

JULY 2021

FAMILIES AT THE FRONT LINES OF COVID-19:

RESULTS FROM SNAPSHOT OF FAMILIES PRE-PANDEMIC & LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF UK PARENTS DURING COVID-19

FINAL REPORT FROM IAA CHALLENGE LAB
UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX & FAMILY ACTION

REPORT PREPARED ON BEHALF OF FAMILY ACTION BY:
DR VERONICA LAMARCHE, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
&
DR REBECCA CLIFT, DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX



Building
stronger
families



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT	5
SUMMARATIVE FINDING FROM PROJECT:.....	6
OVERVIEW OF CONVERSATION ANALYSIS DATA	7
THEMES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN PARTNERS.....	7
Values and Attitudes.....	7
Arguments over how to deal with a child	7
Parent siding with one over another sibling; one parent disaligning from another in the course of an argument with a child	7
THEMES OF CONFLICT PARENTS & CHILDREN	8
Household Regulation	8
Household chores and division of duties	8
Messy rooms.....	8
Wake-up times	8
Values and Attitudes.....	8
Excessive screen time for children.....	8
Children leaving the house.....	9
Secrecy regarding friends and activities	9
Children’s unhappiness over school – wanting to change or leave.....	9
Children’s attitude to schoolwork	10
Children’s rudeness to parents, and insubordination	10
Concerns over children’s future	10
Children wearing unsuitable clothes (e.g. daughters in clothes that are too revealing).....	11
Body art (e.g. getting an ear pierced or a tattoo).....	11
THEMES OF GENERIC STRESSORS BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS	11
Money: a) household costs; b) buying unnecessary things	11
Territoriality.....	12
Conflicts over what to watch on TV	12
Joining in communal family activities vs. solitary time.....	13
GENERAL SUMMARY OF PRE-PANDEMIC SNAPSHOT OF FAMILIES.....	13
OVERVIEW OF LONGITUDINAL PROJECT	15
Profiles of Parents:	16
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM LONGITUDINAL SURVEY:	16
Relationships with Children	16
Relationships with Partners	17
QUESTION 1: Attachment Style.....	18
December 2020:	18
Fig 1a. Anxious Attachment.	18
Fig 2a. Avoidant Attachment.....	19
May 2021:	19
Fig 1b. Anxious Attachment	20
Fig 2b. Avoidant Attachment.....	20
Summary:.....	20
QUESTION 2: Relationship Satisfaction with Partners & Child(ren).....	21

December 2020:	21
Fig 3a. Relationship satisfaction with romantic partner.	21
Fig 4a. Relationship satisfaction with child(ren).	21
May 2021:	22
Fig 3b. Relationship satisfaction with romantic partner.	22
Fig 4b. Relationship satisfaction with child(ren).	22
Summary:.....	23
QUESTION 3: Changes to the relationship with partners and child(ren)	23
December 2020:	23
Fig 5a. A) Changes to relationship with partner since January 2020; b) Changes to relationship with partner since first UK lockdown; c) anticipated changes in the next 6 months	24
Fig 6a. A) Changes to relationship with child(ren) since January 2020; b) Changes to relationship with child(ren) since first UK lockdown; c) anticipated changes in the next 6 months	24
May 2021:	25
Fig 5b. A) Changes to relationship with partner since before pandemic started; b) anticipated changes in the next 6 months	25
Fig 6b. A) Changes to relationship with partner since before pandemic started; b) anticipated changes in the next 6 months	26
Summary:.....	26
QUESTION 4: Interactions in the relationships	26
December 2020:	27
Fig 7a. Positive and negative behaviours with partners.	27
Fig 8a. Positive and negative behaviours with children.	28
May 2021:	29
Fig 7b. Positive and negative behaviours with partners.	30
Fig 8b. Positive and negative behaviours with children.	30
Summary:.....	31
QUESTION 5: Talking about issues with partners and children.	31
December 2020:	32
Fig 9a. Ease of talking to partner about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.	32
Fig 10a. Ease of talking to children about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.	32
May 2021:	32
Fig 9b. Ease of talking to partner about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.	33
Fig 10b. Ease of talking to children about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.	33
Summary:.....	33
QUESTION 6: Dealing with interpersonal problems with partners and children before and after the first UK lockdown.	34
December 2020 & May 2021:	34
Fig 11. Endorsed ways of dealing with interpersonal problems with partner before and since lockdown. Note. Participants could endorse multiple responses, therefore percentages may exceed 100.	34
Fig 12. Endorsed ways of dealing with interpersonal problems with children before and since lockdown. Note. Participants could endorse multiple responses, therefore percentages may exceed 100.	35
Summary:.....	35

QUESTION 7: Biggest sources of stress or conflict between partners and children.	35
.....	35
December 2020:	35
Fig 13. Top 3 sources of stress or conflict with partner during the first UK lockdown.....	36
Fig 14. Top 3 sources of stress or conflict with children during the first UK lockdown.	36
Fig 15. Severity of conflict with partner.....	37
Fig 16. Ongoing source of conflict with partner.....	37
Fig 17. Severity of conflict with children.	38
Fig 18. Ongoing source of conflict with children.....	38
May 2021:	38
Fig 19. Ranked conflict in the family: a) percentage of participants ranking each source as their no.1 source of conflict; b) percentage of participants ranking each source among their top 3; and, c) percentage of participants ranking each source of conflict from most to least.....	39
Summary:.....	39
QUESTION 8: General Relationship Quality.....	40
December 2020:	40
Fig 20a. Closeness with Partner	40
Fig 21a. Perceived partner responsiveness	41
Fig 22a. Closeness with Children.....	41
Fig 23a. Perceived responsiveness from child(ren).....	42
May 2021:	42
Fig 20b. Closeness with Partner	42
Fig 21b. Perceived partner responsiveness.....	43
Fig 22b. Closeness with Children.....	43
Fig 23b. Perceived responsiveness from child(ren).	44
Fig 24. Strength of family relationships: a) family cohesion, b) emotional expressiveness, c) conflict.....	44
Fig 25. Social needs fulfilment	45
Fig 26. Quality time spent with family: a) has COVID changed the amount of quality time spent as a family (a lot less time, a lot more time); and, b) has COVID changed how you define “quality time”	45
Summary:.....	46
QUESTION 9: Concerns about COVID-19 and Generalised Stress.....	46
December 2020:	46
Fig 27a. Concerned about COVID-19 today compared to the first UK lockdown.....	46
Fig 28a. Generalised Stress	47
May 2021:	48
Fig 27b. Concerned about COVID-19 today compared to the first UK lockdown.....	48
Fig 28b. Generalised Stress	48
Summary:.....	49
OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS	49
December 2020:	49
Can you explain any ways in which you may feel differently about your partner now than when you did before the first lockdown?.....	49
What is the most surprising thing you have learned (good or bad) about your relationship with your partner during COVID-19?	50
Can you explain any ways in which you may feel differently about your child(ren) now than when you did before the lockdown?	50

What is the most surprising thing you have learned (good or bad) about your relationship with your child(ren) during COVID-19?	51
What do you think the government could do better to support families during crises such as COVID-19?	51
What do you think society as a whole could do better to support families during crises such as COVID-19?	52
Is there support that you would find useful to support your relationships with your partner and/or children that is not currently available/you find it difficult to access?	52
December 2020:	53
Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any POSITIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your romantic partner? ...	53
Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any NEGATIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your romantic partner? ...	53
Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any POSITIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your child(ren)?	54
Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any NEGATIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your child(ren)?	54
How has COVID-19 affected how you spend mealtimes together as a family? Please provide a brief example if possible.	55
How would you define "quality time" as a household? Please provide a brief example if possible.	56
Can you describe any POSITIVE changes COVID-19 has had on your relationship with your broader family (i.e., family who live outside your immediate household)?	56
Can you describe any NEGATIVE changes has had on your relationship with your broader family (i.e., family who live outside your immediate household)?	57
What, if any, changes do you think you will make to how you socialise or interact with your broader family as a result of what you have learned through the COVID-19 pandemic?	57
Is there anything else you think we should know about how COVID-19 has influenced your relationships, particularly stress and conflict between you and your romantic partner and/or you and your child(ren)?	58

IAA CHALLENGE LAB PROJECT: FAMILIES AT THE FRONTLINES OF COVID-19

INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

What would a society that supports families look like? What aspects of family resilience will make this effective post COVID-19? These central questions were posed by Family Action (FA) in commissioning this report from the University of Essex, which was supported through funds from the IAA Challenge Lab. FA believes in the strength of families to shape resilience and life chances, and one of the most striking realisations emerging from lockdown is the extent that loved ones have been at the front lines of supporting one another through this unprecedented experience. Stressors associated with sheltering in place, economic upheaval, caregiving demands, and the uncertainty of future outbreaks have created fractures in many families. However, COVID-19 also highlighted the resilience of families and their ability to adapt and evolve in response to new and changing demands. Thus, the dynamic fluidity of family fractures and resilience therefore require a dynamic and reactive response that not only identifies immediately emerging needs, but is also capable of capturing the natural change and growth that occurs through families over time. As the UK emerges from COVID-19 aiming for a stronger society poised to successfully navigate future crises, it is essential we look now at how families are navigating the 'new normal' to identify how we can support families and strengthen invaluable social resources. FA is aware of existing protective factors and the importance of communication in shaping resilient families that feel valued and supported by society. However, as COVID-19's effects continue to develop, it is unclear how protective factors may now differ among family groups, and how they may shift over the coming months. These insights are essential to ensuring FA's support is effective, that their public messaging supports families and society, to look beyond the immediate term to influencing policy and society as a whole.

Mindful of the diversity of needs and the multifactorial nature of family stressors, this project took a flexibility and responsive approach to tackling these questions. Although there are existing datasets on family stress, these are limited in several key ways: 1) they are not specific to the COVID-19 period, and 2) those that are do not include information on key interactions (e.g. conflict) that are at the core of family fractures and have evolved as a consequence of COVID-19. The project was novel in its approach to identifying sources of fractures, as well as emergent strengths in families following COVID-19, bringing to bear the insights of work in conversation analysis (CA)¹, and relationship science^{2,3}. We recruited a large and diverse sample of participants to undertake a 6-month longitudinal survey that

¹ Clift, R. (2016) *Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Lamarche, V.M. (2021). Interdependent transformations: Integrating insights from relationship science to advance post-traumatic growth and personality change research. *European Journal of Personality*, 08902070211022119.

³ Murray, S. L., Lamarche, V.M., Seery, M. D., Jung, H. Y., Griffin, D. W., & Brinkman, C. (2021). The social-safety system: Fortifying relationships in the face of the unforeseeable. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 120(1), 99.

included open and closed questions about conflict and communication within households with children living at home. Key themes associated with conflict and communication identified within wave 1 of the longitudinal study were contrasted with the strengths and fault lines identified by CA in a videoed dataset of family interactions pre-COVID-19. This provided an initial “then and now” lens of how families have been impacted by COVID-19, what has changed and what has endured, so that FA can provide support that is tailored to their dynamic needs.

We start by providing the results of the qualitative survey, which provides a pre-Covid snapshot of family stressors pre-lockdown, and a narrative gloss of the results of our longitudinal survey, before we report in detail on the longitudinal survey itself.

SUMMARATIVE FINDING FROM PROJECT:

The overall message from this project is clear: families have proved impressively resilient in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and have the interpersonal resources to thrive. But the socioeconomic challenges are considerable, and families need to be able to access the external support and resources that they need in order to do so.

A PRE-PANDEMIC SNAPSHOT OF FAMILIES

OVERVIEW OF CONVERSATION ANALYSIS DATA

The conversation analysis (CA) data consists of footage of two British families filmed in their homes on over 20 cameras by Dragonfly TV Productions: one a family of white English origin, with three teenagers (aged 14, 16 and 19) living at home, and one a family of East African Indian origin, with three generations of seven adults (parents, with three twenty-something children and the partners of two of the children) and a toddler living in the same house. Some of this (15 hours) was edited and broadcast, and this forms the corpus we have used to identify some of the stressors in family life pre-pandemic. In having direct access to episodes of conflict we have been able to triangulate on the quantitative data, illuminating areas of conflict that escape self-reports due to selective memory or salience, or personal bias. By the same token, in giving us access to moment-to-moment interactions, the qualitative corpus will reveal some sources of conflict that will not be accessible to the longitudinal study but are included here to give a fine-grained picture of daily interactions within the family.

We analysed the interactional data thematically in order to identify the sources of conflict. In what follows we examine the identified sources of conflict in terms of that between parents, then between parents and children, and then under the heading 'generic stressors' to sketch out the terrain, pre-pandemic. Under each identified stressor we assessed how COVID-19 is likely to have an impact in amplifying or muting the source of conflict – or whether the situation is likely to stay much the same as before. We then report the broad results of the longitudinal study. We assume that the reader will read the longitudinal study that follows in conjunction with these summaries for the full results of the overall survey.

THEMES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN PARTNERS

Values and Attitudes

Arguments over how to deal with a child

This occurred when parents had differing understandings of a particular situation, or of a child's attitude. In one instance, one parent believed their child was being supportive of their sibling, whereas the other believed that they were undermining them

Parent siding with one over another sibling; one parent disaligning from another in the course of an argument with a child

Our interactional data showed that disagreements would often escalate into arguments as one parent took the side of a child against another parent or another sibling. Alignments, affiliations and temporary coalitions and their opposites are an everyday source of conflict within families.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

Neither of these issues were raised in the open-ended questions in the longitudinal study, which suggests that these sources of conflict were not aggravated during lockdown. A minority of respondents said that they had discovered a negative side to their partners. However, the majority of respondents reported no change in their relationships, with more responses suggesting that couples had greater appreciation for each other now, with partners being loving and supportive, and that lockdown had brought them closer together.

THEMES OF CONFLICT PARENTS & CHILDREN

Household Regulation

While these are ultimately a matter of values and attitudes, and so potentially classifiable as such, these are also eminently practical and task-based concerns.

Household chores and division of duties

Messy rooms

Wake-up times

These three issues were collectively the three most recurrent sources of family dispute pre-pandemic, and are clearly generic issues in the regulation of the household. At base, they relate to the bringing up of children in encouraging discipline, cooperation and responsibility in later life.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

It was possible that, amongst families in lockdown, these concerns would be amplified simply due to constant co-presence of family members. In the contexts where there were no work or school commitments, enforcing routines may have been more challenging. Mealtime routines may have been disrupted during COVID-19 for the same reason, with families confined to the home and with easy access to food. However, the quantitative survey did not yield responses that mentioned these specific issues as sources of conflict.

Values and Attitudes

Excessive screen time for children

Pre-lockdown, there were visible indications of parental disquiet over their children's excessive screen time. For example, there were conflicts over what activities the children should engage in during their free time. When friends were

over during the daytime, the children were encouraged not to stay indoors and play on screens but to go outside and play.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

These concerns might have been aggravated during lockdown because of a) the confinement of families to the home and b) the need for some parents to be remote working online resulting in children being unsupervised at those times.

Some respondents did mention excessive screen time for children as a problem in lockdown, but these were not the majority of responses.

Children leaving the house

A major concern for parents was an older child leaving the house late at night (e.g. to go clubbing instead of, for example, spending the evening with the family).

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

While lockdown meant that leaving the house was not possible except for essentials, e.g. food shopping and exercise, it was possible that the gradual easing of lockdown would similarly bring with it concerns about teenage children leaving the house. However, the concerns in such contexts would relate to with whom the children were socialising, and what they were doing (e.g. whether they were observing social distancing rules) – in other words, the concerns would be more focused on health. However, the respondents did not report that children leaving the house was a source of conflict – but it should be noted that many of our respondents had children under 12, so this would not have been an issue for them.

Secrecy regarding friends and activities

One concern for parents, pre-lockdown, was that their children were keeping particular friends (such as possible romantic partners) or activities secret from them.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

It was possible that concerns over friends and children's activities – only mediated through social media – would stay much the same during lockdown, but be augmented by the concerns mentioned above relating to health and social distancing. The respondents suggested that this did not change during lockdown.

Children's unhappiness over school – wanting to change or leave

There were a number of conflicts between parents and teenage children about school – one sixteen-year-old child wanted to leave school, and her parents and older sister tried to dissuade her from doing so.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

We hypothesised that this would not change during lockdown, and this was not raised as an issue by respondents.

Children’s attitude to schoolwork

One source of concern to parents, pre-lockdown, was their children’s attitude to school and schoolwork; one continuing source of conflict was a fourteen-year old’s attitude towards his schoolwork and staying up so late that he was tired during the school day.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

We hypothesised that this might be more pronounced during lockdown, with the move to online teaching and the necessity for more self-regulation. Parents in lockdown were required to supervise their children in situations when they themselves were having to work from home, putting them under a double burden. This was confirmed by our respondents, who cited schooling and home schooling (‘how hard home-schooling is’) as one of the chief stressors and one of the most negative impacts on the relationship between parents and children in lockdown.

Children’s rudeness to parents, and insubordination

Children resisting parents’ exhortations to help with household chores, or ‘treating the house like a hotel’, or repeatedly ignoring pleas not to go out late, pre-lockdown, were a frequent theme.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

We hypothesised that this would not change during lockdown as it remains a source of conflict between children and their parents. While bad behaviour by children was cited by parents, it was not cited as a leading cause of friction in families during lockdown. In fact, more respondents paid tribute to the resilience and adaptability of their children, and the loving care of children towards them, during lockdown.

Concerns over children’s future

Recurrent expressions of concern regarding the future of the two older teenage girls characterised the pre-lockdown data, and were the cause of a number of arguments.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

We hypothesised that this would not change during lockdown, and our respondents did not mention this as a stressor, perhaps indicating that the context of COVID-19 did not facilitate long-term reflection. However, parents did cite concerns over whether lockdown had impaired their (younger) children's development and schooling

Children wearing unsuitable clothes (e.g. daughters in clothes that are too revealing)

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

As this relates to children going out at night in clothes deemed unsuitable by their parents, we hypothesised that this would not be an issue during lockdown. This was not mentioned by parents.

Body art (e.g. getting an ear pierced or a tattoo)

These were one-off incidents, and the cause of considerable parent-child conflict at the time

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

The singularity of these incidents, and the fact that body art was effectively impossible to access during lockdown, led us to hypothesise that this would not be an issue during the COVID lockdown, and it was not mentioned in the longitudinal survey.

THEMES OF GENERIC STRESSORS BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS

These relate to the sharing of space or resources by family members. As pre-pandemic stressors, we predicted that these would be underscored and amplified by the constraints of lockdown.

Money: a) household costs; b) buying unnecessary things

Our data showed that money was a recurrent source of friction, if not outright conflict between parents. This was most clearly manifested in a parent remonstrating with the other family members about the heating being too high for too long. Another, less frequent occurrence was disagreement over whether the purchase of an item was necessary. This included, for example, rebuking a child for ordering a taxi to go out to a club.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

The move to online purchasing in lockdown plus the precarious employment conditions under which many were existing would, we hypothesised, aggravate the concerns over money. This was confirmed by the longitudinal survey, which showed resoundingly that money was the main stressor in lockdown between partners.

Territoriality

This issue, pre-Covid, related to family members e.g. entering others' bedrooms without permission or knocking first, or a child using the parents' en-suite bathroom and taking too long in it.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

In lockdown this issue, we hypothesised, would be hugely amplified, not just in the private spaces of bedrooms and bathrooms, but also the communal areas. In contexts where adults were having to work from home and did not have dedicated work places such as studies which they could close off from other domestic activity, they were under considerable strain; all the more so if they were also having to home-school or supervise young children. The fact that communal areas had to be repurposed as workspaces in such contexts would, we surmised, be a major source of domestic tension. In actual fact, the respondents did not mention issues of sharing space as problematic in the longitudinal survey, although they mentioned being 'cooped up' and having to spend too much time together.

Conflicts over what to watch on TV

Pre-Covid, this issue was the cause of friction rather than outright conflict between family members.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

In lockdown, we hypothesised that this issue would be magnified by the fact that family members had no option but to stay at home and find sources of recreation and entertainment together. Thus the pre-Covid disputes over what to watch on TV would be broadened out to the issue of access to screens or tablets – particularly in contexts where there was limited access to such resources. Furthermore, the issue of what was, e.g. appropriate (or not) for children to watch could have been salient. It was also likely that agreement as to which recreational activities to undertake as a family may have been subject to more dispute in this context. In fact, this was not mentioned by respondents as a stressor in lockdown.

Joining in communal family activities vs. solitary time

One tension observed in our data was that between parents wanting children to join in family activities (e.g. a family gathering for a birthday or Mother's Day) and teenagers wanting to spend time in their bedrooms.

THEMATIC EMERGENCE WITHIN LONGITUDINAL DATA

In lockdown, where all family members were legally required to be at home and thus spend their days together, it was likely that the tension between engaging in communal activities rather than solitary pursuits would be elevated. Some families reported spending more mealtimes together; some, fewer. Some reported an increasing dependence on takeaways; equal numbers reported preparing more – and healthier – meals together.

GENERAL SUMMARY OF PRE-PANDEMIC SNAPSHOT OF FAMILIES

Overall, we judged that the periods of lockdown during the pandemic would amplify and aggravate the generic issues that were sources of conflict pre-pandemic because the family members were confined to their homes. Alongside **money** and **education**, access to both of which were hugely impacted in the context of COVID-19, we judged that the constraints of sharing **space** and **time** would also be a source of tension. With respect to **space**, in many cases, what was formerly solely a domestic space, such as a dining room, living room, or kitchen, had to be re-purposed as a shared working and schooling space, which would add to the stress endured by families. With respect to **time**, the conflicting demands on parents to be both home workers and home educators would also add to their burdens over and above those normally endured. Where domestic duties were clear-cut pre-pandemic, it was likely that the lockdown necessarily prompted discussions about how these were managed when the whole family was constantly at home, needing to be fed and, in many cases, home-schooled. The massive move to online working and socialising also, we believed, would prompt discussions about the proportion of time spent with the family or otherwise.

LINKING PRE-PANDEMIC SNAPSHOT WITH FINDINGS FROM LONGITUDINAL SURVEY

It was indeed the case that division of household labour and childcare became a salient issue in lockdown, particularly for women, and for those with younger children. However, constraints of space was not reported to be a major issue in the surveys, although 'being cooped up together' was cited as one of the few negative effects on family relationships in the context of a generally positive picture, where respondents generally reported no negative effects. The May 2021 survey revealed that work – a leading stressor in the December 2020 survey – was no longer a leading source of stress, suggesting that families had largely adapted to working from home and had resolved major work-life balance issues by then. And, while time, and how to spend it as a family, was predicted to be an issue, more respondents than not

reported that lockdown had afforded their families more quality time together. One of the strongest findings of the survey was the benefits to families in having this quality time during lockdown, and the positive effects on family life. The perhaps surprising levels of resilience in, and support from children, and the affirmation of family ties was a recurrent theme amongst our respondents. By contrast, the main stressors were money and children's education.

LONGITUDINAL SURVEY (DECEMBER 2020 – MAY 2021)

OVERVIEW OF LONGITUDINAL PROJECT

The following data were collected across two timepoints in December 2020 and May 2021. Participants were recruited and completed the first survey between December 8-16, 2020. 1,015 respondents took part in the initial survey, all of whom had at least 1 child. Of the initial sample, 935 participants were still active on the recruitment platform six months later and were invited to participate in the follow-up survey between May 24-31, 2021. A final sample of 739 of those invited completed the second survey (73% retention of the initial sample).

The general breakdown of the sample at Timepoint 1 is as follows:

The average age of our participants was 39 years old (SD=9.24 years)

76% of the sample identified as women

86% of the sample identified as white (5% Black/Black British; 4% Asian; 4% Mixed ethnic background; 2% Middle Eastern, Latinx, or Ethnicity not listed).

65% were employed, while 14% were homemakers, 8% were unemployed, 5% were furloughed due to COVID-19, 3% were disabled and unable to work, 1% were retired, and the remaining identified as being in another type of employment not listed.

33% of the sample identified as key workers.

35% of the sample said a member of their household was in a vulnerable category for COVID but only 8% of the sample had a member of their household shielding.

54% of the sample was single (35%) or in a dating relationship (18%), and the remaining were engaged or married/in a marriage-like committed partnership (47%). For those in relationships, the average relationship length was 7.45 years (SD=8.89).

51% of the sample were living with a romantic partner, and the average household in this sample included 3 people living at home (SD=1.12 people).

At Timepoint 2, the general breakdown of the participants who took part in the follow-up was as follows:

76% of the follow-up sample identified as women.

38% of the sample were single (35%) or in a dating relationship (3%), and the remaining were engaged or married/in a marriage-like committed partnership (62%).

54% were from relatively higher socioeconomic households.

Profiles of Parents:

On average, people in our sample had 2 children (SD=0.97 children, range 1-7 children)

Youngest children (or only children) were 8.55 years old on average (SD=6.19 years, range 0-51.5 years old), and eldest children were 9.12 years old on average (SD=9.55 years, range 0-52 years old)

77% of people in our sample said their children were in school or university, and 19% said they were still home schooling their children at the time of the survey.

58% of people in the initial sample had at least 1 child under the age of 5; 48% had at least one child between the ages of 5 and 11; 36% had at least one child between the ages of 12 and 17; and, 21% had at least one child aged 18 or older. For the majority of people in this sample, their youngest child was either under 5 (34%) or between the ages of 5 and 11 (37%). These proportions were similar across the follow-up survey (55%; 47%; 38%; 23%).

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM LONGITUDINAL SURVEY:

The current survey of parents across the UK provided a snapshot into how people felt COVID-19 had impacted their relationships with their children and their romantic partners 10- and 15-months into the pandemic. When considering the implications of the current findings, it is important to bear in mind that participants were asked in instances to retrospectively assess how the first UK lockdown had impacted their relationships nearly a year after the initial lockdown began. This means that participant responses may be biased by how their current relationship interactions. However, biased recollections can also be informative as they guide behaviours in the present and inform future behaviours.

Relationships with Children

Overall, across both surveys, people felt very satisfied in their relationships with their children, particularly people with younger children under the age of 12. In general, people felt that their relationships with their children were better off now than they had been at the beginning of 2020, and had the same optimism that their relationships would continue to improve over the following months. Again, notably,

these trends were stronger for people with younger children under the age of 12. These trends were also more present among people who reported being romantically attached compared to those who were single, suggesting that single parents may have lacked home-based support systems to help them in their daily interactions with their children (regardless of child's age). These overall trends were largely similar at the May 2021 follow-up survey.

A slightly different pattern emerged when looking at the positive and negative interactions people reported having with their children during the first UK lockdown. While interactions were largely rated as moderately positive, people with younger children under the age of 12 reported both more positive and more negative interactions with their children compared to people without children in those age groups. People found it moderately easier to talk to their children about interpersonal issues since COVID-19 began, especially those with children between the ages of 5 to 11 compared to people without children in that age group.

Time, school and work emerged as the most commonly identified stressors between parents and children during the first UK lockdown. And while these stressors did not differ across parent profiles, people with children between the ages of 5 and 11 reported that these stressors led to more severe conflict between them and their children compared to people without children in those age groups. At the follow-up, schooling continued to be a consistent source of stress in relationships with children. Notably, people with children between the ages of 5 and 11 also reported that they felt it had been easier to talk to their children about conflicts and issues in their relationship.

In general, people reported strong, positive relationships with their children in December 2020. Interestingly these trends were more present among people with younger children under the age of 12, despite the difficulties these individuals also reported due to issues such as home-schooling. These trends may reflect a hidden benefit that people with younger children had to engage in more hands-on one-to-one experiences due to a lack of alternative care options (e.g., classrooms, playschools, playgroups), whereas people with older children may have had fewer alternative activities to engage in even when their children were at home (e.g., those between the ages of 12 and 18 who could home school themselves with less direct supervision). These overall trends were largely similar in the May 2021 follow-up survey.

Relationships with Partners

Overall, across both surveys, people felt satisfied in their relationships with their partners. In general, people had not felt there had been changes for better or worse to their relationships in the past year or since the first UK lockdown. However, people who had relatively younger children (under 18s) anticipated more positive changes in the following six months compared to those with adult children. These overall trends were largely similar in the May 2021 follow-up survey.

Women were more likely than men to report that both they and their partners had interacted more negatively towards each other during whereas men actually reported that their partners had behaved more positively towards them.

Money, work, time, and children were the most commonly identified stressors between romantic partners during the first UK lockdown in the first survey. In the follow-up survey, money and children’s behaviours were again the top ranked sources of conflict.

QUESTION 1: Attachment Style

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about how they experience relationships with others. Participants in relationships were asked to think about these statements in the context of their romantic partnership, while those who identified as entirely single were asked to think about these statements with regards to their relationships with others more broadly.

This questionnaire allows us to calculate how anxiously and avoidantly attached people are in their relationships. Adults high in attachment anxiety tend to struggle with close bonds because they are chronically worried that their affections are not reciprocated, despite strongly wanting close intimate bonds. Adults high in attachment avoidance tend to struggle with close bonds because they are uncomfortable depending on others and do not often desire intimacy to the same extent as those who are securely or anxiously attached.

December 2020:

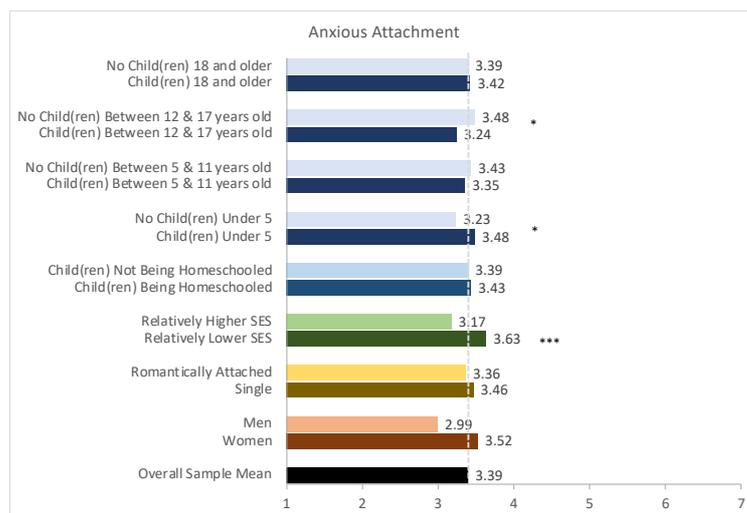


Fig 1a. Anxious Attachment.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, anxious attachment was relatively low in this sample (M=3.39, SD=1.51). Women in the sample were significantly more anxiously attached compared to men

in the sample, as were people from a relatively lower socioeconomic status (SES) group compared to those from a relatively higher SES group. People with children under five, and those between 12 and 18 were significantly more anxiously attached compared to those without children in those age groups.

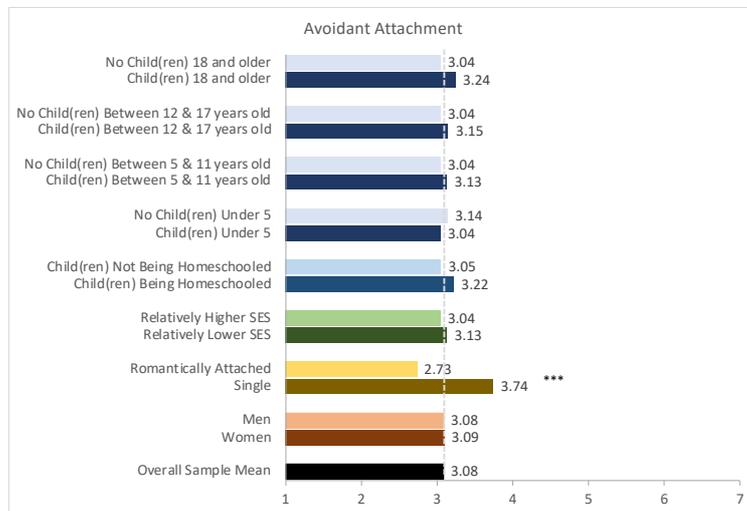
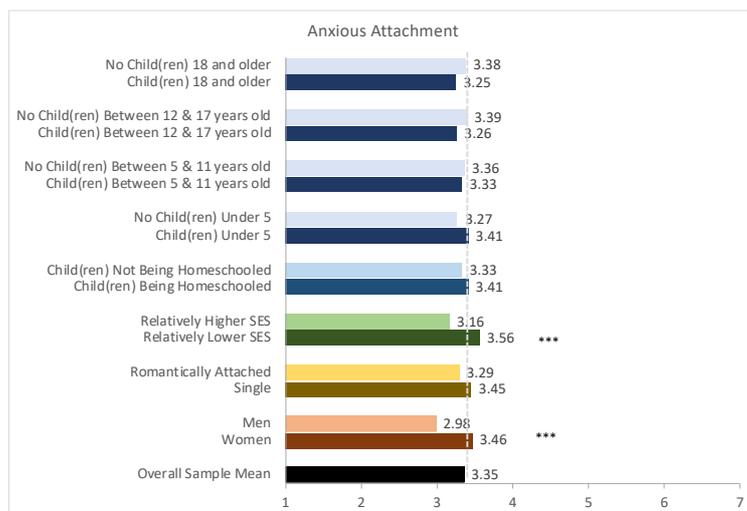


Fig 2a. Avoidant Attachment.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, avoidant attachment was relatively low in this sample ($M=3.08$, $SD=1.50$). Romantically attached people in this sample were significantly less avoidantly attached than those who were single. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that people who are avoidantly attached are more likely to be single by choice due to their discomfort with closeness and intimacy.⁴

May 2021:



⁴ Pepping, C. A., MacDonald, G., & Davis, P. J. (2018). Toward a psychology of singlehood: An attachment-theory perspective on long-term singlehood. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(5), 324-331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417752106>

Fig 1b. Anxious Attachment.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Consistent with the findings from December 2020, anxious attachment was relatively low in this sample in May 2021 (M=3.35, SD=1.51). As in the initial assessment, women were significantly more anxiously attached compared to men, as were people from a relatively lower socioeconomic status (SES) background compared to those from a relatively higher SES background. The significant differences that emerged across people with children from different age groups were no longer present at this assessment.⁵

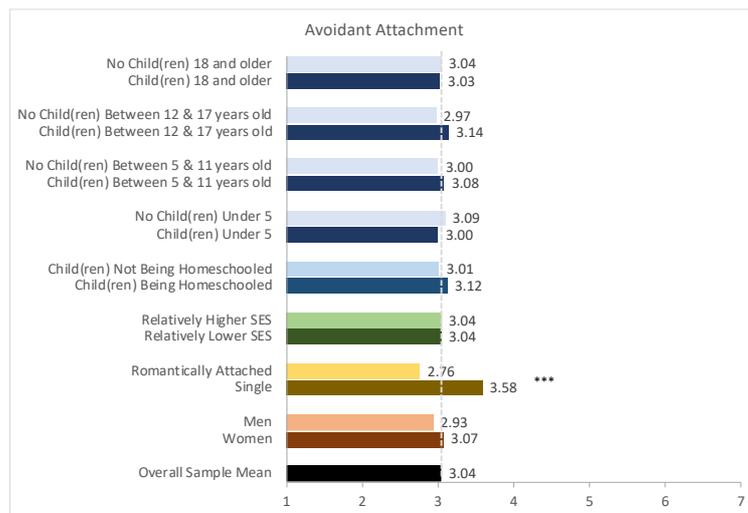


Fig 2b. Avoidant Attachment.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Again consistent with the survey from December 2020, avoidant attachment was relatively low in this sample (M=3.04, SD=1.48), and romantically attached people in were still significantly less avoidantly attached than those who were single.

Summary:

Overall, insecure attachment (high avoidant attachment, high anxious attachment) remained relatively low across the pandemic, consistent with prior research that suggests that insecure attachment styles are less common than secure ones.⁶

⁵ Please note: Changes between Time 1 and Time 2 are descriptive and do not indicate whether there have been *statistically significant* shifts across time. Rather, these findings simply suggest that a pattern that was present at Time 1 is no longer/is now present at Time 2. Interpreting change across time should be done with extreme caution.

⁶ Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (2017). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. In *Interpersonal Development* (pp. 283-296). Routledge.

QUESTION 2: Relationship Satisfaction with Partners & Child(ren)

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements assessing their relationship satisfaction with their romantic partner (if applicable) and their child(ren).

December 2020:



Fig 3a. Relationship satisfaction with romantic partner.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, relationship satisfaction with romantic partners was relatively high (M=5.43, SD=1.50). No differences emerged across subgroupings of participants.

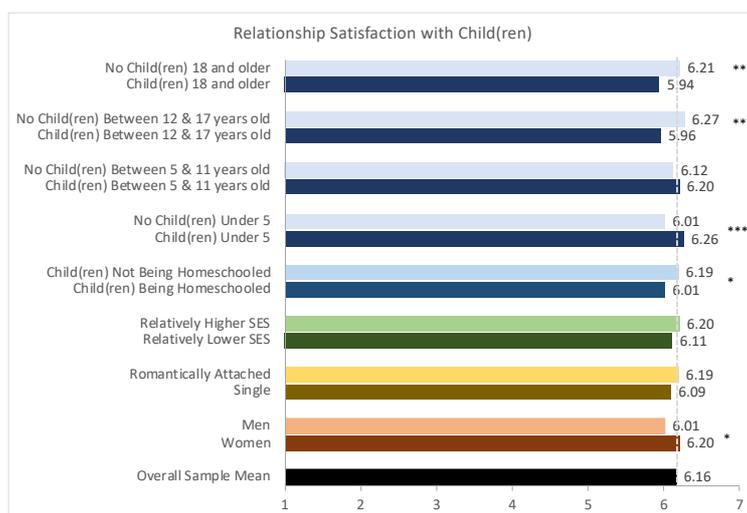


Fig 4a. Relationship satisfaction with child(ren).

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, relationship satisfaction with children was very high (M=6.16, SD=1.01). Women were significantly more satisfied with their relationships with their child(ren) compared to men. People were also significantly more satisfied in their relationships

with their child(ren) when they were not being home schooled compared to those who were. Furthermore, people who had children under 5 years old felt more satisfied with their relationships with their child(ren) compared to those without children under 5. By contrast, those with children between the ages of 12 and 17, compared to those without children in that age group, and those with children over 18, compared to those without children in that age group, felt less satisfied in their relationships with their child(ren) (*n.b.: These differences across age groups appear to be driven by greater satisfaction with relationships with children under 5*).

May 2021:

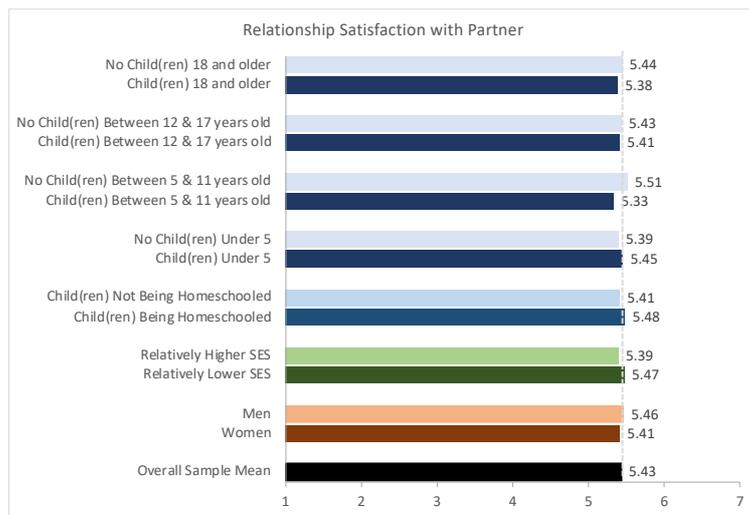


Fig 3b. Relationship satisfaction with romantic partner.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Consistent with the survey from December 2020, relationship satisfaction with romantic partners was relatively high in the May 2021 survey (M=5.43, SD=1.44) and no differences emerged across subgroupings of participants.

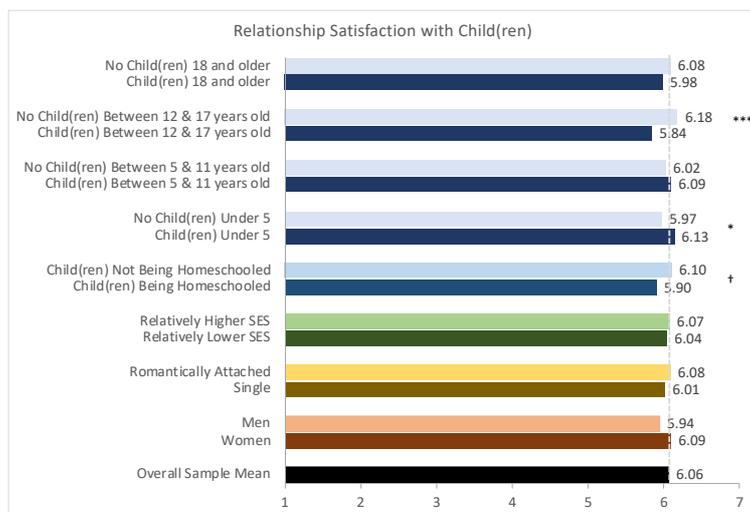


Fig 4b. Relationship satisfaction with child(ren).

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Consistent with the December 2020 survey, relationship satisfaction with children was still very high in May 2021 ($M=6.06$, $SD=1.08$). However, women were no longer significantly more satisfied with their relationships with their child(ren) compared to men. Furthermore, people who had not been home schooling their child(ren) in December 2020 were only marginally more satisfied in their relationships with their child(ren) compared to those who had been home schooling. People who had children under 5 years old still felt more satisfied with their relationships with their child(ren) compared to those without children under 5, and those with children between the ages of 12 and 17, compared to those without children in that age group, still felt less satisfied in their relationships with their child(ren).

Summary:

Overall, satisfaction with family relationships (children and partners) remained high despite the pandemic, consistent with research suggesting that relationships had not been unilaterally negatively impacted by the pandemic.⁷ However, people with relatively older children (12+) were somewhat less satisfied with their family relationships compared to those without older children.

QUESTION 3: Changes to the relationship with partners and child(ren)

Participants were asked to indicate whether or not their relationships with their partners and children were better off today compared to: 1) January 2020 [pre-pandemic]; 2) During the first COVID-19 lockdown in Spring 2020; and, 3) where they think their relationship will be 6 months from now.

In the follow-up survey in May 2021, participants were again asked if their relationships were better off today compared to: 1) before the pandemic began, and 2) where they think their relationship will be 6 months from now.

These questions were measured using a scale ranging from -3: much worse off, to 3: much better off, with a midpoint of 0: no change. Positive scores reflect relatively positive changes to the relationships, negative scores reflect relatively negative changes to the relationships.

December 2020:

⁷ Balzarini, R. N., Muise, A., Zoppolat, G., Di Bartolomeo, A., Rodrigues, D. L., Alonso-Ferres, M., ... & Slatcher, R. B. (2020). Love in the time of COVID: perceived partner responsiveness buffers people from lower relationship quality associated with COVID-related stressors. <https://psyarxiv.com/e3fh4/download?format=pdf>

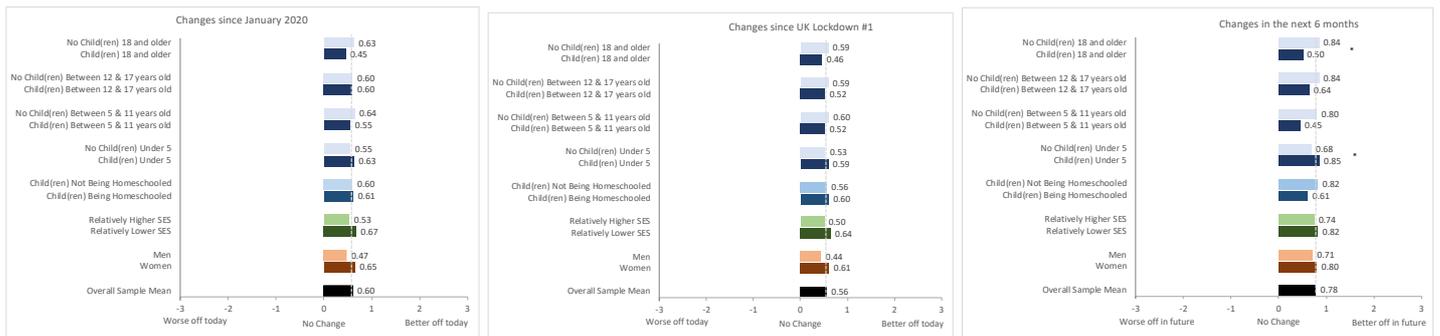


Fig 5a. A) Changes to relationship with partner since January 2020; b) Changes to relationship with partner since first UK lockdown; c) anticipated changes in the next 6 months
 Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that there had been no changes to their relationships with their partners since the start of 2020 ($M=0.60$, $SD=1.47$) or since the first UK lockdown ($M=0.57$, $SD=1.37$). People in this sample also did not anticipate much change in their relationship over the next 6 months ($M=0.78$, $SD=1.29$), with the exception that people who had no children over the age of 18 who anticipated that their relationship with their romantic partner would significantly improve over the subsequent 6 months, compared to those with children over the age of 18.

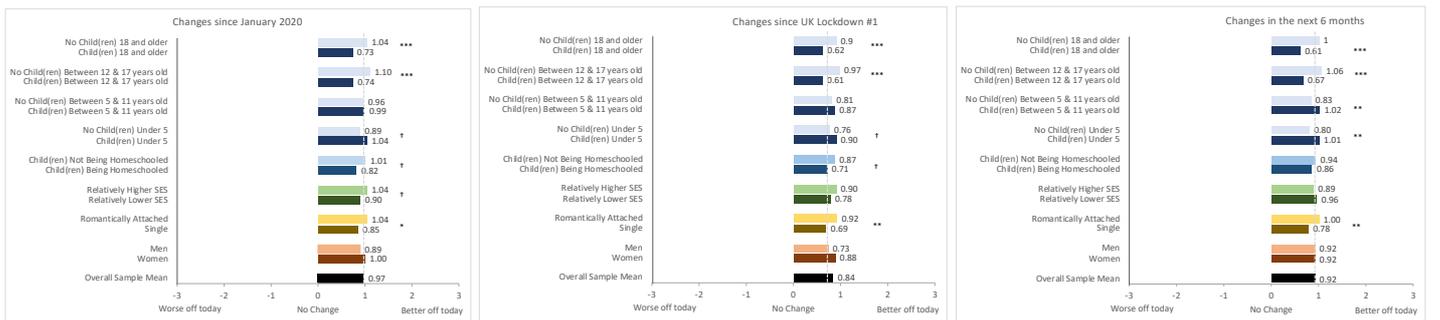


Fig 6a. A) Changes to relationship with child(ren) since January 2020; b) Changes to relationship with child(ren) since first UK lockdown; c) anticipated changes in the next 6 months
 Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that there had been slightly positive changes to their relationship with their child(ren) since January 2020 ($M=0.97$, $SD=1.29$) and since the first lockdown in the UK ($M=0.84$, $SD=1.24$), and anticipated slightly positive changes to continue in the future as well ($M=0.92$, $SD=1.18$). People who were romantically attached experienced and anticipated more positive changes than those who were single. People who were home-schooling their children also reported that their relationships had improved relative to earlier in the year compared to people who were not home-schooling their children.

People with children under the age of 5 reported that their relationships were stronger today compared to both January 2020 and the first UK lockdown, whereas those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 and those with children over the age of 18 reported that their relationships were worse off today, compared to those without children in those age groups. Similarly, people with children under 5, as well

as those between the ages of 5 and 11, anticipated that their relationship with their children would improve over the next 6 months, whereas those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 and those over 18 expected them to get slightly worse, compared to those without children in those age groups (N.B.: These differences across age groups appear to be driven by people with children under 5).

May 2021:

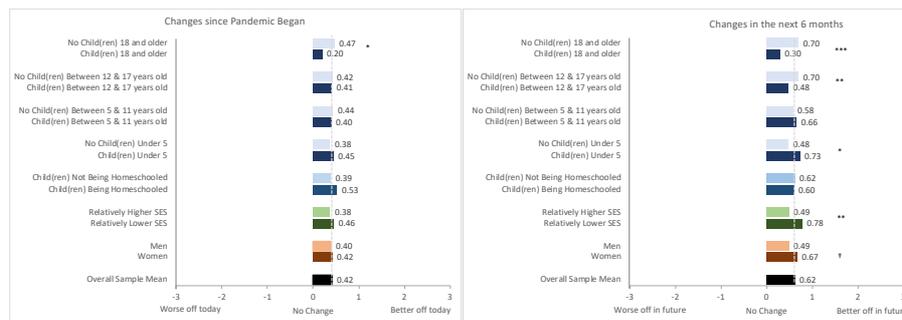


Fig 5b. A) Changes to relationship with partner since before pandemic started; b) anticipated changes in the next 6 months

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Consistent with the December 2020 survey, people reported that there had been relatively no changes to their relationships with their partners since before the pandemic began ($M=0.42$, $SD=1.25$). Unlike in the initial survey, people in the follow-up survey without children over the age of 18 believed their relationship had changed somewhat for the better compared to those with children over the age of 18.

Again, consistent with the December 2020 survey, people did not anticipate much change in their relationship over the next 6 months ($M=0.62$, $SD=1.11$), and people who had no children over the age of 18 continued to anticipate that their relationship with their romantic partner would significantly improve over the subsequent 6 months, compared to those with children over the age of 18. Additionally, in the follow-up survey, people from lower SES backgrounds anticipated more positive changes to their relationship compared to those from relatively higher SES backgrounds, as did those with children under the age of 5 (compared to those without children in that age group). By contrast, in the follow-up survey, people with children between 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and those with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) anticipated more negative changes to their relationships with their children.

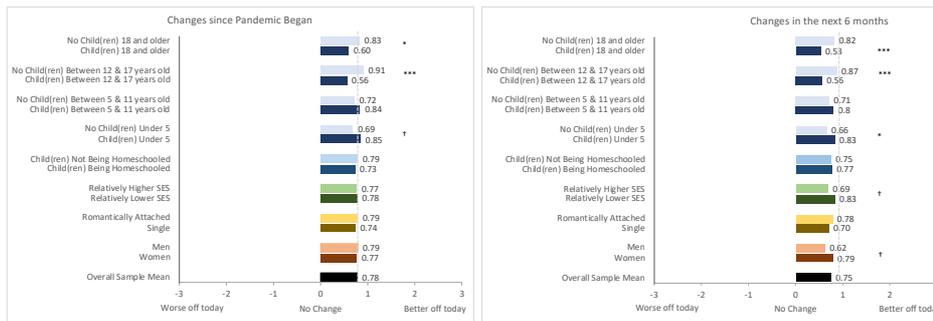


Fig 6b. A) Changes to relationship with partner since before pandemic started; b) anticipated changes in the next 6 months

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Compared to the survey in December 2020, people reported that there had been relatively little changes to their relationship with their child(ren) since the pandemic began ($M=0.78$, $SD=1.32$). Furthermore, people with children under the age of 5 no longer significantly differed from those without children in that age group in terms of the perceived changes to their relationship compared to before the pandemic. Similarly, those who had been home schooling in December 2020 (compared to those who were not) no longer reported that their relationship was better off compared to before the pandemic started. However, consistent with the first survey, in the follow-up survey those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without children in that age group), and those with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without children in that age group), still believed that their relationships with their children were relatively worse off.

Again, compared to the first survey, people reported that they anticipated relatively little change to their relationship with their child(ren) in the next 6 months ($M=0.75$, $SD=1.08$). However, consistent with the first survey, people with children under 5 (compared to those without children in this age group) expected their relationships to improve compared to those without children in this age group, whereas unlike the first survey, people with children between the ages of 5 and 11 no longer expected more positive changes than those without children in that age group. Finally, consistent with the first survey, people in the follow up survey with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and those with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) expected their relationship to get somewhat worse over the next 6 months.

Summary:

Overall people with relatively older children (12+) had experienced less positive changes and anticipated worse outcomes for their relationships over the next 6 months compared to people without older children.

QUESTION 4: Interactions in the relationships

Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they had experienced they had experienced a series of positive and negative interactions with their partners (if applicable) and their child(ren).

Behaviours were aggregated into the following:

- Positive & negative behaviours people had enacted towards their partners.
- Positive & negative behaviours people had enacted towards their children.
- Positive & negative behaviours partners had enacted towards them.
- Positive & negative behaviours children had enacted towards them.

December 2020:

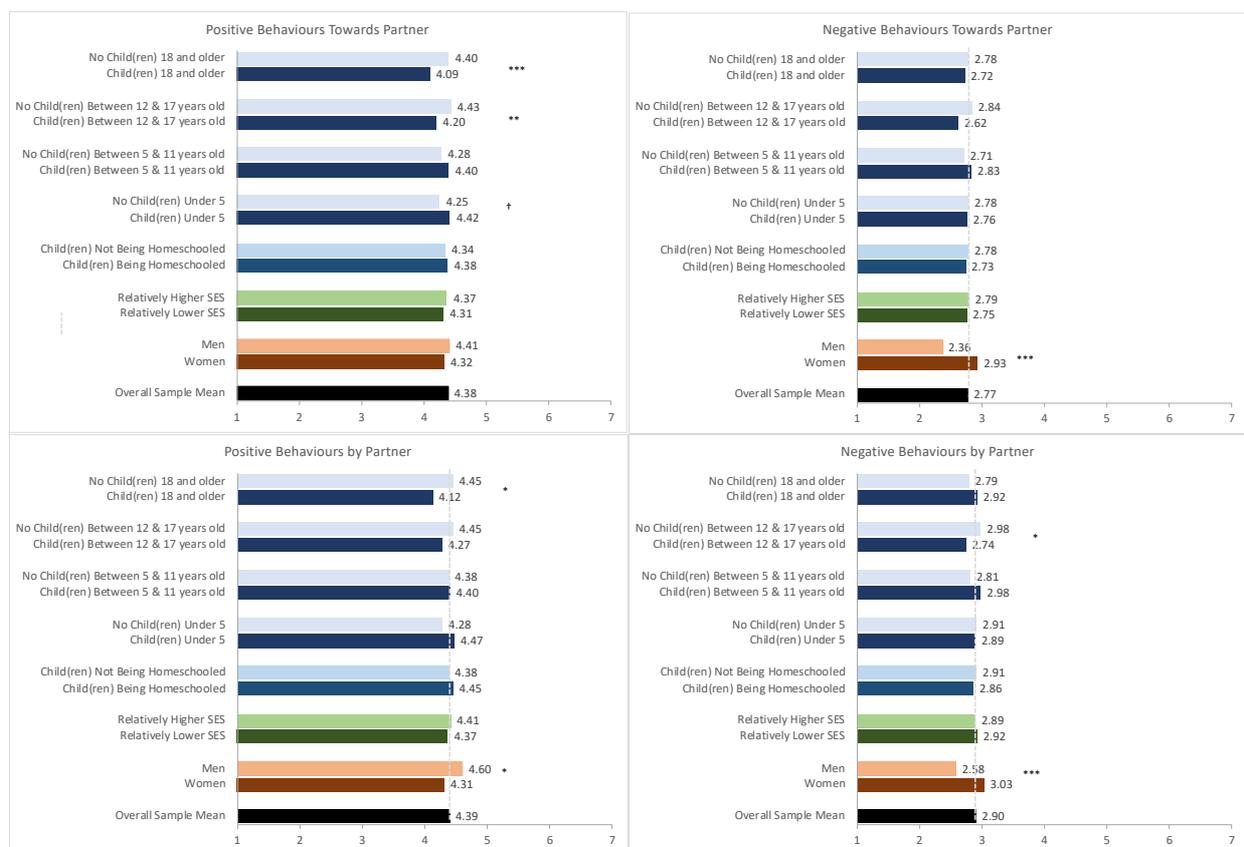


Fig 7a. Positive and negative behaviours with partners.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people reported low levels of negative interactions and moderate levels of positive interactions with their partners, both in terms of how they behaved towards their partners (positive behaviours: M=4.34, SD=1.11; negative behaviours: M=2.77, SD=1.19) as well as how their partners behaved towards them (positive behaviours: M=4.39, SD=1.50; negative behaviours: M=2.90, SD=1.34).

Women (compared to men) in the sample reported that they had behaved significantly more positively towards their partners, and also that their partners had behaved significantly more negatively and less positively towards them.

People with children under the age of 5 (compared to those without children in that age group) reported that they had behaved significantly more positively towards their partners. By contrast, those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and those with children 18+ (compared to those without) reported that they had behaved significantly less positively towards their partners. People who had children between 12 and 17 (compared to those without) also reported that they had behaved less negatively toward their partner as well (*n.b.: These differences across age groups appear to be driven by people with children under 5*).

When it came to partner enacted behaviours, people with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) reported that their partners had behaved significantly less positively towards them. However, it was people who had children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) who reported more negative behaviours enacted by their partners (*n.b.: These differences across age groups appear to be driven by people with children under 12*).

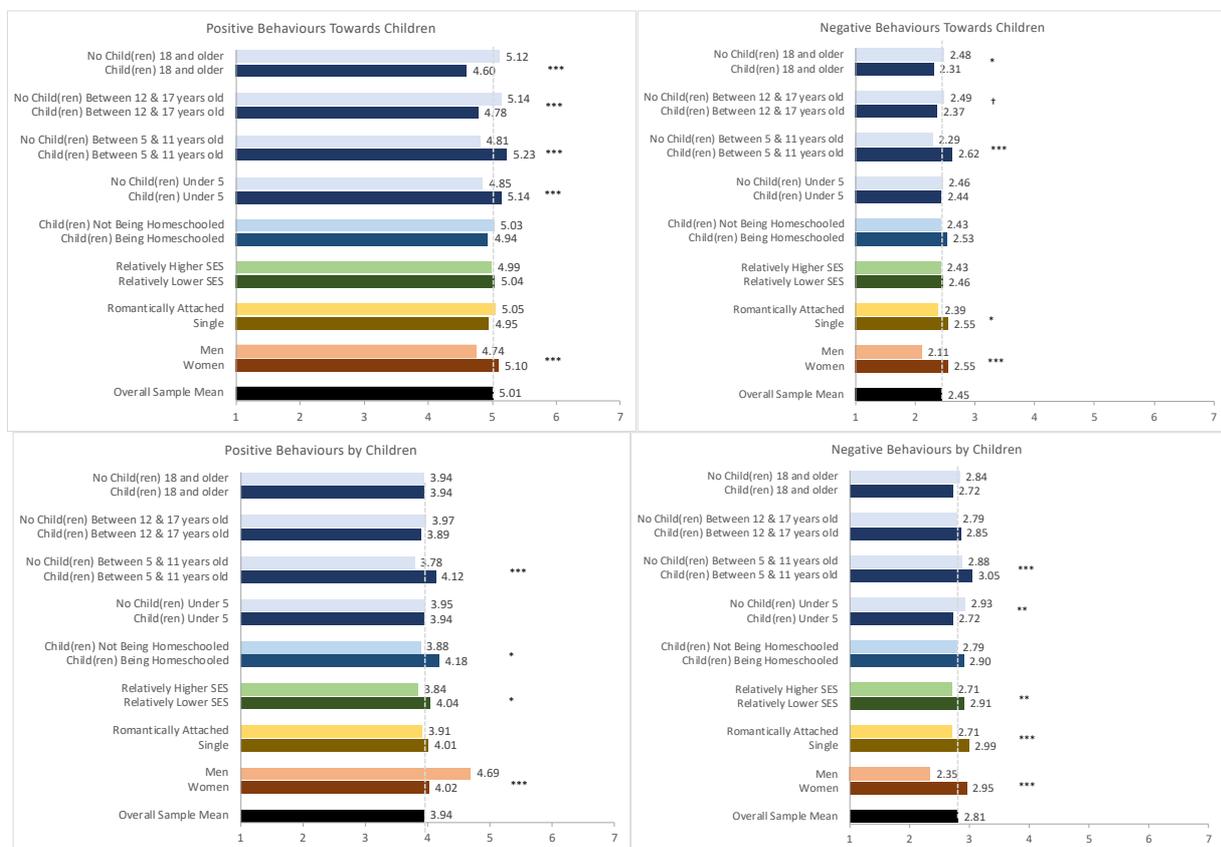


Fig 8a. Positive and negative behaviours with children.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people reported low levels of negative interactions and moderate levels of positive interactions with their children, both with regards to how they interacted with their children (positive behaviours: $M=5.01$, $SD=1.00$; negative behaviours: $M=2.45$, $SD=1.04$) and how their children interacted with them (positive behaviours: $M=3.94$, $SD=1.49$; negative behaviours: $M=2.81$, $SD=1.23$).

Women (compared to men) reported behaving both significantly more positively and more negatively towards their children. Women (compared to men) also reported that their children had behaved significantly less positively and more negatively towards them. Single people (compared to romantically) reported behaving more negatively with their children. Furthermore, single people (compared to romantically attached) and people from relatively lower SES backgrounds (compared to higher SES) reported more negative behaviours by their children.

People who were home-schooling their children (compared to not) reported their children had interacted significantly more positively towards them. Similarly, people with children under the age of 5 (compared to those without), and those with children between 5 and 11 (compared to without) reported that they had interacted with their children significantly more positively compared to those without children in those age groups. By contrast, those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and children over 18 (compared to those without) reported significantly less positive interactions with their children. Similarly, people with children between 5 and 11 (compared to those without) reported that they had behaved more negatively toward their children, whereas those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and children over 18 (compared to those without) reported they had significantly less negative interactions with their children (N.B.: These differences across age groups appear to be driven by people with children under 12).

May 2021:

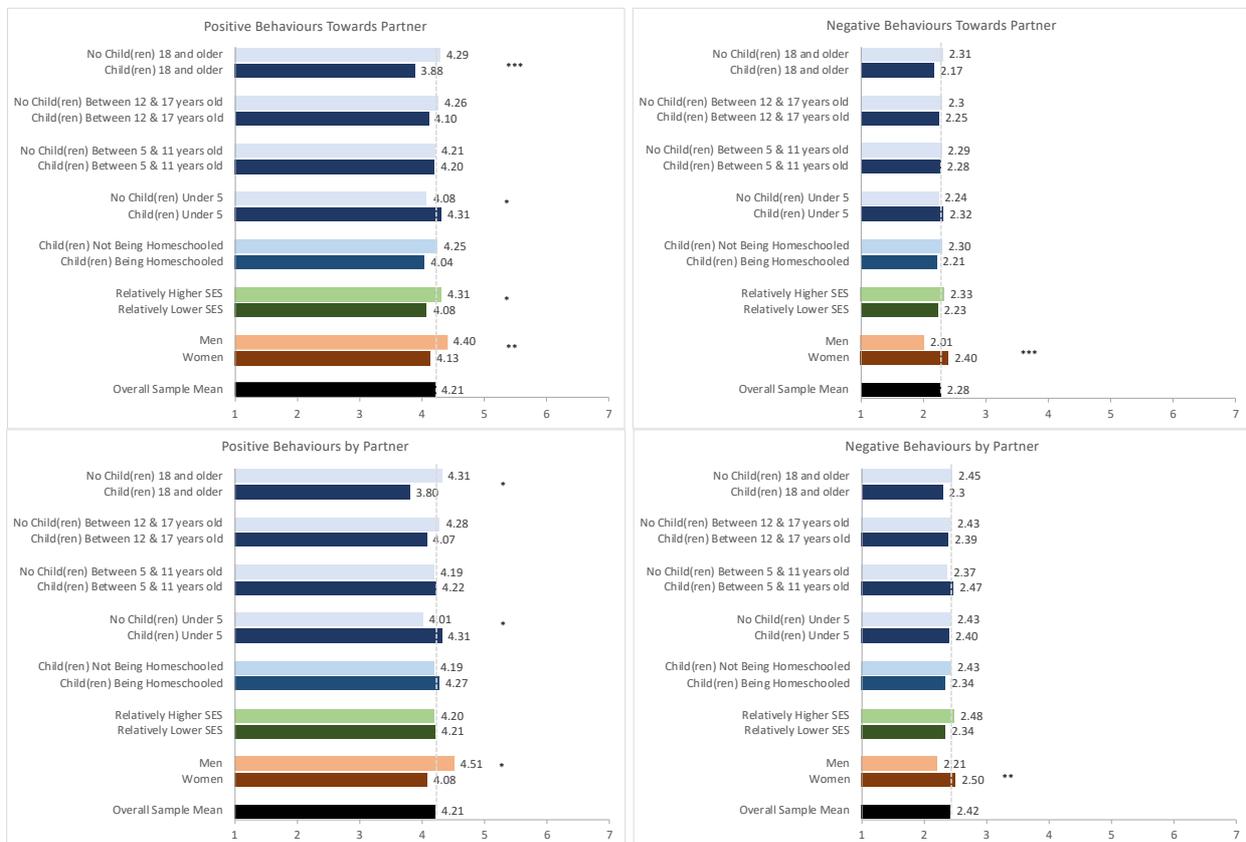


Fig 7b. Positive and negative behaviours with partners.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Consistent with the survey in December 2020, people in the May 2021 follow-up survey reported low levels of negative interactions and moderate levels of positive interactions with their partners, both in terms of how they behaved towards their partners (positive behaviours: M=4.21, SD=1.10; negative behaviours: M=2.28, SD=1.11) as well as how their partners behaved towards them (positive behaviours: M=4.21, SD=1.46; negative behaviours: M=2.42, SD=1.29).

Similarly, consistent with the first survey, women (compared to men) reported significantly less positive and more negative behaviours from both themselves and their partners in the follow-up survey. However, differences between people with children in different age groups no longer emerged in the follow-up survey, with the exception of people with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) reported significantly less positive behaviours by them and their partners in the follow-up survey.

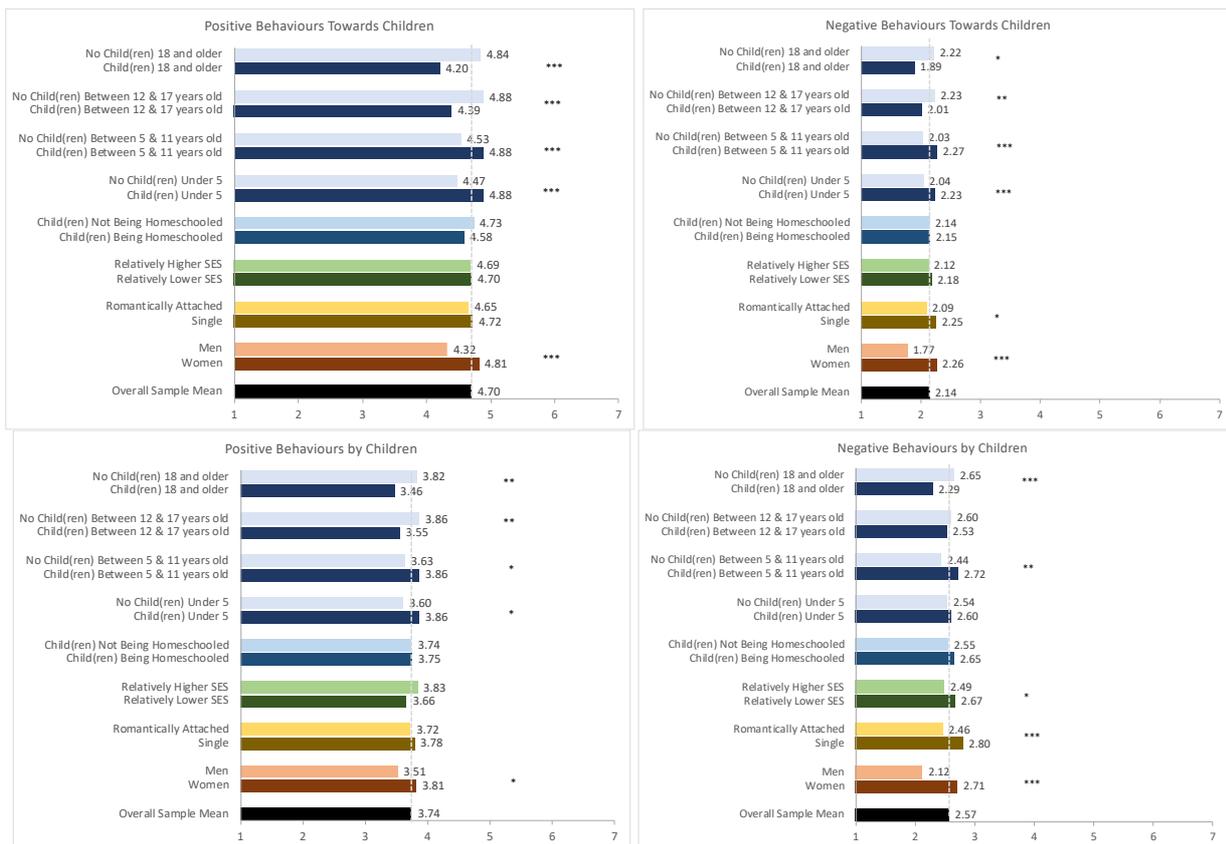


Fig 8b. Positive and negative behaviours with children.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people reported low levels of negative interactions and moderate levels of positive interactions with their children, both with regards to how they interacted with their children (positive behaviours: M=4.70, SD=1.20; negative behaviours:

M=2.14, SD=0.96) and how their children interacted with them (positive behaviours: M=3.74, SD=1.45; negative behaviours: M=2.57, SD=1.24).

Consistent with the December 2020 survey, women (compared to men) in the follow-up survey reported behaving both significantly more positively and more negatively with their children. Women also again reported that their children had behaved significantly less positively and more negatively towards them than men. Single people (compared to romantically attached) reported significantly more negative behaviours between them and their children. Furthermore, people from relatively lower SES backgrounds (compared to higher SES) reported that their children had behaved more negatively towards them.

Differences between people who had been home schooling no longer emerged in the follow-up sample. However, consistent with the first survey, people with children under the age of 5 (compared to those without children in that age group) again reported that they had behaved more positively and negatively towards their children, and that their children had behaved more positively towards them. Those with children between the ages of 5 and 11 (compared to those without) similarly reported both significantly more positive and significantly more negative behaviours between them and their children. By contrast, people with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and those with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) reported significantly less positive and less negative behaviours between them and their children.

Summary:

Overall, across the pandemic, women are reporting that they have experienced more negative and less positive interactions with their partners, and while they are also reporting more negative interactions between them and their children, they are also reporting more positive interactions as well. This may reflect changes in how households are managed (e.g., home schooling, division of labour, working from home) as a consequence of the pandemic, or a broader reflection of the interpersonal experiences of women within the family structure beyond the constraints of the pandemic. Additionally, people with younger children (under 12) reported both more positive and negative interactions with their children while those with older children (12+) reported less positive and less negative interactions. This may again reflect the unique constraints of pandemic life, with younger children needing more constant interaction and supervision by parents compared to older children to may be more autonomous or live outside of the family home.

QUESTION 5: Talking about issues with partners and children.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they found it relatively easy or difficult to talk to their partners and children about issues between them, and whether these discussions have become easier or harder since COVID-19 began.

December 2020:

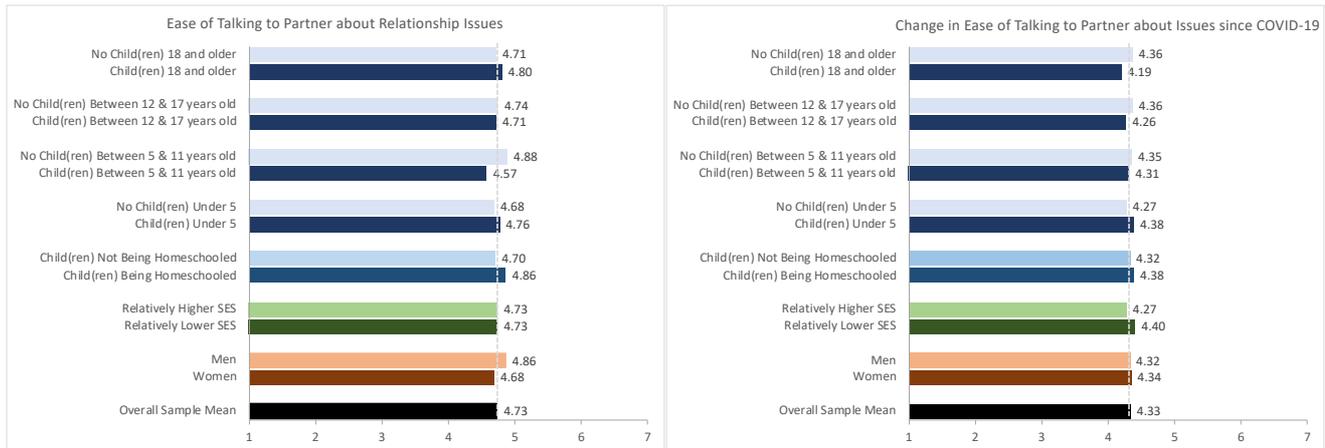


Fig 9a. Ease of talking to partner about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that talking to their partners about relationship issues was moderately easy (M=4.73, SD=1.83), and that it had become slightly easier since COVID-19 (M=4.33, SD=1.26). No differences emerged across the subpopulations in this sample.

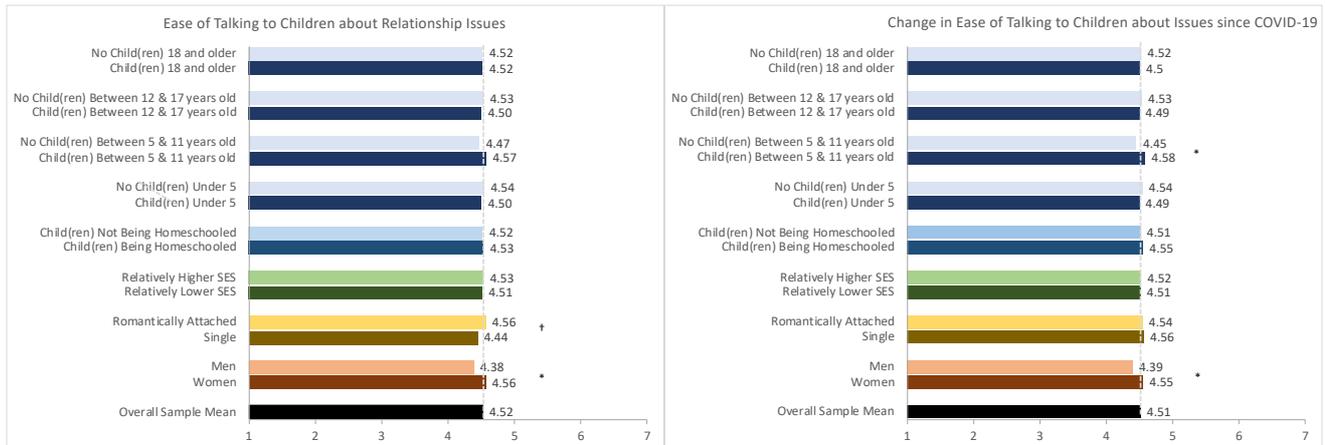


Fig 10a. Ease of talking to children about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that talking to their children about relationship issues was moderately easy (M=4.52, SD=1.02), and that it had become slightly easier since COVID-19 (M=4.51, SD=1.04). Women found it significantly easier to talk to their children about issues compared to men. People with children between the ages of 5 and 11 found it had become slightly easier to talk to their children since COVID-19 compared to people without children in those age groups.

May 2021:

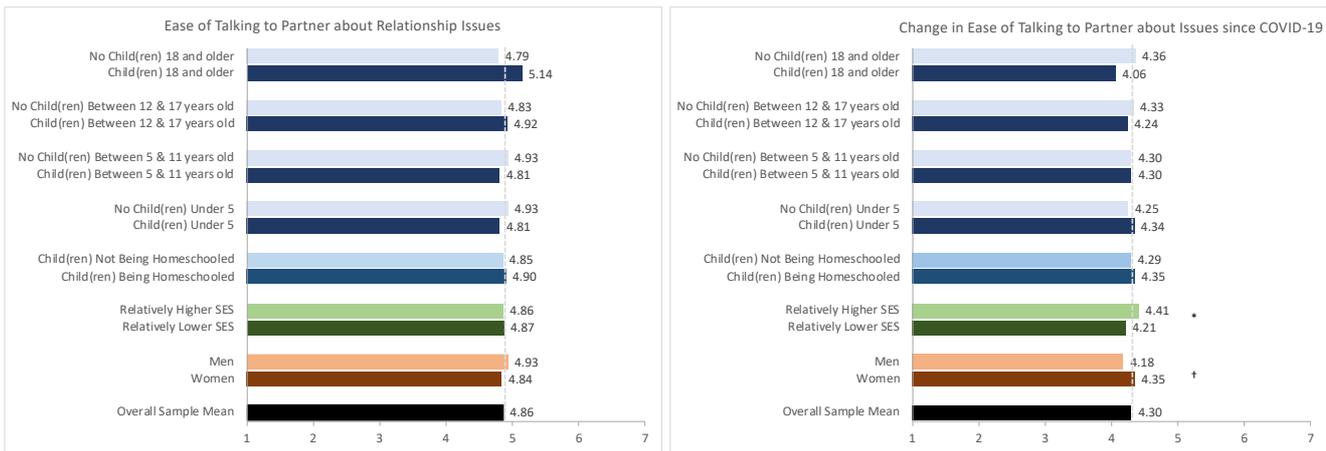


Fig 9b. Ease of talking to partner about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that talking to their partners about relationship issues was moderately easy (M=4.86, SD=1.76), and that it had become slightly easier since COVID-19 (M=4.30, SD=1.05). Unlike in the December 2020 survey, people from relatively higher SES backgrounds (compared to lower SES) reported that they felt it had become easier to talk to their partners about conflicts over the course of the pandemic.

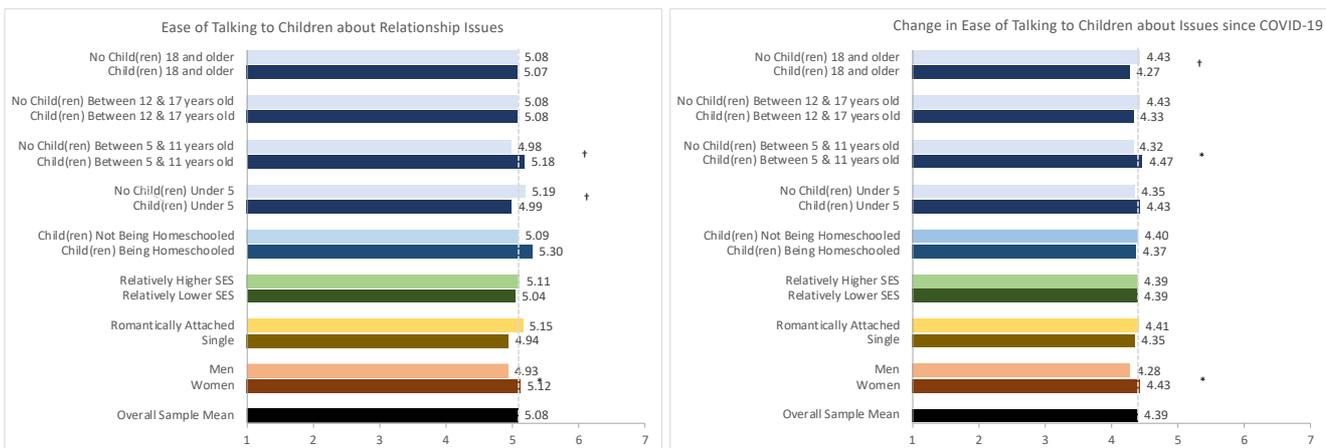


Fig 10b. Ease of talking to children about relationship issues a) now, b) since COVID-19.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that talking to their children about relationship issues was moderately easy (M=5.08, SD=1.61), and that it had become slightly easier since COVID-19 (M=4.39, SD=.96). Consistent with the December 2020 survey, women in the follow-up survey (compared to men) found it significantly easier to talk to their children about conflicts. People with children between the ages of 5 and 11 (compared to those without) also still found it had become slightly easier to talk to their children about issues and conflicts across the pandemic.

Summary:

Overall, across the pandemic people reported that they felt it was generally not difficult to talk to their family members about conflicts and issues that have arisen between them. Women in general report this being easier than men, which is consistent with prior research suggesting that men are more likely to avoid conflict discussions.⁸ Similarly, people with children between the ages of 5 and 11 reported that talking to their children about problems had become easier across the pandemic. This may reflect both an opportunity to more interactions with children in this age group which lead to more conflict but also more opportunities to talk about conflict (compared to older children who people reported less interactions with overall) and their relative developmental ability to engage with and respond to conflict problem solving (compared to younger children under 5 who people reported interacting with more but who may not be developmentally equipped to handle conflict resolution).

QUESTION 6: Dealing with interpersonal problems with partners and children before and after the first UK lockdown.

December 2020 & May 2021:

Participants were asked to indicate all the ways in which they had tried to deal with issues with their partners and their children a) before the first UK lockdown, and b) since the first UK lockdown, and c) again in May 2021. The low frequency of endorsement across categories makes it difficult to interpret results split across subpopulations, so only overall trends are presented.

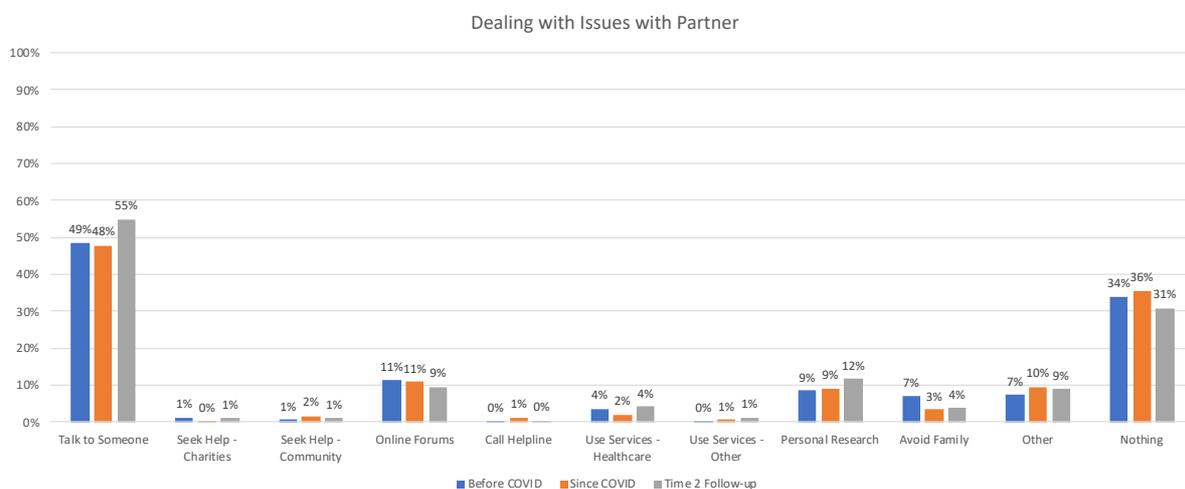


Fig 11. Endorsed ways of dealing with interpersonal problems with partner before and since lockdown. Note. Participants could endorse multiple responses, therefore percentages may exceed 100.

The majority of people in the initial survey reported that before COVID-19, they either dealt with interpersonal problems with their romantic partner by talking to

⁸ Overall, N. C., Simpson, J. A., & Struthers, H. (2013). Buffering attachment-related avoidance: Softening emotional and behavioral defenses during conflict discussions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 104(5), 854-871. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031798>

someone about the issue (49%), or by doing nothing (34%). This remained the same after COVID as well (48%; 36%), and in the follow-up survey (55%; 31%).

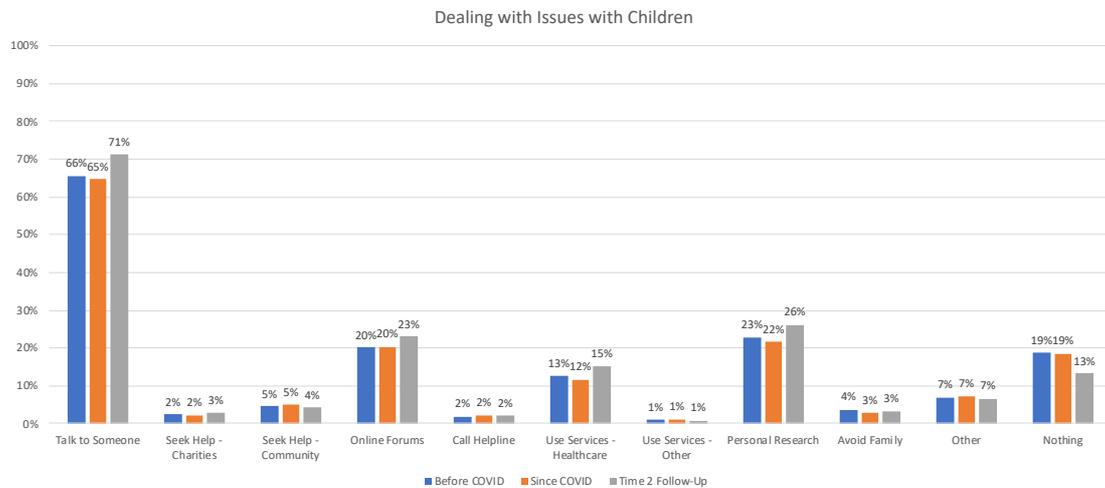


Fig 12. Endorsed ways of dealing with interpersonal problems with children before and since lockdown.
 Note. Participants could endorse multiple responses, therefore percentages may exceed 100.

The majority of people in the initial survey reported that before COVID-19, they dealt with interpersonal problems with their children by talking to someone about the issue (66%), or by visiting online forums (20%), going to healthcare services (13%), doing their own research (23%), or doing nothing (19%). This remained the same after COVID-19 (65%; 20%; 12%; 22%; 19%), and in the follow-up survey (71%; 23%; 15%; 26%; 13%).

Summary:

Overall, people in the survey tended to deal with family conflicts by talking to someone about the problem or by doing nothing. People were slightly more likely to engage with additional resources to deal with conflicts with their children, and between the two surveys a slightly smaller proportion of people reported that they had done nothing about the issues they were experiencing although this shift was small.

QUESTION 7: Biggest sources of stress or conflict between partners and children.

The following questions were used to identify sources of conflict and stress between partner and children. Different questions were asked in the initial December 2020 survey and the May 2021 survey to drill-down into some of the issues raised in the initial survey more specifically.

December 2020:

Participants were asked to identify the three biggest sources of conflict between them and their partners and them and their children during the first UK lockdown.

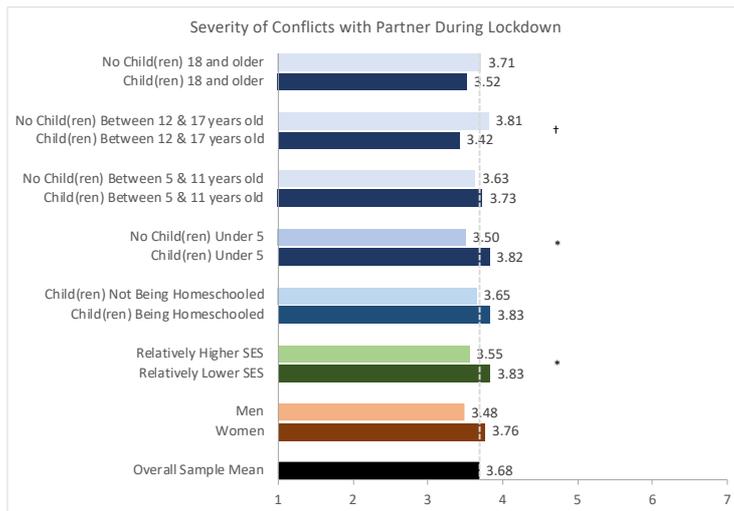


Fig 15. Severity of conflict with partner.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in our sample reported that the conflicts with their partners regarding the top three identified stressors were low to moderately serious (M=3.68, SD=1.70). People from relatively lower SES backgrounds (compared to high SES) reported significantly more serious conflicts. People with children under the age of 5 (compared to those without) reported that their conflicts with their partners had been significantly more serious, while people who had children between the ages 12 and 17 (compared to those without) reported that their conflicts were significantly less serious.

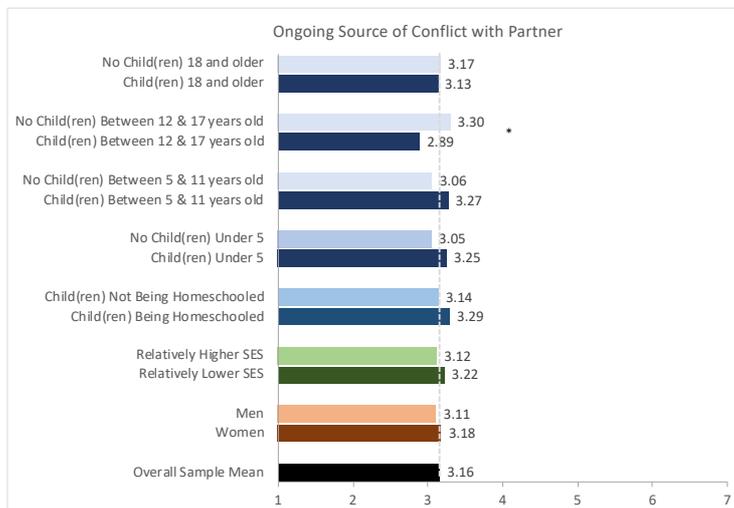


Fig 16. Ongoing source of conflict with partner.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in our sample reported that the top stressors were low to moderately still sources of stress or conflict with their partner now (M=3.16, SD=1.70). People with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) reported that the top stressors during the first UK lockdown were no longer sources of conflict with their partners.

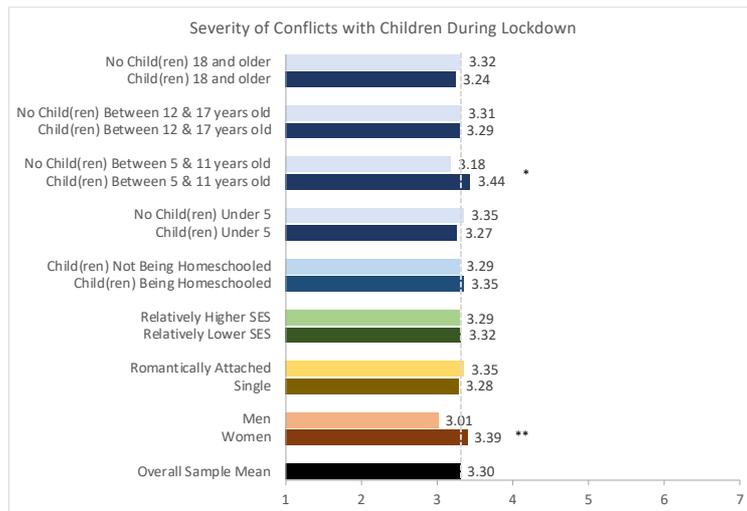


Fig 17. Severity of conflict with children.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in our sample reported that the conflicts with their children regarding the top three identified stressors were low to moderately serious (M=3.30, SD=1.64). Women (compared to men), and those with children between the ages of 5 and 11 (compared to those without children in that age group) reported that conflicts were significantly more serious.

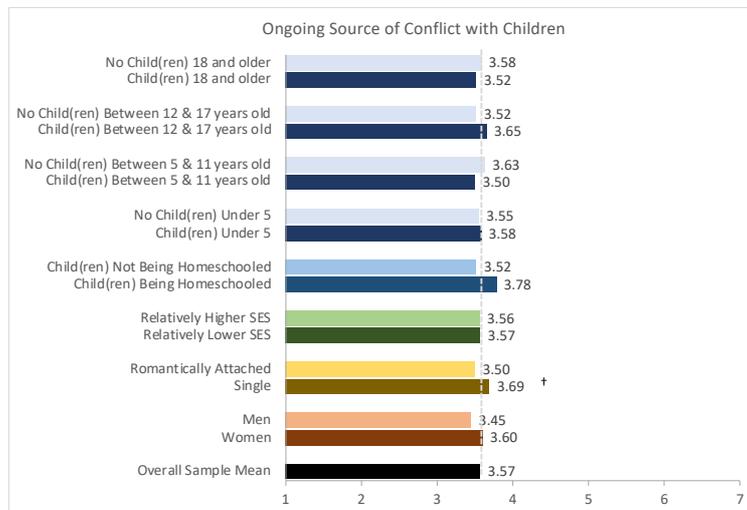


Fig 18. Ongoing source of conflict with children.

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in our sample reported that the top stressors were relatively less likely to be an ongoing source of stress or conflict with their child(ren) now (M=3.57, SD=1.64). No significant group differences emerged across the subsamples.

May 2021:

Participants were asked to rank the following sources of conflict from 1 (biggest source of conflict in their family) to 8 (least source of conflict): money/finances,

schooling/home schooling, quality time spent together, food/mealtime, work/working from home, disagreements about parenting/childcare, children’s behaviour, and, disagreements about social distancing/COVID-19.

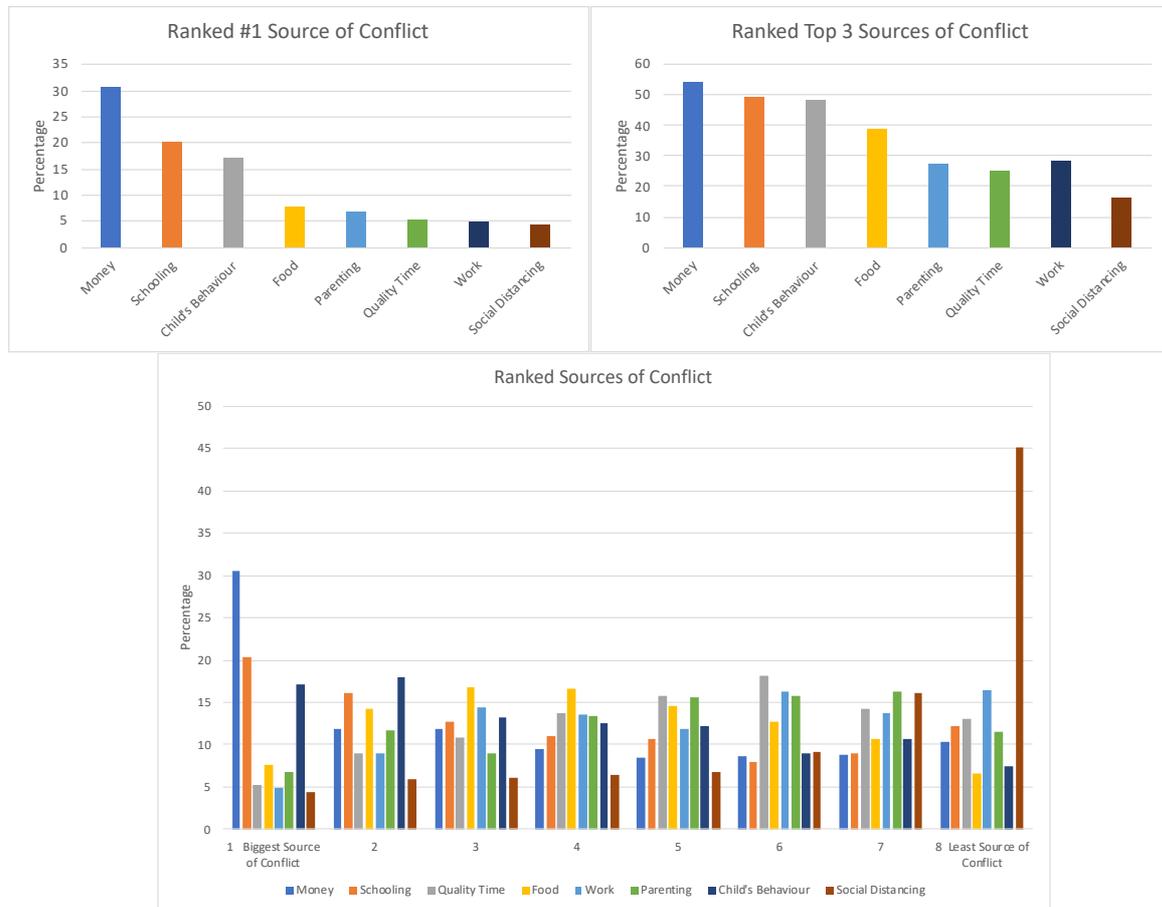


Fig 19. Ranked conflict in the family: a) percentage of participants ranking each source as their no.1 source of conflict; b) percentage of participants ranking each source among their top 3; and, c) percentage of participants ranking each source of conflict from most to least.

Consistent with open-ended prompt in the December 2020 survey, money, schooling/home schooling, and children’s behaviours were identified as the top three sources of conflict. Disagreements about social distancing and COVID-19 was ranked the least source of conflict.

Summary:

Overall, across the pandemic the common sources of conflict in families revolved around money, schooling/home schooling of children, and children’s behaviours. Although work was identified as one of the most common sources of conflict between couples in December 2020, it was ranked as the second least impactful source of conflict in May 2021. This may be an artefact of the December 2020 survey separating couple and children-based sources of conflict, and them being combined in the May 2021 survey. Alternatively, changes in and habituation to work-from-home restrictions in the latter half of the pandemic may mean that couples had largely adapted to and resolved conflicts surrounding work and work-life-balance in the follow-up survey. Conflict severity on the top issues was seen as

low to moderate, consistent with relatively low ratings of negative behaviours between family members in other questions (e.g., positive and negative behaviours with partners and children). Interestingly, people in the initial survey believed that the conflicts they had identified in December 2020 were only low to moderately ongoing issues. However, in the May 2021 survey, people ranked the most common sources of conflict from December as the most serious source of conflict in their families now.

QUESTION 8: General Relationship Quality

In addition to the relationship indicators already discussed, people were also asked to evaluate how close they felt to their partners and child(ren), how committed they were to their relationship (romantically attached only), and how responsive they felt their partners and child(ren) are to their needs. In the follow-up survey, participants were also asked about family cohesion, emotional expression and conflict, how satisfied they were that their social needs were being fulfilled, whether the amount of quality time they have spent with their families has changed, and whether their definitions of “quality time” has changed as a result of the pandemic.

December 2020:

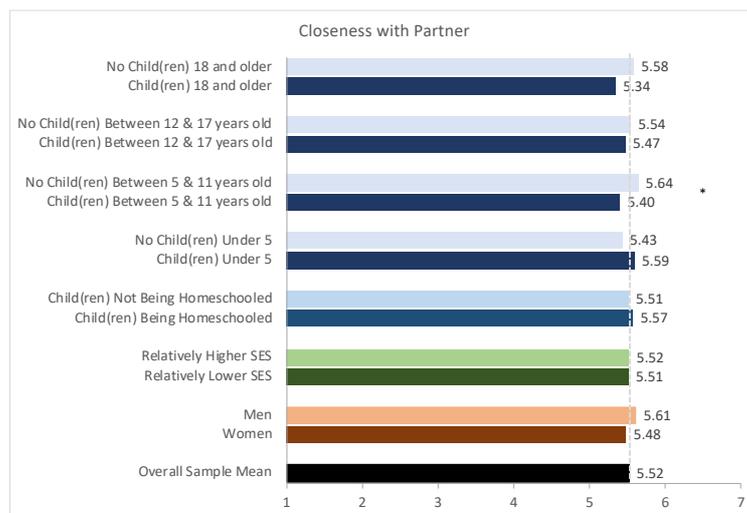


Fig 20a. Closeness with Partner

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a high degree of felt closeness with their partners (M=5.52, SD=1.56). People with children between the ages of 5 and 11 felt significantly less close to their partners compared to people without children in that age group.

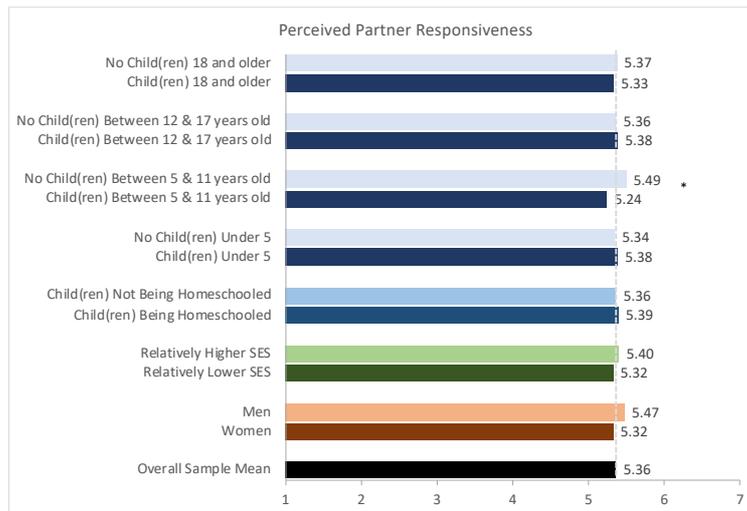


Fig 21a. Perceived partner responsiveness

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a high degree perceived partner responsiveness (M=5.36, SD=1.50). People with children who were between the ages of 5 and 11 felt that their partners were significantly less responsive to their needs compared to people without children in that age group.

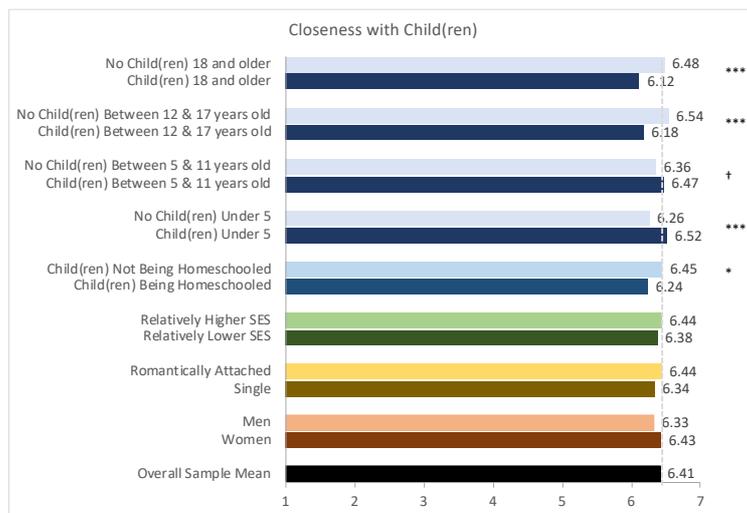


Fig 22a. Closeness with Children

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a very high degree of felt closeness with their children (M=6.41, SD=0.94). People with children who were not being home-schooled felt significantly closer to their children than those who were home-schooling. Similarly, people who had children under the age of 5, and those between the ages of 5 and 11 felt significantly closer to their children than those without children in those age groups, whereas those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 and those over 18 felt significantly less close to their children (*n.b.:* These differences across age groups appear to be driven by people with children under 12).

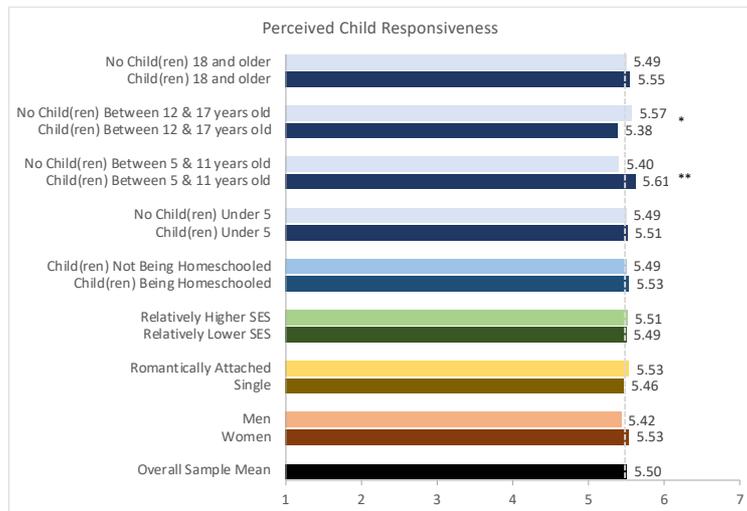


Fig 23a. Perceived responsiveness from child(ren).

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that their children appeared responsive to their needs to a great extent ($M=5.50$, $SD=1.16$). People with children who were between the ages of 5 and 11 felt their children had been significantly more responsive to their needs compared to those without children in that age group, whereas people with children between the ages of 12 and 17 felt their children had been significantly less responsive to their needs compared to people without children in that age groups.

May 2021:

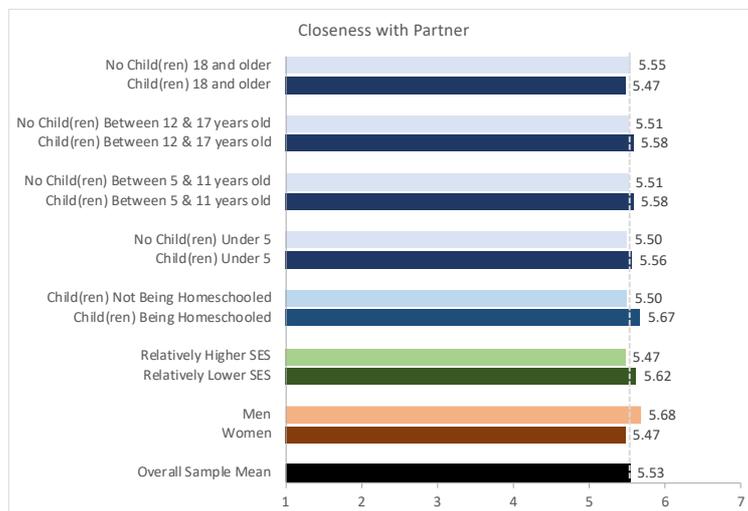


Fig 20b. Closeness with Partner

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a high degree of felt closeness with their partners ($M=5.53$, $SD=1.506$). Unlike in the first survey in December 2020, where people with children between the ages of 5 to 11 (compared to those without) felt

less close to their partners, no subgroup differences emerged in the follow-up survey.

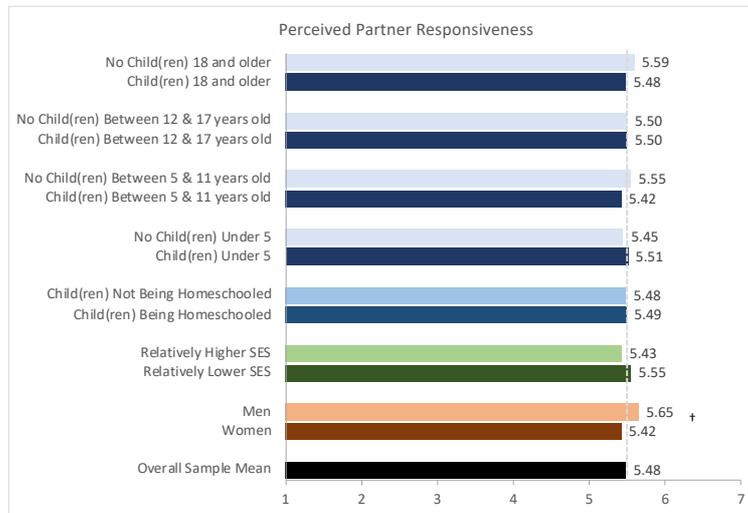


Fig 21b. Perceived partner responsiveness

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a high degree perceived partner responsiveness ($M=5.48$, $SD=1.37$). Again, unlike the first survey where people with children between the ages of 5 and 11 (compared to those without) felt that their partners were significantly less responsive to their needs, no subgroup differences emerged at the follow-up.

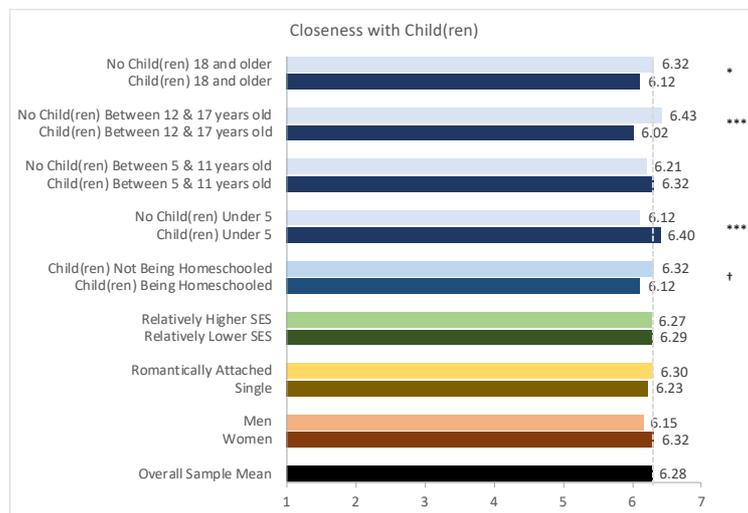


Fig 22b. Closeness with Children

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported a very high degree of closeness with their children ($M=6.28$, $SD=1.07$). Although the differences between people who were and were not home schooling their children in December 2020 were no longer significant, people who had children under the age of 5 (compared to those without)

felt significantly closer to their children, while those with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) and those with children over the age of 18 (compared to those without) felt significantly less close to their children at the follow-up.

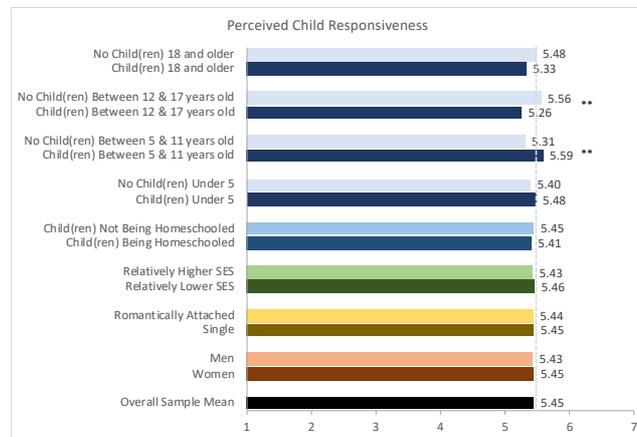


Fig 23b. Perceived responsiveness from child(ren).

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported that their children appeared responsive to their needs to a great extent ($M=5.45$, $SD=1.23$). People with children between the ages of 5 and 11 (compared to those without) felt their children had been significantly more responsive to their needs compared. This is consistent with people finding it easier to talk to children in this age group about issues and conflicts between them, and parents evaluations of more positive interactions with children in this age group. By contrast, people with children between the ages of 12 and 17 (compared to those without) felt their children had been significantly less responsive to their needs.

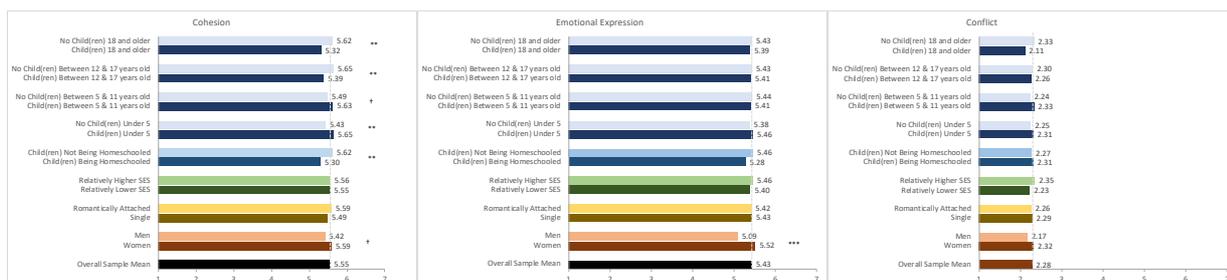


Fig 24. Strength of family relationships: a) family cohesion, b) emotional expressiveness, c) conflict

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean. Higher scores reflect more cohesion, more emotional expressiveness, and less conflict. This question was new to the follow-up survey.

Overall, people in the May 2021 follow-up survey reported high levels of family cohesion ($M=5.55$, $SD=1.11$) and emotional expressiveness ($M=5.43$, $SD=1.19$), and low levels of conflict ($M=2.28$, $SD=1.08$). Women (compared to men) reported more family cohesion and more emotional expressiveness within the family, but there were no gender differences in assessments of conflict. Additionally, people with children under 5 (compared to those without) reported more family cohesion, while those with children between 12 and 17 (compared to those without), children over

18 (compared to those without) and children who were being home schooled reported less family cohesion at the time of the survey.

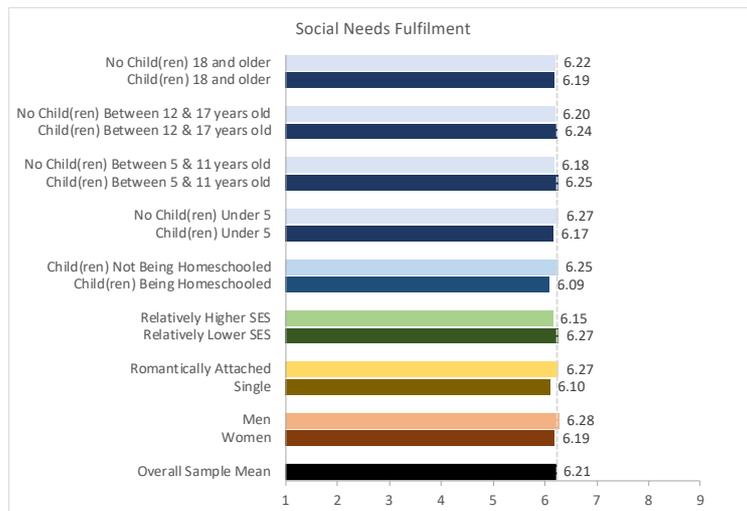


Fig 25. Social needs fulfilment

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean. This question was new to the follow-up survey.

Overall, people in the May 2021 follow-up survey were moderately satisfied with how their social needs were being fulfilled (M=6.21, SD=1.74). No differences emerged across subgroups. Although this questionnaire was as new to the follow-up survey, prior research done in the UK revealed similarly moderate satisfaction at the onset of the first UK lockdown (M=6.22, SD=1.77, N=300), this satisfaction had significantly decreased on month into lockdown, though remained moderate (M=5.83, SD=1.74, N=275).⁹ Thus, people in this sample were showing similar levels of satisfaction with how their social needs were being met during the pandemic as other adults in the UK one year prior.

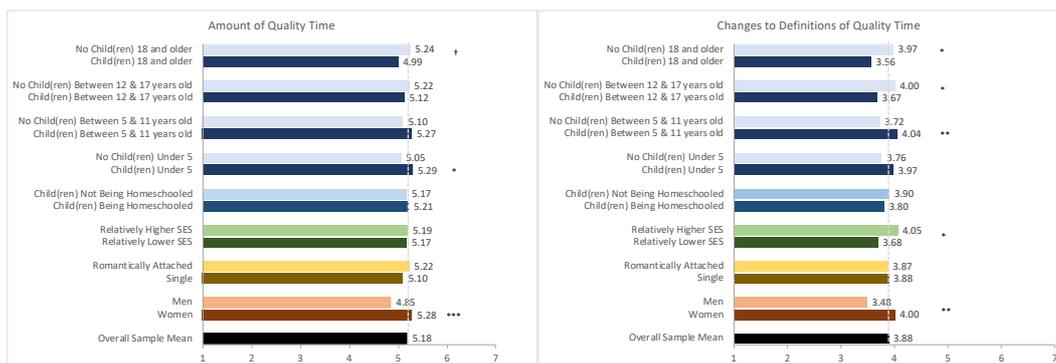


Fig 26. Quality time spent with family: a) has COVID changed the amount of quality time spent as a family (a lot less time, a lot more time); and, b) has COVID changed how you define “quality time”

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.. This question was new to the follow-up survey.

⁹ Lamarche, V. M. (2020). Socially connected and COVID-19 prepared: The influence of sociorelational safety on perceived importance of COVID-19 precautions and trust in government responses. *Social Psychological Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.32872/spb.4409>

Overall, people in the follow-up survey felt that COVID-19 led to them spending somewhat more quality time together as a family, and that it had moderately changed how they defined family “quality time”. Women (compared to men) more increases in quality time spent as a family and more significant changes to their definitions of quality time. People from relatively high SES backgrounds (compared to low SES) also believed that COVID-19 had changed their definitions of quality time to a moderate extent. Finally, people with children under 5 years old (compared to those without) reported spending more quality time as a family. Those with children between 5 and 11 years old (compared to those without) also believed that their definitions of quality time had changed due to COVID-19, whereas those with children over 18 (compared to those without) reported spending relatively less quality time together and less changes to their ideas about quality time.

Summary:

Overall, family relationships remained strong across the pandemic with people reporting high degrees of closeness and perceived responsiveness from their family members. Consistent with other findings from the survey, people with younger children (under 12s) reported slightly higher quality connections than those with relatively older children (12+). Additionally, people felt the pandemic meant that they were spending somewhat more quality time with their families, and that the definition had somewhat changed their ideas of what family “quality time” meant, particularly women and those with younger children (under 12s).

QUESTION 9: Concerns about COVID-19 and Generalised Stress

December 2020:

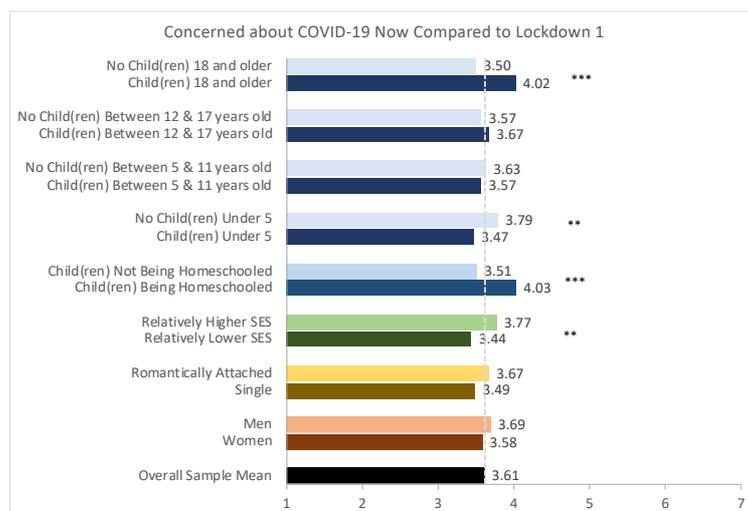


Fig 27a. Concerned about COVID-19 today compared to the first UK lockdown

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample were generally as concerned about COVID-19 today as they had been during the first UK lockdown (M=3.61, SD=1.68). People from relatively higher SES groups and those who were home-schooling their children were also significantly more concerned today compared to people from relatively lower SES groups and those who were not home-schooling. Similarly, people who had children under the age of 5 were significantly less concerned about COVID-19 today compared to during the first lockdown, whereas those with children over the age of 18 were significantly more concerned now than before compared to people without children in those age groups (N.B., These differences are highly correlated with participant age, as older participants are both more at risk for COVID and are more likely to have adult children).

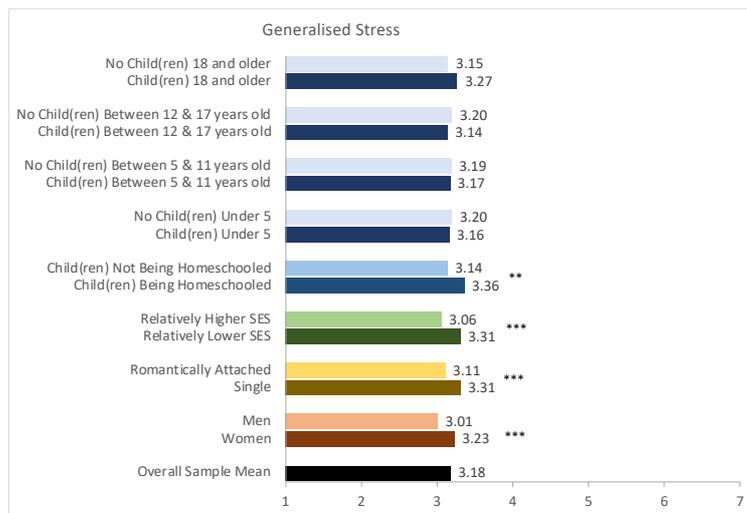


Fig 28a. Generalised Stress

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: †p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in this sample reported low to moderate levels of stress across life domains (M=3.18, SD=1.05). Women (compared to men), single people (compared to romantically attached), people from relatively lower SES groups (compared to higher SES groups), and people home-schooling (compared to not) all reported relatively more stress in their lives.

May 2021:

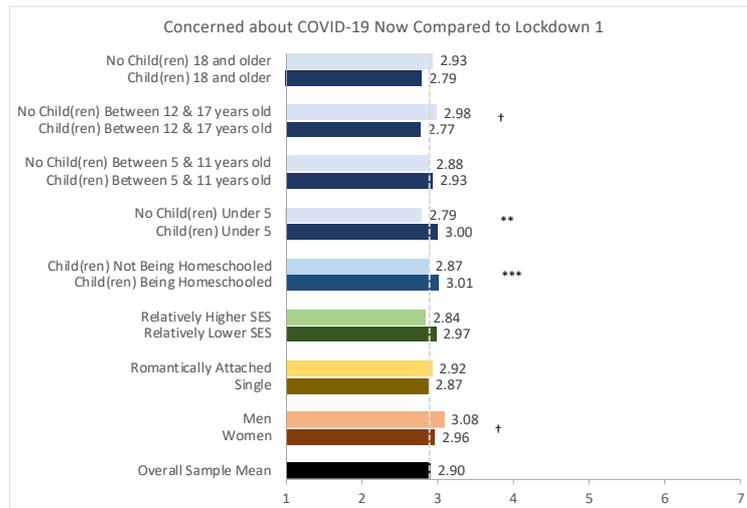


Fig 27b. Concerned about COVID-19 today compared to the first UK lockdown

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in the follow-up survey were generally less concerned about COVID-19 today compared to how they remembered feeling during first UK lockdown ($M=2.90$, $SD=1.57$). Unlike the first survey in December 2020, group differences no longer emerged between people from different SES backgrounds. However, people who had been home schooling their children (compared to those who had not) continued to report greater concern about COVID-19, as were people who had children under 5 years old (compared to those without children in that age group).

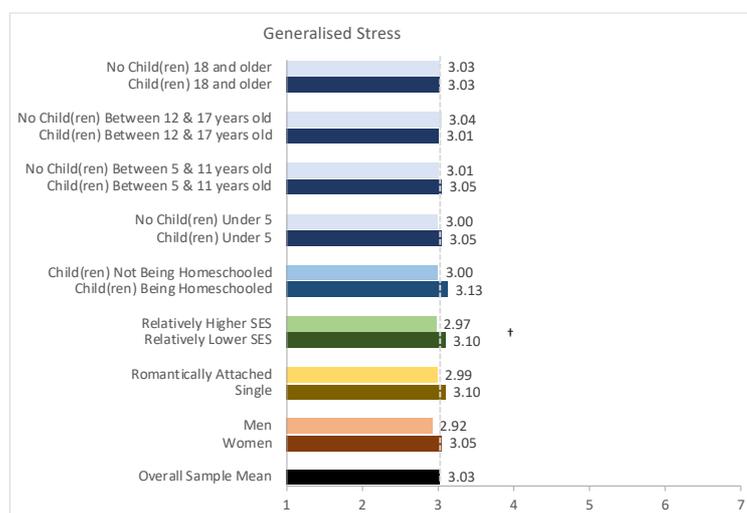


Fig 28b. Generalised Stress

Note. Statistical significance for group contrasts is denoted as follows: † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The vertical dashed line represents the overall sample mean.

Overall, people in the follow-up survey reported relatively low stress across life domains ($M=3.03$, $SD=1.04$). Unlike the first survey, where women (compared to men), single people (compared to romantically attached), people from relatively lower SES groups (compared to higher SES groups), and people home-schooling

(compared to not) reported relatively more stress in their lives, no differences emerged across subgroupings in the follow-up.

Summary:

Overall, people were feeling moderate levels of stress, but specific to COVID-19 and in general, in December 2020. However, by May 2021 people were reporting relatively lower stress. This may reflect the state of COVID at each time point (i.e., in December 2020 the novel UK variant was beginning to spread, vs. in May 2021 when the UK was looking to soon release all COVID-19 restrictions and cases were at a 12-month low).

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions which were coded to identify themes that emerged across individuals. Due to low variability in response rates across themes, the data are presented for participants overall and not divided across subgroupings of participant profiles. Phrase-size in the following figures depict the frequency with which these themes were identified in participants' open-ended responses to the following questions. Responses of "No/Nothing/No Change" indicate responses where participants used these terms. Instances where participants left a response blank were not coded.

December 2020:

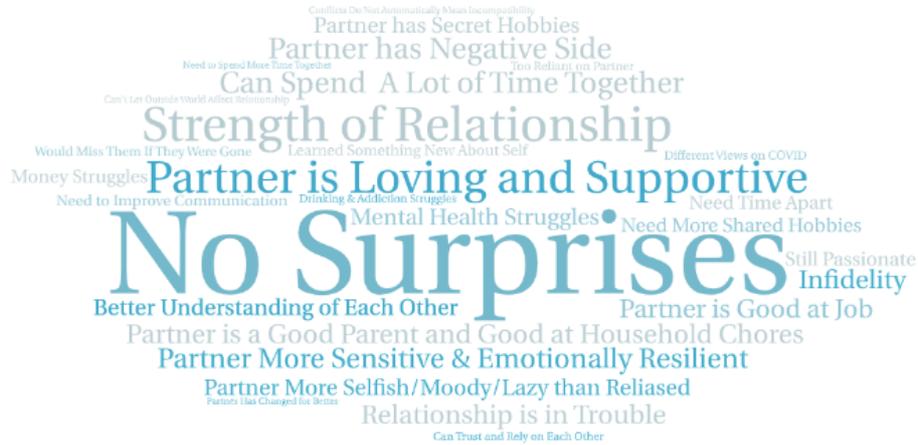
Can you explain any ways in which you may feel differently about your partner now than when you did before the first lockdown?



When asked to explain how the UK lockdown changed how they felt about their partners, a few common themes emerged. The majority of participants felt that there had been no change in their relationship. The next most common themes captured a tendency for people to report that their relationship had changed for the better (e.g., brought closer, greater appreciation for each other, made relationship stronger), followed by another thematic trend suggesting that relationship was less

strong as a consequence of COVID (e.g., growing apart, falling out of love, unreliable partners).

What is the most surprising thing you have learned (good or bad) about your relationship with your partner during COVID-19?



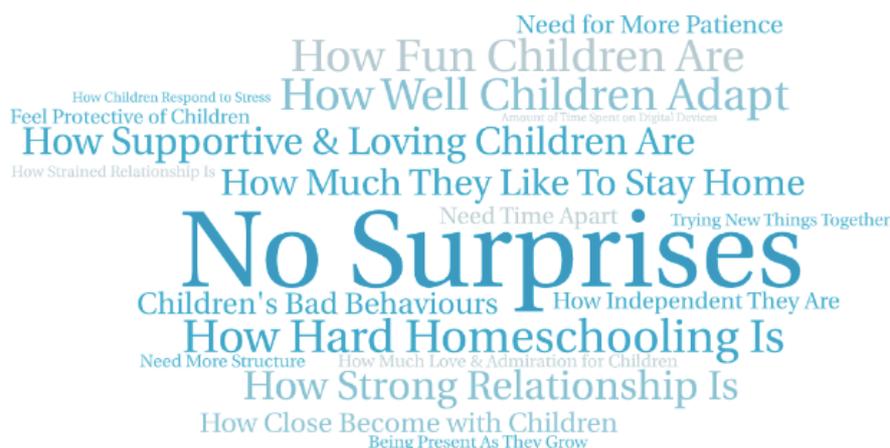
While the most common theme was for people to report they had not learned anything surprising about their partner during COVID-19, the next most common theme was for people to report how surprised they were by the strength and quality (e.g., love, support) of their relationship, followed by how skilled their partners were at work and household chores. A slightly less common trend was a realisation that partner had secrets or a more negative side to their personality, and concerns that the relationship itself was in trouble.

Can you explain any ways in which you may feel differently about your child(ren) now than when you did before the lockdown?



As with romantic partners, most people felt there had been no change to their relationship with their children during the first UK lockdown. However, themes regarding the strength of the relationships were also quite common. In particular people felt that lockdown had brought them closer together and more love, respect and admiration for their children than before.

What is the most surprising thing you have learned (good or bad) about your relationship with your child(ren) during COVID-19?



As with romantic partners, people felt there had not been many surprises to their relationship with their children. However, the most common surprises that did emerge related to difficulties surrounding home schooling, how strong and resilient children are (e.g., how well they adapt), and generally how positive their children are in their lives (e.g., strength of relationship, love/care/affection, support from children).

What do you think the government could do better to support families during crises such as COVID-19?



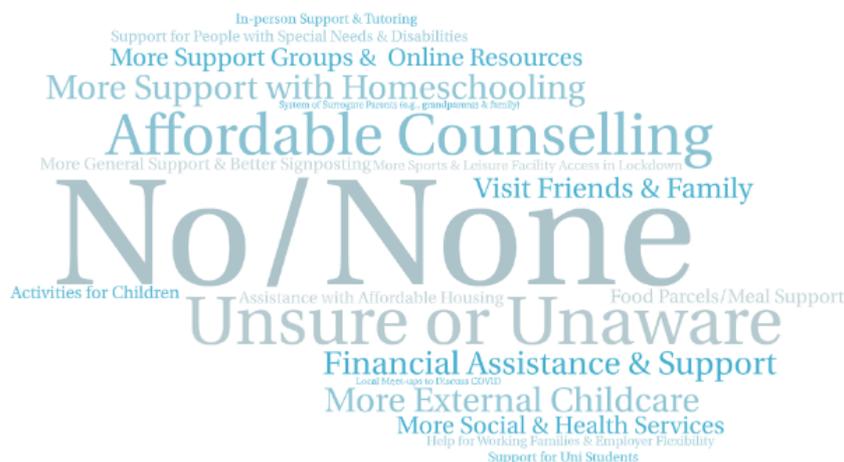
People were very divided in what they felt the government could do to better support families during crises such as COVID-19. Many felt that the government had done all that they could, whereas others felt everything could have been handled better. Other common themes included more support for home schooling, more job creation and financial support, more support for single parents, and more access to mental health and attention paid to family well-being.

What do you think society as a whole could do better to support families during crises such as COVID-19?



People were also divided on what society as a whole could do to better support families. Common themes included issues of more social cohesion and positivity (e.g., meeting others, less shaming and more tolerance of families, less negativity), and a need to help those who are vulnerable to a greater extent (e.g., those with disabilities, women, single parents), and more support for schools and in-person activities for children during the day.

Is there support that you would find useful to support your relationships with your partner and/or children that is not currently available/you find it difficult to access?



The majority of people felt that there was no support that they were missing. However, common themes also emerged. Many people felt that they were unsure or unaware of what was available and how to access it, suggesting greater need for signposting support. The next most common themes included access to affordable mental health and relationship counselling, more support with home schooling, more external childcare and activities for children, and more financial assistance and support.

December 2020:

Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any **POSITIVE** impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your romantic partner?

A word cloud of positive impacts. The most prominent words are 'More accomplished', 'More quality time together', and 'More agreement'. Other visible words include 'Better support each other', 'Grown closer', 'Better communication and understanding', 'Better appreciation', 'No/Nothing', 'Better division of household labour/childcare', and 'More caring and considerate'.

Consistent with the trends identified in the first survey, when asked to identify the positive ways in which COVID-19 had impacted their relationships, the majority of people identified themes that suggested a strengthening of the relationship bond (e.g., growing closer, more agreement, better support), as well as more positive time spent with each other (i.e., more quality time).

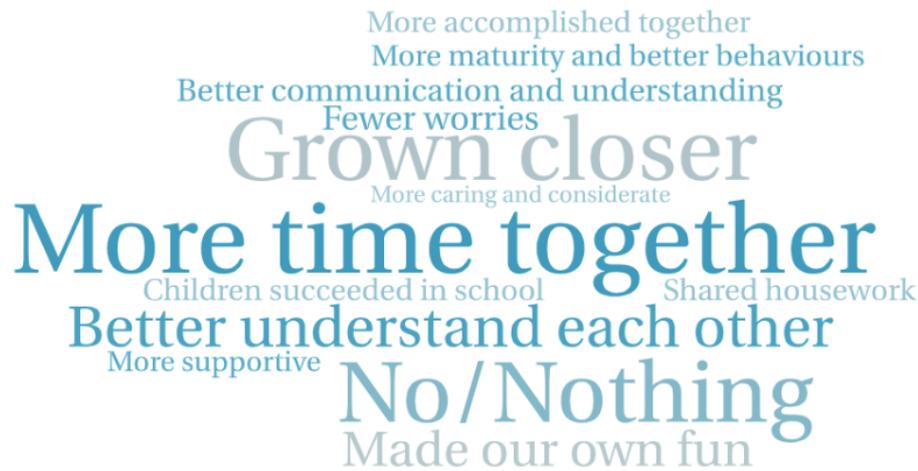
Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any **NEGATIVE** impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your romantic partner?

A word cloud of negative impacts. The most prominent words are 'No/Nothing', 'Cooped up together', and 'More worries'. Other visible words include 'Spent less time together', 'Boredome/Stuck at home', 'Less intimacy', 'Insensitivity', 'Social distancing', 'Grown apart', 'Too much stress/unhealthy behaviours', 'Struggled coping with grief', and 'Uneven division of household labour'.

When asked to identify the negative ways in which COVID-19 had impacted their relationships, the majority of people felt there had been no negative consequences. However, common themes of feeling too constrained due to the lockdowns (e.g., too cooped up; boredom) and more life worries and stressors did emerge. Thus,

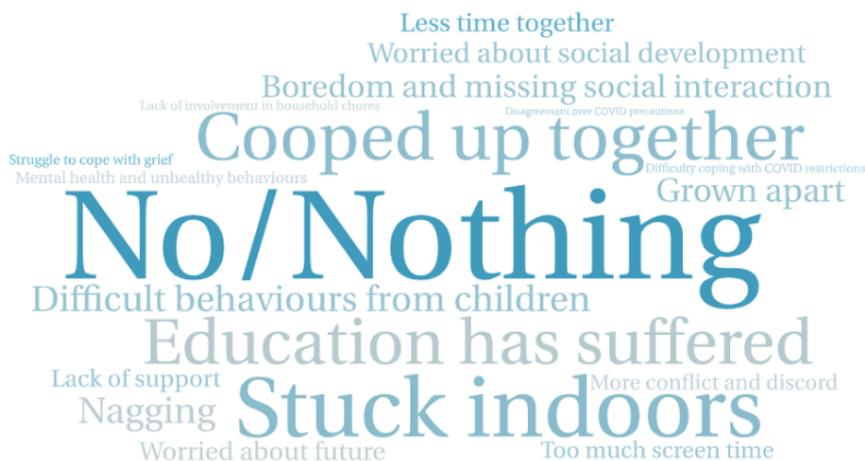
unlike in the first survey where people commonly identified a weakening of the relationship due to the first lockdown, in the follow-up survey most people identified external stressors (lockdown restrictions; financial worries) as the source of negative changes to their relationships.

Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any POSITIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your child(ren)?



Although a good proportion of people felt that COVID-19 had not had any positive impacts on their relationships with their children, a greater proportion identified themes consistent with having spent more quality time together (e.g., more time, making own fun), as well as their relationships becoming stronger (e.g., growing closer, better understanding of each other).

Reflecting on the entire past year since COVID-19 began, can you describe any NEGATIVE impact(s) you think the pandemic has had on your relationship with your child(ren)?



The majority of people felt that COVID-19 had not had any negative impacts on their relationships with their children. However, similar to their relationship with their partners, a common theme of the constraints of COVID-19 restrictions (e.g., stuck indoors, cooped up together, boredom/lack of social interaction) and concerns about children's education, development and behaviour also emerged.

**How has COVID-19 affected how you spend mealtimes together as a family?
Please provide a brief example if possible.**

More enjoyable
Shared more mealtimes
Shared fewer mealtimes
Prepare healthier meals together
No change
More tension
More takeaways

The themes surrounding changes to mealtime were quite similar across participants, though divided in valence. A majority of people believed that COVID-19 had not altered their family mealtimes. However, the changes identified by the remainder of participants were split between positive changes (i.e., more meals together, more enjoyable, and healthier meal rituals), while the remainder identified negative changes (i.e., fewer meals together, more tension and stress, unhealthier meal choices).

How would you define "quality time" as a household? Please provide a brief example if possible.

Shared meals
Shared activities
Enjoying each other's company without pressures
No technology
Unsure
Making memories

Definitions of "quality time" also emerged as consistent themes across participants. For the majority of participants, these themes centred on shared experiences (e.g., meals, activities, making new memories together) and a lack of technological interference (e.g, less screen time).

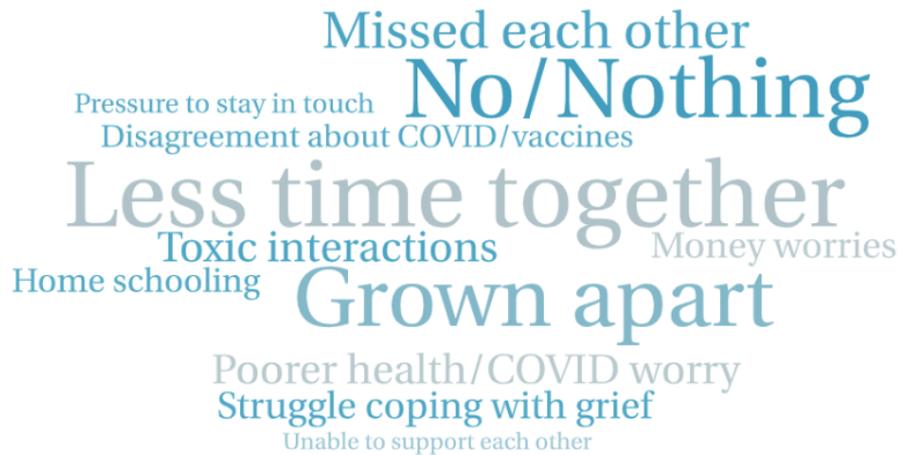
Can you describe any **POSITIVE** changes **COVID-19** has had on your relationship with your broader family (i.e., family who live outside your immediate household)?

More caring
New baby
Used technology to socialise
Accomplished more
No/Nothing
Missing each other increased value of interactions
Stronger bond and appreciation
Interacted more frequently
Know each other better
Less contact
More supportive

The majority of participants felt that there had not been any positive changes to their broader family relationships as a consequence of COVID-19. However, some consistent themes nonetheless emerged. Notably, a proportion of people identified a strengthening of family relationships during COVID-19 (e.g., more caring, stronger bonds and appreciation for each other), new ways to interact (e.g., technology & more frequent interactions). A theme that the reduction in contact with family members had been a positive also emerged, suggesting that broader family connections had been a source of stress for some people prior to the pandemic,

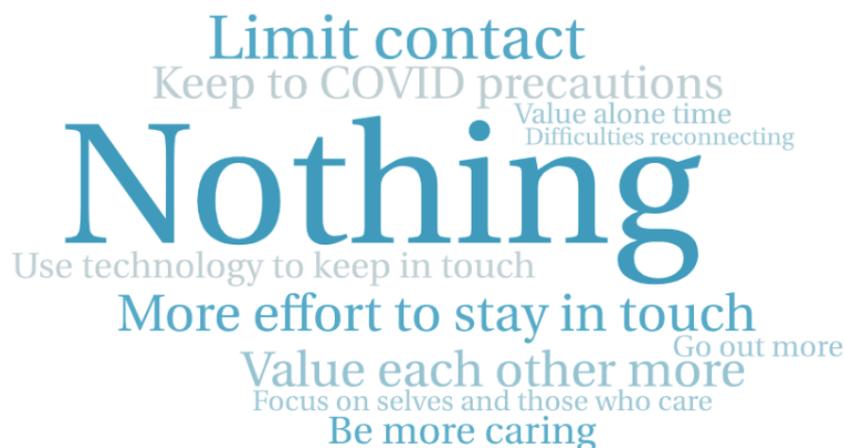
and that for some, missing each other had increased the value and appreciation for interactions when they occurred.

Can you describe any NEGATIVE changes has had on your relationship with your broader family (i.e., family who live outside your immediate household)?



The majority of people discussing the negative impacts of COVID-19 on their broader family networks identified themes associated with restricted in-person interactions (i.e., spending less time together, missing family members, growing apart), in addition to no negative changes at all. Less common themes focused on COVID-19 created more opportunities for disagreement, stress and worries (e.g., money worries, concerns about health and COVID-19, disagreements over COVID-19 and vaccines, toxic interactions with family members).

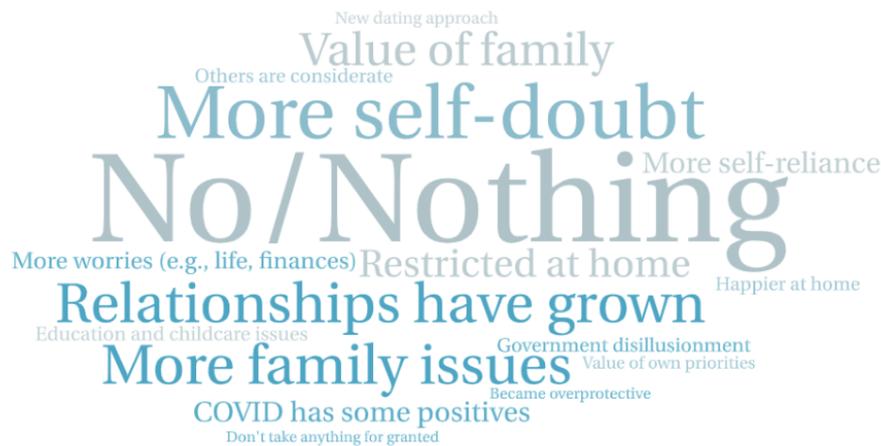
What, if any, changes do you think you will make to how you socialise or interact with your broader family as a result of what you have learned through the COVID-19 pandemic?



The majority of people felt that COVID-19 would have no lasting impact on how they socialised or interacted with their broader family. However, themes of continuing to follow COVID-19 precautions (e.g., limiting contact, adhering to social distancing),

as well as the recognised importance of maintaining these bonds (e.g., more effort staying in touch, valuing one another more, using technology to increase interactions) were also commonly identified.

Is there anything else you think we should know about how COVID-19 has influenced your relationships, particularly stress and conflict between you and your romantic partner and/or you and your child(ren)?



When asked whether there was anything else people felt that the researchers and charity should know about the impact of COVID-19 on families, the majority of people had no suggestions. However, themes of family resilience (e.g., value of family, family growth), family struggles (e.g., family issues, more worries), and self-doubt also emerged.