Responses include 5 blanks and duplicates
Vertical bars to show date of distributing to newsletter or sending a reminder email
The height of the bar has no significance
The reminder sent out on 14 June was late in the evening*

Comment: The time given to members to complete the survey was 17 days compared with 11 days in 2020. To maximise the number of responses, three reminder emails were sent (2020: one reminder in the newsletter, which produced no discernible response, and one email reminder; no reminder was sent to postal recipients in 2020 or 2021). The response rate between online and postal responders was similar at around 70% in 2021 (2020: 72% online and 56% postal responses).

There were five blanks and no identifiable duplicate responses this year (2020: 15/749 2%). Most duplicates in 2020 were submitted within a few minutes of each other, suggestion that there were delays in acknowledging the submit-instruction in Google Forms resulting in ‘submit’ being pressed for a second time.

The likelihood of there being zero duplicates this year is small, but they are not readily identifiable given the anonymity of submissions. They are unlikely to be sufficiently numerous to skew the results.

Quality of questions: There were seven questions; one was problematic,

Q4. Current government guidance suggests that we may be able to restart indoor groups before the pandemic is fully under control. If, as soon as we are allowed, we were to restart indoor groups how do you feel about attending?

- I prefer to participate online rather than go to groups
- I want to continue online but only until the situation is more certain
- I might go to in-person groups if they were available
- I would go to in-person groups if they were available
- I’ll wait and see how things works out before deciding

Although the question produced some useful information, the implicit assumption was that the only active members were those attending online groups. This failed to consider the 47% of members who have not participated in online activities. Secondly, providing a ‘wait and see’ option failed to force a choice-like response between ‘stay online as we are’ and ‘go to groups’.

Analysis of questionnaires:

Online responses were collected automatically by Google Forms and passed into Google Sheets. Responses from postal questionnaires were initially entered into Google Forms to register the responses in Google Sheets. The contents of both Google Sheets, online and postal responses, were transferred to MS Excel and combined before analysis. The Committee test questionnaires were excluded from the analysis.

Data was analysed primarily using pivot tables. No statistical analysis was carried out.

There were 110 comments (20%; 2020: 165/755, 22%); these were sorted by subject matter. Comments were selected as being broadly representative or, where there was more diversity, to reflect the range of opinion (minor adjustments have been made to spelling and punctuation to improve clarity but without changing the original sense; edits are indicated).

No attempt has been made to undertake a comparative analysis of comments from the current and last year's survey.

Data:

Data is available on request:

research@worcesteru3a.org

2020 survey:

[COVID-19: Survey of Worcester U3A members attitudes towards re-starting U3A activities \(u3aresearch.org.uk\)](https://u3aresearch.org.uk) (retrieved 9.07.2021)

Annex D

2021 Survey questionnaire

When to restart Worcester u3a activities

Considerable progress has been made in getting to grips with the pandemic since this time last year and there is some optimism that we may soon be able to return to indoor groups of more than six people as well as the outdoor groups that are already running.

However, there remains uncertainty about what might happen over the coming months. What we will be able to offer depends both on government guidance and the way the pandemic plays out. The Committee is following developments closely and, when we can restart indoor groups, we will begin only with activities and venues where a safe environment can be provided. We will support groups that wish to continue meeting online and, until venues can accommodate our usual sized audience, Main Meetings will also be held online.

Last July, a substantial majority of our members participated in a survey to help us plan for the pandemic. The results were instrumental in guiding our decisions and we would appreciate having your views for a second time. This will give us an insight about meeting up again in person.

Your anonymity is assured and no personal information is collected in this questionnaire.

There are 7 questions.

Please complete the questionnaire before Saturday 19 June.

1. Have you been participating in any Worcester u3a online groups or Main Meetings?

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

2. Given a choice, when do you think it might be reasonable for us in Worcester u3a to start indoor meetings again?

Mark only one oval.

- Before the end of the year
- In the New Year
- April or later next year
- Wait and see
- No opinion

3. If there are indoor groups and Main Meetings available in September that were of interest to you how likely is it that you would go?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	
Very likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not at all likely

4. Current government guidance suggests that we may be able to restart indoor groups before the pandemic is fully under control. If, as soon as we are allowed, we were to restart indoor groups how do you feel about attending?

Mark only one oval.

- I prefer to participate online rather than go to groups
- I want to continue online but only until the situation is more certain
- I might go to in-person groups if they were available
- I would go to in-person groups as soon as they were available
- I'll wait and see how things work out before deciding

5. Within the next few weeks almost all of our members will have been offered their second COVID-19 vaccination. How important is the success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme to your decision about when to return to indoor groups and meetings?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

6. Social distancing could be needed for some time to come and we will review the guidance as it changes. If you were required to maintain social distancing when attending Worcester u3a activities would you be more or less likely to go?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
More likely to go	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Less likely to go

7. If you were attending Worcester u3a and were required to wear a face covering, such as a non-medical facemask, would you be more or less likely to go?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
More likely to go	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Less likely to go

8. Please let us know of any comments or suggestions you may have. If you would like a response, please include your name and contact details and a member of the Committee will get back to you shortly.

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