

COVID-19 Lockdowns & Subjective Wellbeing (SWB)

Evidence from the Opinions and Lifestyle (OPN) COVID-19 Survey

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Overview

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1. Introduction

COVID-19 Policy Context & Study Aims

Introduction: Study motivation

- There is a large literature on the health and wellbeing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic globally and in Britain.
- But there is a major knowledge gap on the effects of the protective measures and institutional policies taken to stop the spread of the virus.
- The relationships between lockdowns / stringency (strictness) and wellbeing (SWB) remains under researched.
- Health Studies Conference 2023, we looked at the impact of pandemic-induced policy responses on wellbeing (i.e. furlough, homeworking, homeschooling).

2. Methods

Survey Data & Empirical Strategy

ONS wellbeing measures

- ONS OPN COVID-19 Social Impacts Survey collects data on the social impact of coronavirus on day-to-day life in Britain
- OPN weekly online survey from 20 March 2020, sample size <4K
- OPN provides individual measures of subjective wellbeing (SWB), reported on a daily basis during the pandemic
- *Self-reported wellbeing = satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness, anxiety, SWB composite (also bored, lonely etc.)*
- 301,933 respondents, 111 combined OPN waves creates a new study dataset at the ONS Secure Research Service with statistical power to support analyses across time, space, demography and COVID-19 policy responses
- We also use other surveys and datasets, e.g. USOC, Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) data from Our World in Data; ISSP, OxCGRT, Google Trends (GT)

GT lockdown sentiment index

- Sentiment Analysis summarises and tracks trends in public emotions and opinions using large sources data like Google Trends (GT) and Twitter/X.
- Some studies use GT to measure wellbeing using search terms like “boredom” and “loneliness”
- We create a GT index from the volume of searches in the pandemic period, using terms like “Covid restrictions”, “Covid lockdown”, “lockdown rules, “Covid rules”
- We use the GT lockdown data to measure public sentiments relating to Covid lockdowns and restrictions
- The public sentiment index sheds light on associations between lockdowns and self-reported wellbeing

Oxford Covid-19 stringency index

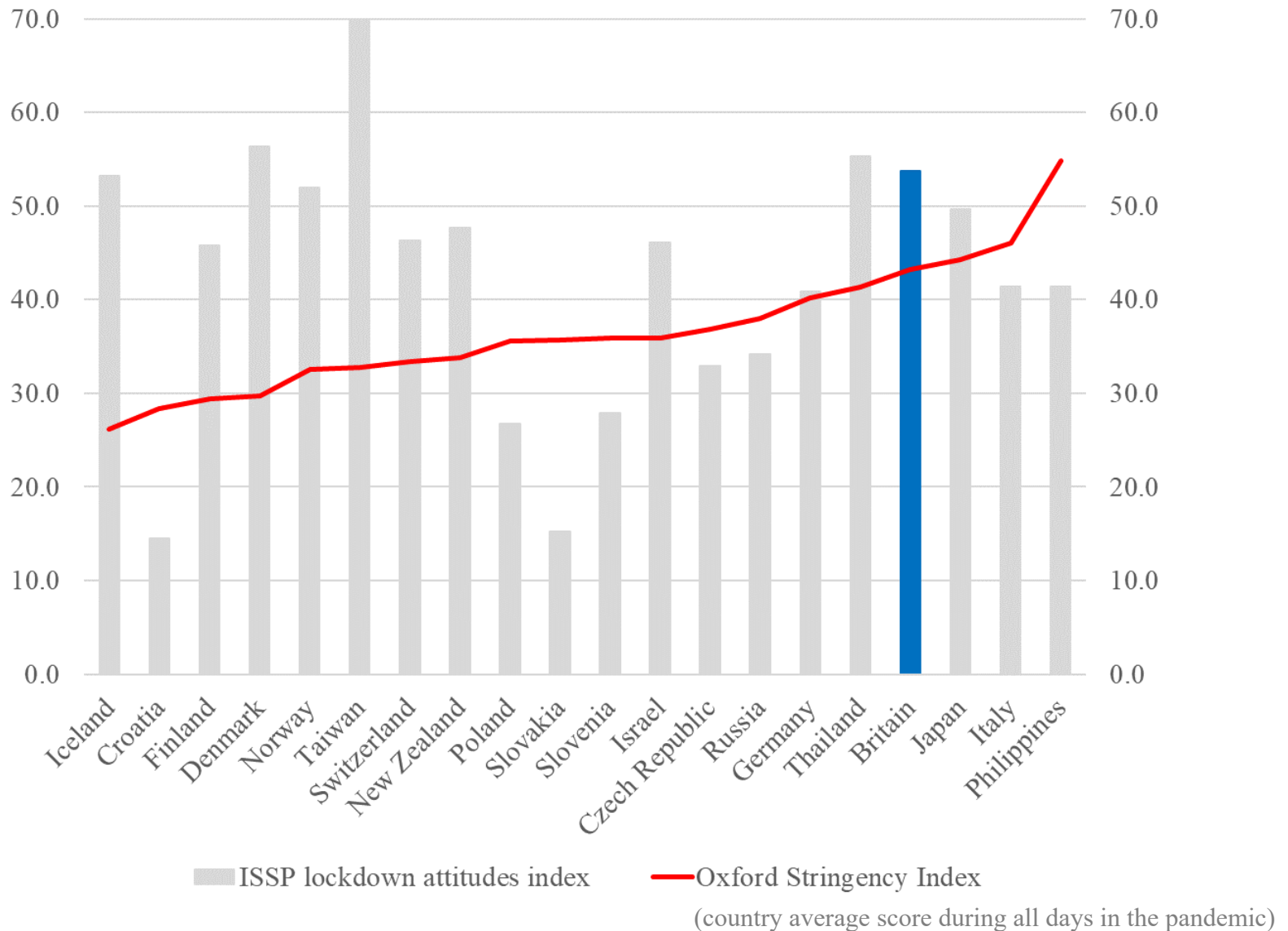
- Team at Oxford collected publicly available information on indicators of government policy responses to COVID-19
- During the pandemic this helped decision-makers and citizens understand governmental responses in a consistent way, aiding efforts to fight the pandemic
- We use the Stringency Index (SI) and the associated lockdown stringency scores taken from the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)
- Metrics used to calculate SI are: *school closures; workplace closures; stay-at-home requirements; restrictions of public events and gatherings; transport and travel restrictions; public information campaigns*
- SI was continuously updated on a daily basis during the pandemic. The SI is scaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100=strictest)
- The Oxford lockdown strictness index sheds light on associations between pandemic responses and subjective wellbeing (SWB)

ISSP national attitudinal index toward lockdowns

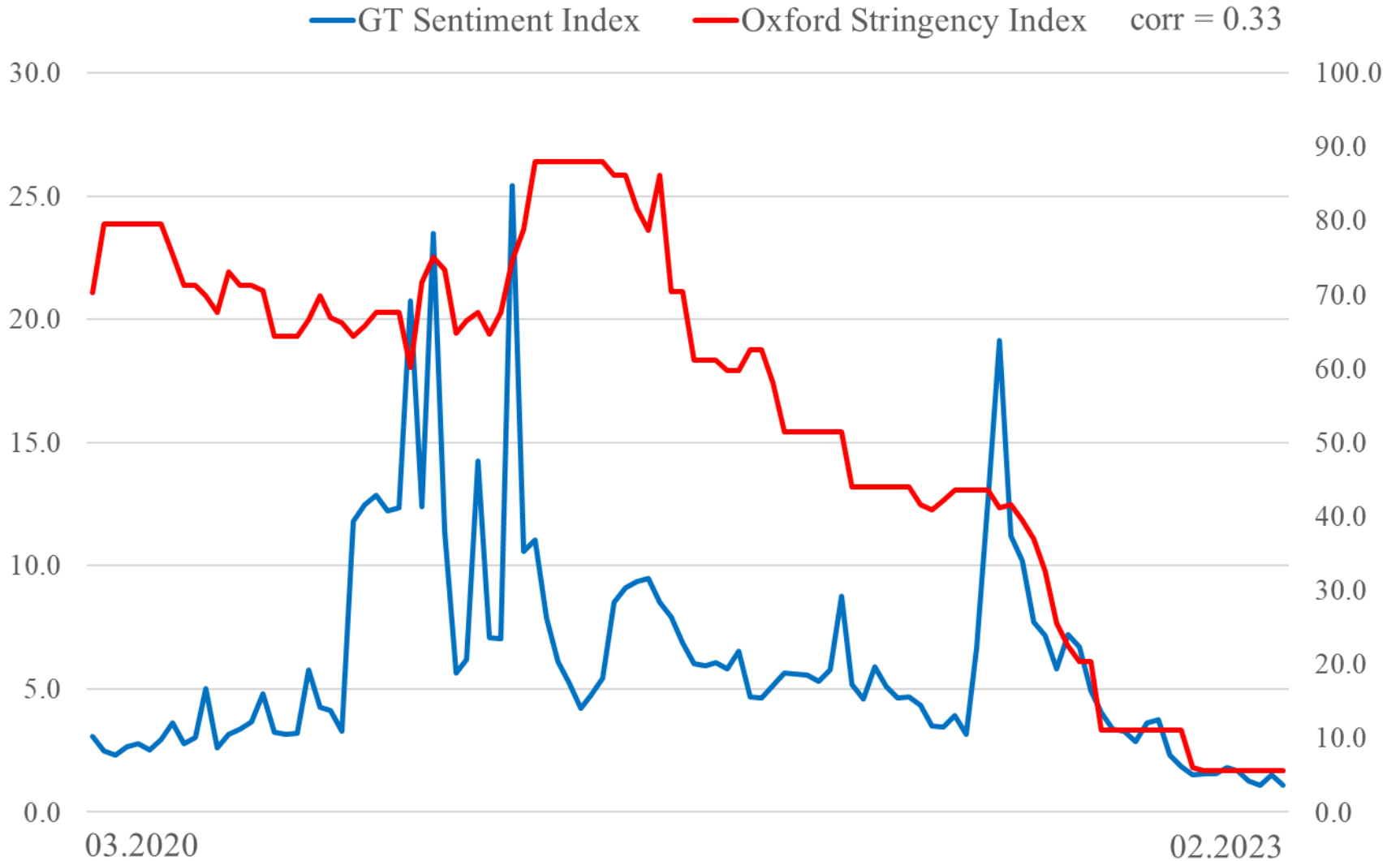
- International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) collected data during the pandemic on public attitudes to lockdown
- We create a composite measure of cross-national public attitudes to lockdowns using the ISSP social survey data that reflects the key components of the Stringency Index
- Government definitely should have the right to lockdown is a composite measure, comprising public attitudes to:
 - *Stay-at-home requirements*
 - *Workplace closures*
 - *School closures*
 - *Cancellation of public events / restrictions on public gatherings*
 - *Border closures and transport restrictions*
- The ISSP index sheds light on associations between public attitudes toward lockdown and government Covid-19 responses

3. Preliminary Findings

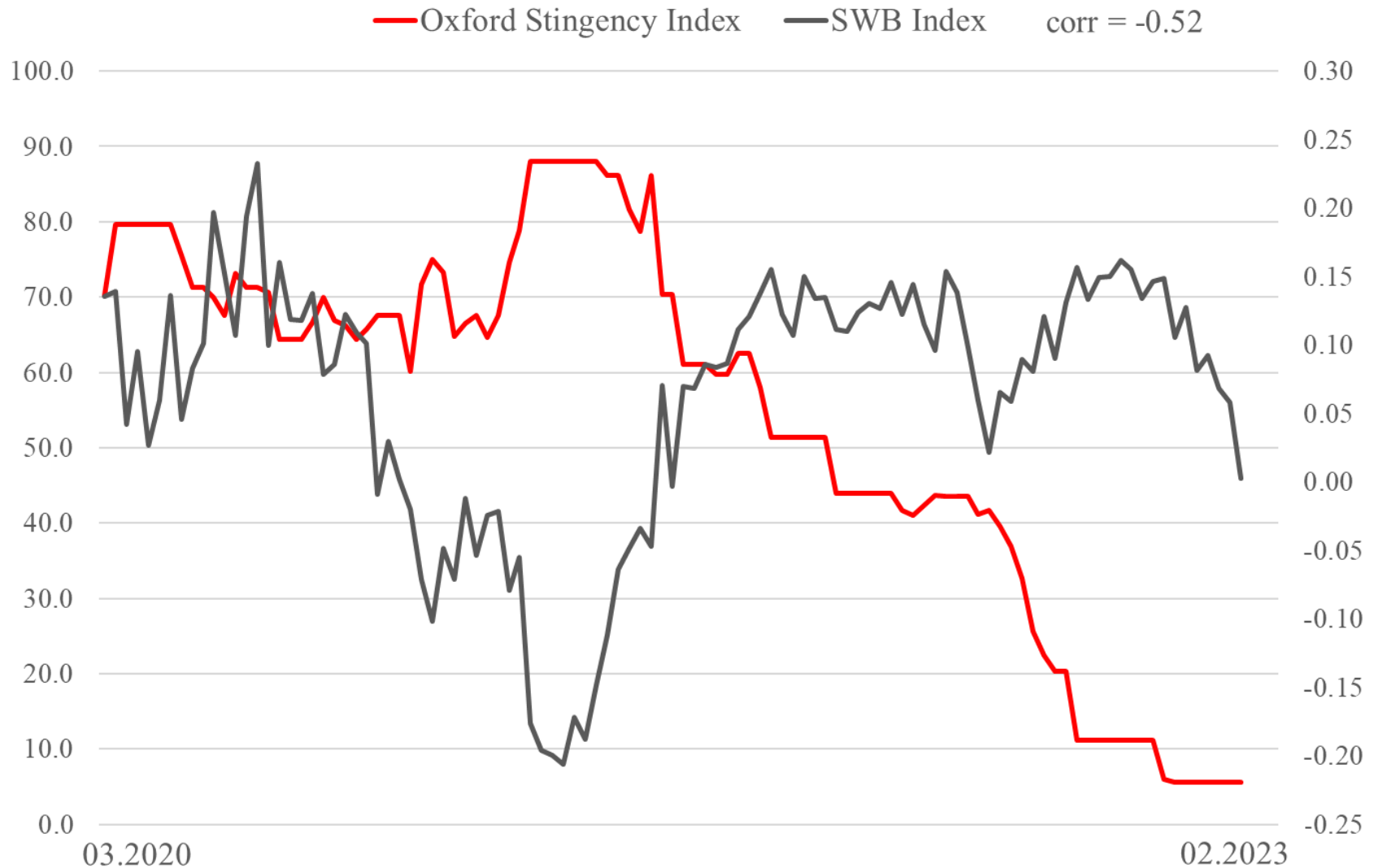
Oxford Covid-19 stringency index & attitudes to lockdown from a comparative perspective



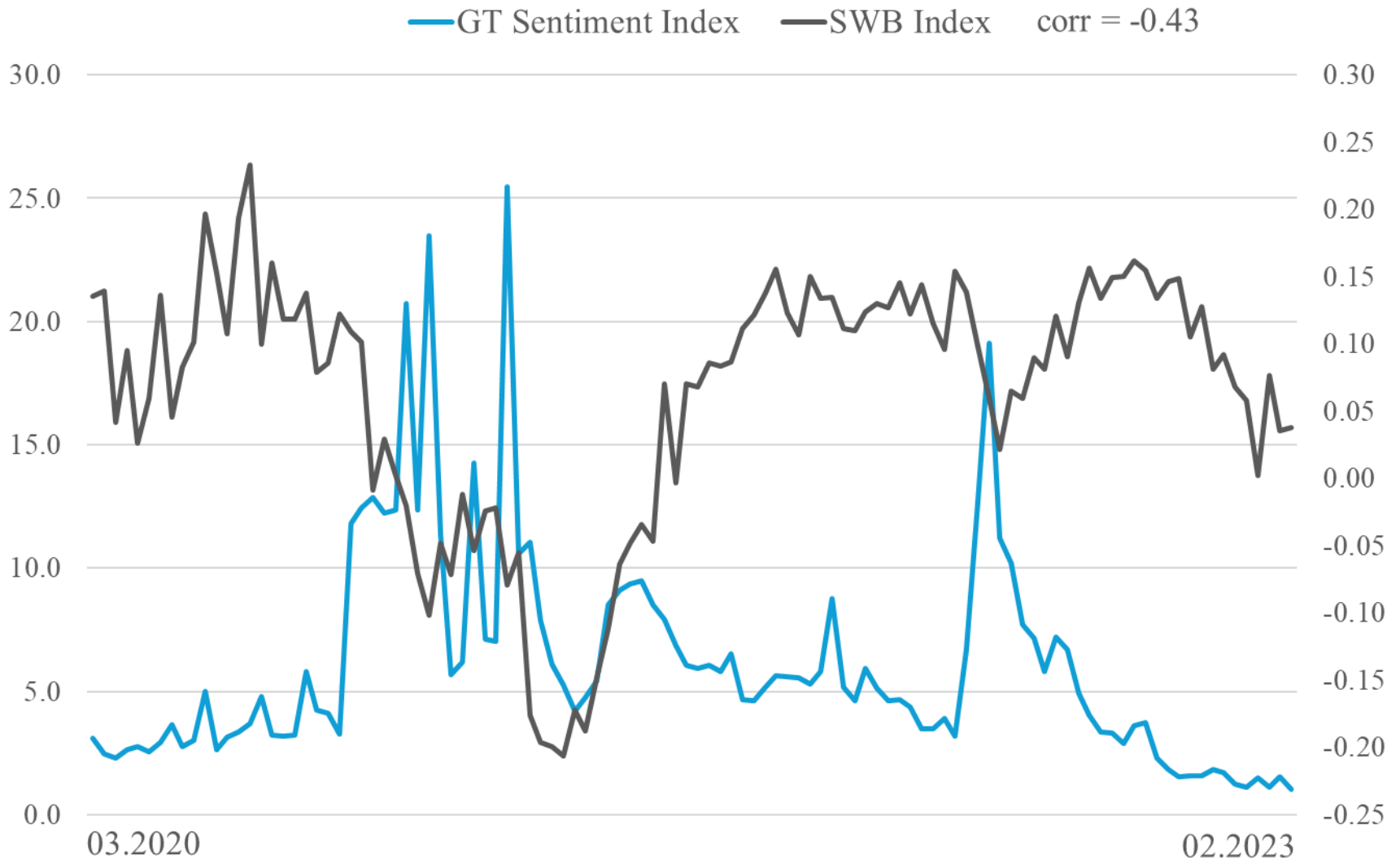
GT public sentiment index & Oxford Covid-19 stringency index



Oxford Covid-19 stringency index & self-reported wellbeing



GT public sentiment index & self-reported wellbeing



Oxford Covid-19 stringency index and wellbeing in Britain

	Satisfaction	Worthwhile	Happiness	Anxious	SWB
Britain	-0.006***	-0.000	-0.003***	0.002***	-0.019
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.013)

ONS OPN

Standard errors in parentheses; Significance levels: *10%; **=5%; ***=1%.

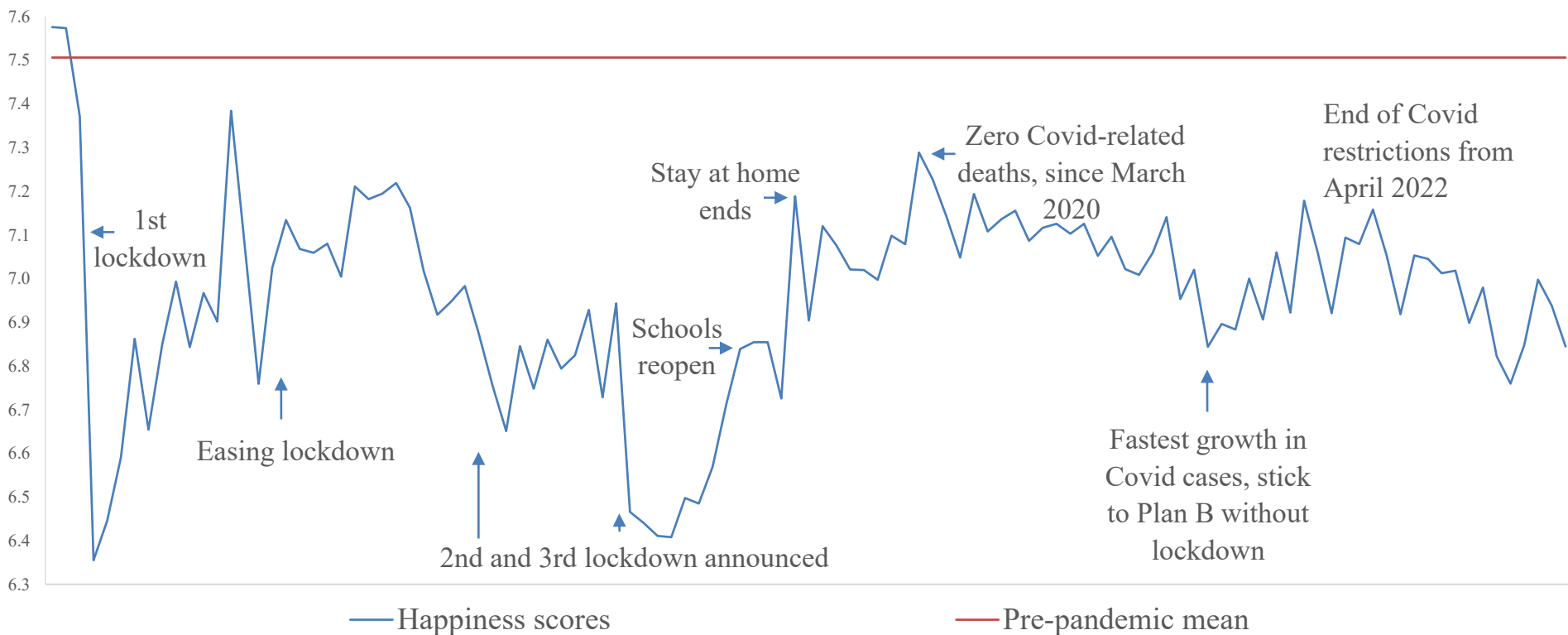
	Satisfaction	Worthwhile	Happiness	Depressed	GHQ
Britain	-0.008***	-0.003***	-0.012***	0.009***	-0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)

ESRC USOC

Standard errors in parentheses; Significance levels: *10%; **=5%; ***=1%.

4. Summary

SWB in Britain: average happiness scores and key coronavirus events



- 54% of people in Britain said government definitely has the right to impose lockdowns (high in the international league table 17/20) - slightly higher in Scotland compared to England
- Stringency Index average for Britain 43% (high in the international league table 17/20) - slightly higher in Scotland compared to England
- Lockdown stringency is shown to slow the spread of the virus but negatively impacts wellbeing - England experienced the greatest negative impact and Scotland the least
- Out of 10 global wellbeing indicators found in the surveys, 9 negative impacts experienced in England and 4 in Scotland
- England significantly more impacted by the strictness of lockdowns compared to Scotland but Scotland had higher strictness compared to England
- More support for lockdowns in Scotland compared to England - and more public confidence in the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Next steps: To what extent does support (or opposition) to lockdown measures impact people's wellbeing
- The OPN survey waves include the variable “COV_SuppOcc”, To what extent do you support or oppose the current lockdown measures where you live
- Our theoretical expectations here are based on the experience of Scotland, more public support for lockdown, stricter lockdown, greater wellbeing in the pandemic

Limitations

OxCGRT indices combine individual indicators to provide an overall measure of the intensity of government response across a family of indicators, inevitably a degree of judgement is involved here but the review process is robust and suggests a high degree of accuracy (see Hale et al 2001).

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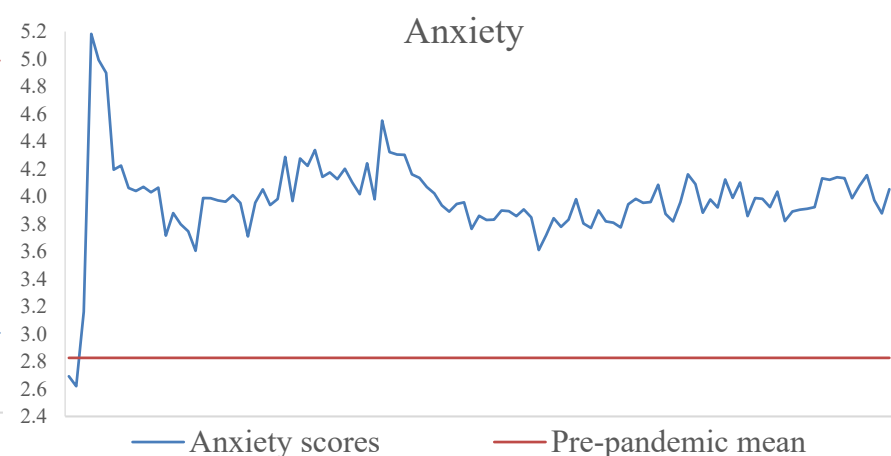
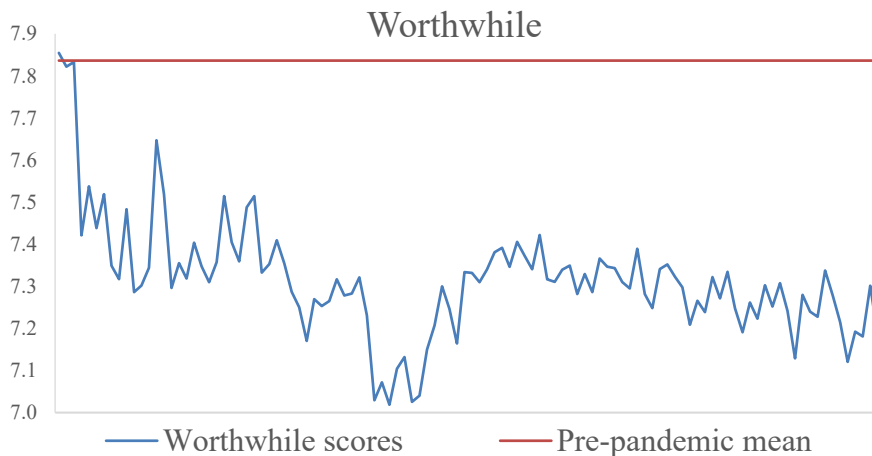
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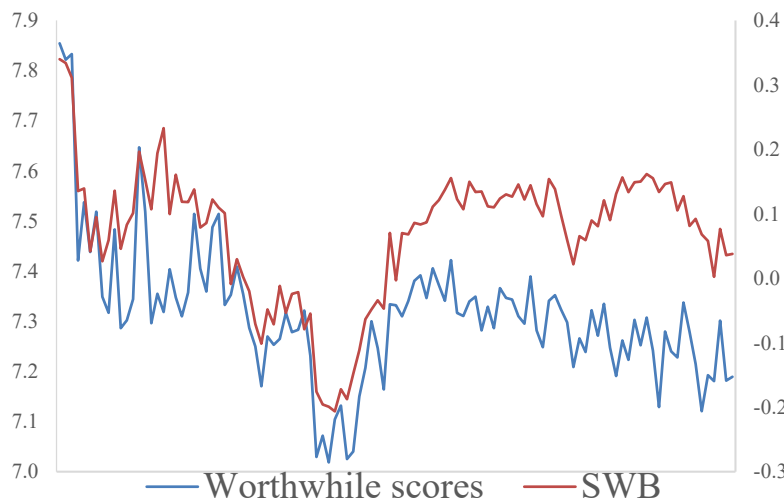
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- The project is registered with the ONS Secure Research Service (SRS), Project Reference No. 2001318.
- Project 2001318 is accredited by the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP), UK Statistics Authority (UKSA).
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Appendix 1: SWB Index combines the four global wellbeing measures



Appendix 2: MCz wellbeing scores and the composite SWB Index



Appendix 3: Oxford Covid-19 stringency index and Covid cases in Britain

