

Supplementary Report 06: Young people's concerns about the return to school (Parent and Self-report)

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Report Authors: **Adrienne Shum,
Samantha Pearcey, Polly Waite and Cathy
Creswell**



The Co-SPACE Study

Background

COVID-19 has caused major disruptions to families' lives, through social distancing, school closures and lock-down. This is also a rapidly changing situation where different pressures will arise for children, young people and their families over time. While research has provided valuable information about how parents can support their children's mental health in general, we know little about what is most effective in the current, changing context.

The Co-SPACE project is tracking the mental health of school-aged children and young people aged 4-16 years throughout the COVID-19 crisis. An online survey is sent out and completed on a monthly basis by parents/carers and young people (if aged 11-16 years) throughout the pandemic. The study has full ethical and data protection approval (ethical approval ref: R69060) and is fully GDPR compliant.

The findings will help identify what protects children and young people from deteriorating mental health over time, and at particular stress points. Findings will be shared directly with health and education services to inform the development and provision of effective support for children and families.

Recruitment & Sample

The study sample has been recruited through a variety of means, including social media, distribution through partner organisations, networks and charities, the media and targeted online advertising. The self-selecting nature of recruitment means that this will not be a nationally representative sample. See Appendix A for the demographic information.

For the long-term, we are aiming to have good representation across a wide range of socio-demographic and health factors (e.g., income, ethnicity, pre-existing mental/physical health difficulties) to investigate the experiences for different groups that may be particularly vulnerable during and after the pandemic.

We are keen to recruit as many families as possible to the study. Parents/carers can sign up and take part at any point: <https://cospaceoxford.com/survey>

Further information

For further information or to request specific analyses, please contact the research team at co-space@psy.ox.ac.uk

Focus of this report

To date, over 11,500 parents/carers and 1,300 adolescents have taken part in the Co-SPACE survey and we continue to collect data on a monthly basis.

In light of the recent exam grading controversy, this report provides cross-sectional data from 987 parents/carers of young people (aged 12-16) and 284 young people (aged 12-16) who completed the Co-SPACE survey within August, either as part of the initial survey or the monthly follow-up surveys.

This report also provides longitudinal data from 142 parents/carers of young people (aged 15-16) who completed the survey in July and a follow-up survey in August.

In this report, we examined the responses for the following specific groups:

1. Child age (12-14-year olds vs 15-16-year olds)
2. Higher and lower household incomes (those above and below an annual household income of £16,000 and £30,000, which are the poverty line and mean national income respectively)

Focusing on the following issues:

- a. Parent/carer report on their children's worries around the return to school
- b. Parent/carer report on their feelings around how their child is doing
- c. Young people's self-report on their worries around the return to school

Please note:

It is important to note that we do *not* have comparative data from pre-COVID-19 so findings should be considered descriptive based on this particular, non-representative, sample and no conclusions can be drawn about how the findings might differ from any other year outside of the COVID-19 context. It is also important to note that where responses in July and August are compared, responses may have been submitted at any time during those months.

Key findings

- Young people aged 15-16 were more worried about academic pressure than children aged 12-14. This was consistent across parent-reported and self-reported data.
- Over half of the 15-16-year olds reported feeling worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their job prospects and the economy.
- From July to August, parents/carers reported an increase in young people's worries about their job prospects and the economy.
- A higher percentage of 15-16-year olds from low income households (<£16,000 p.a.) were reported to have substantial worries about the academic pressure and lack of support in school work at this time, compared to higher income households.

Findings

1. Concerns around school return

Data in the graphs below represents the percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries (i.e., responses of “a lot” or “extremely” to the question) around the return to school.

a. By age group (parent/carer report, n=987)

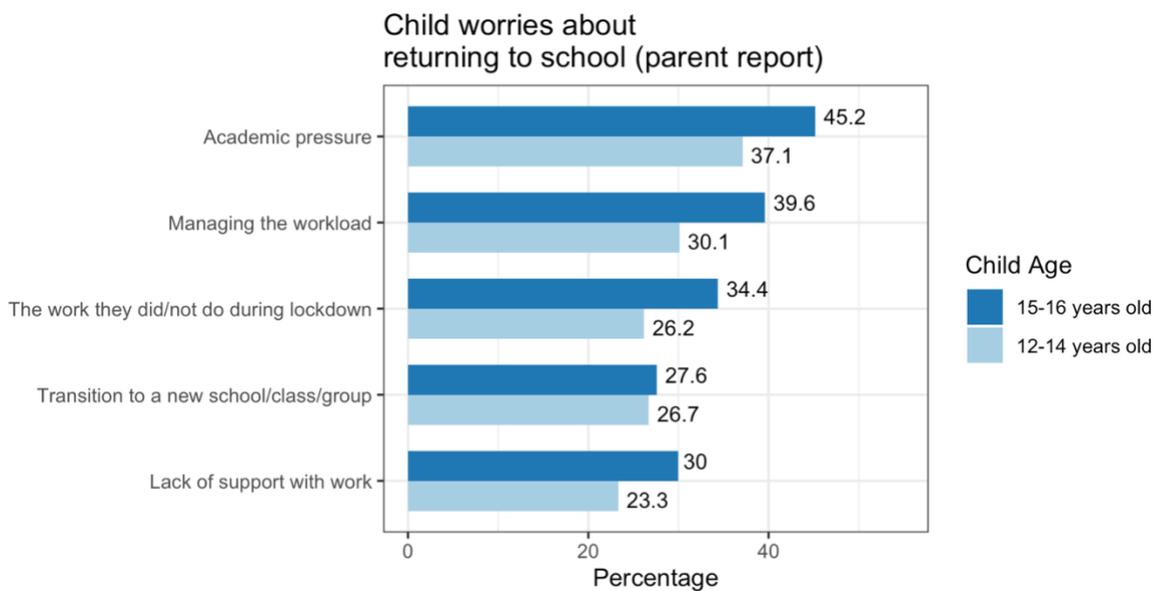


Figure 1. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries around the return to school, by age group

b. By age group (young person self-report, n=284)

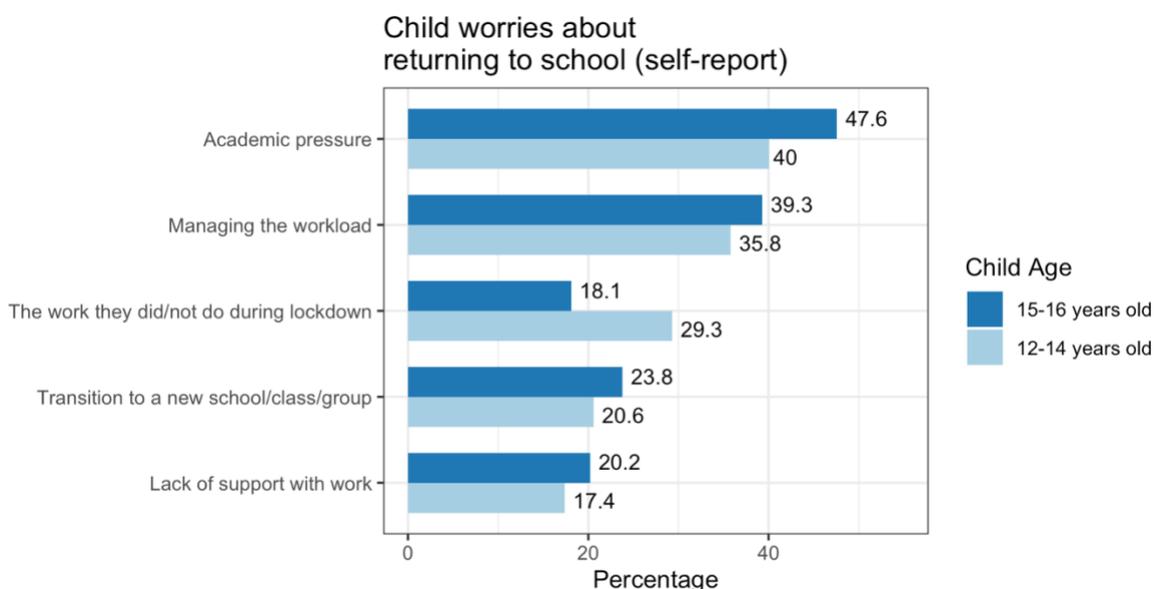


Figure 2. Percentage of 15 and 16-year olds reporting that they have substantial worries around the return to school, by age group

b. By household income (parent/carer report, 15-16-year olds, n=342)

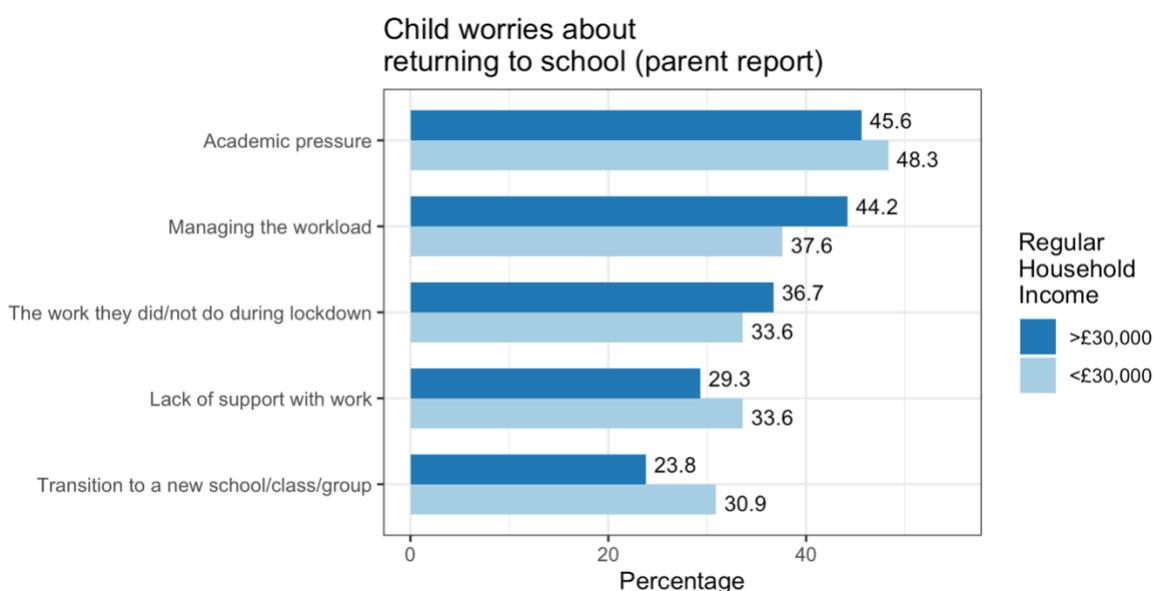


Figure 3. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries around the return to school, by household income above and below £30,000

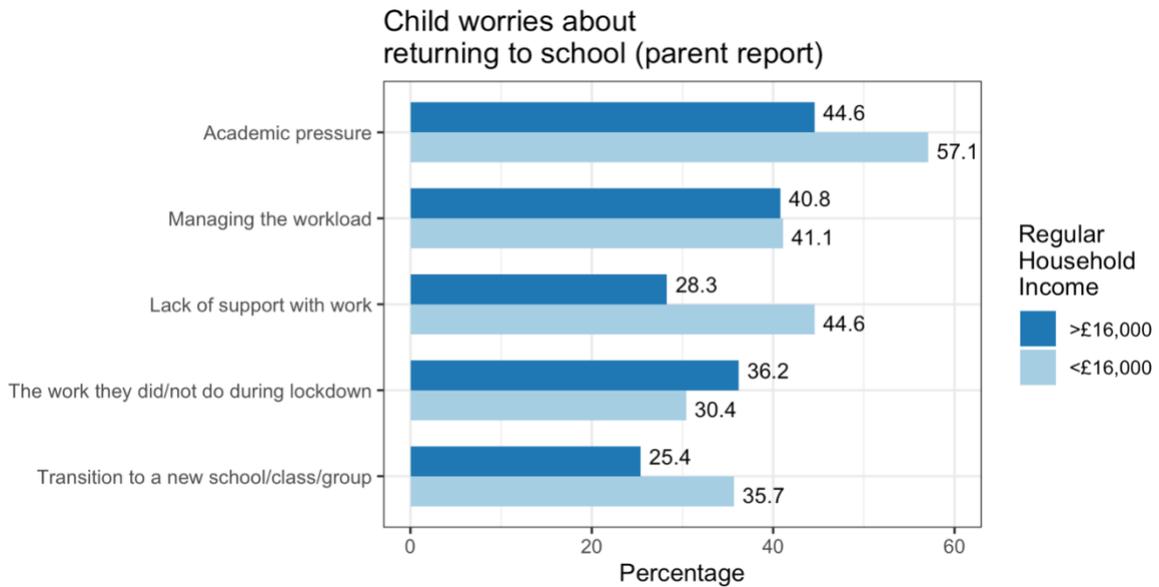


Figure 4. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries around the return to school, by household income above and below £16,000

2. Worries about the impact of COVID-19

Data in the graphs below represents the percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries (i.e., responses of “Agree” or “Strongly agree” to the question) about the impact of COVID-19 on their job prospects and school/work.

a. By age group (parent/carer report, n=987)

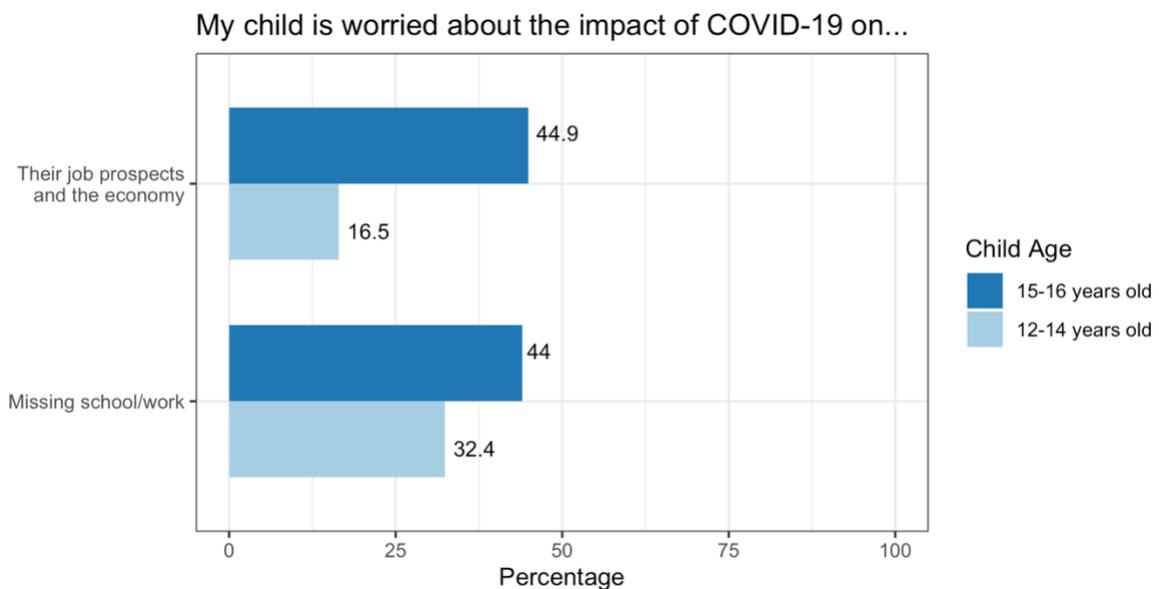


Figure 5. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their children are worried about their job prospects and school work, by age group

b. By age group (self-report, n=284)

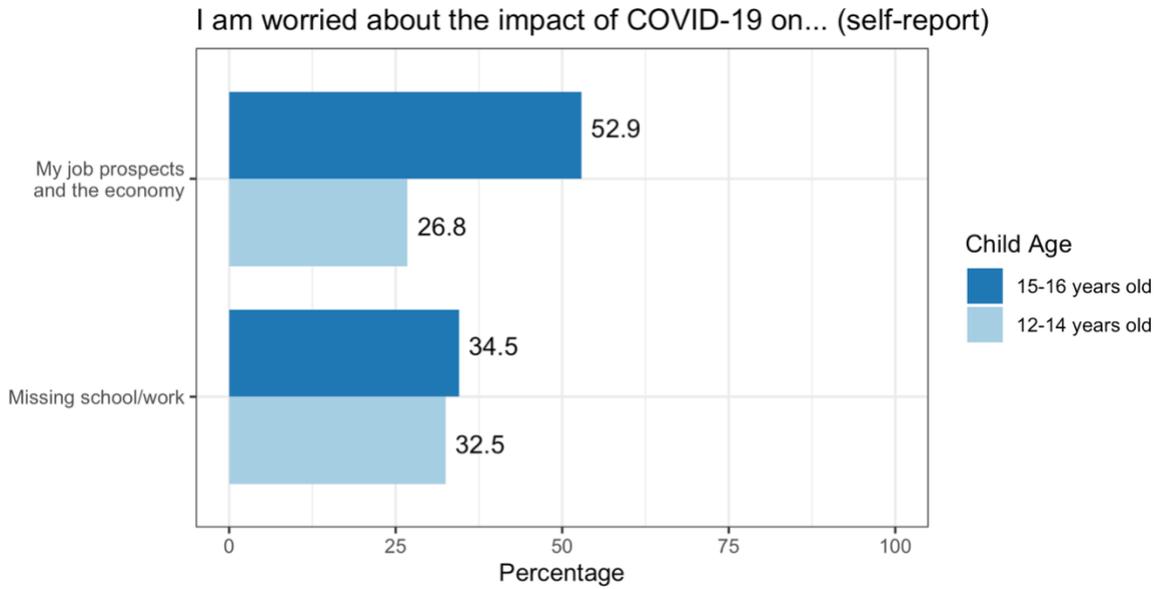


Figure 6. Percentage of 15 and 16-year olds reporting that they are worried about their job prospects and school work, by age group

c. By household income (parent/carer report, 15-16-year olds, N=342)

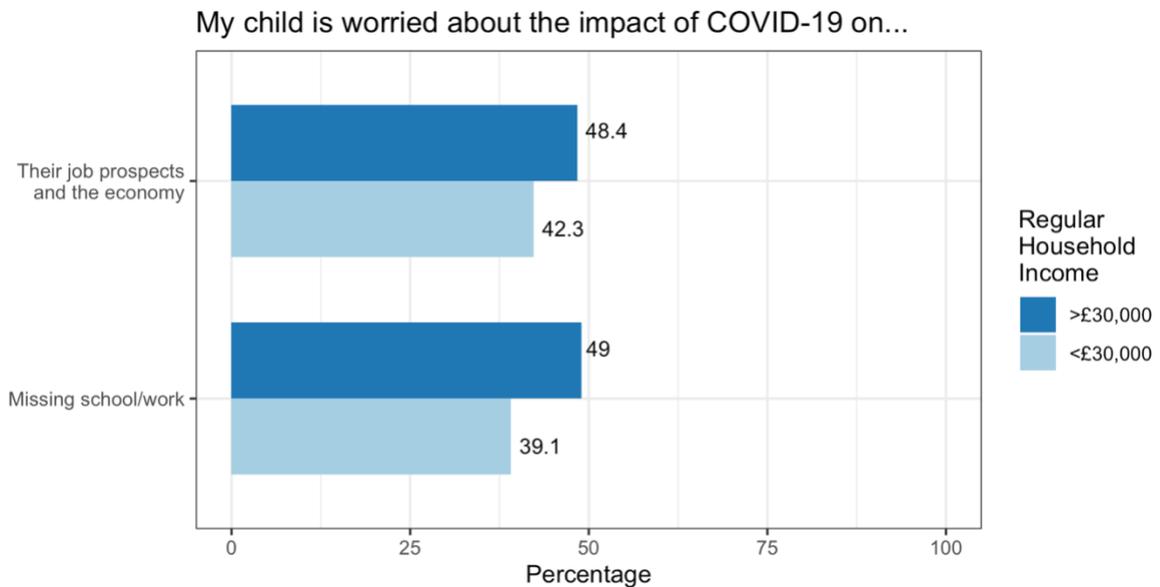


Figure 7. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their children are worried about their job prospects and school work, by household income above and below £30,000

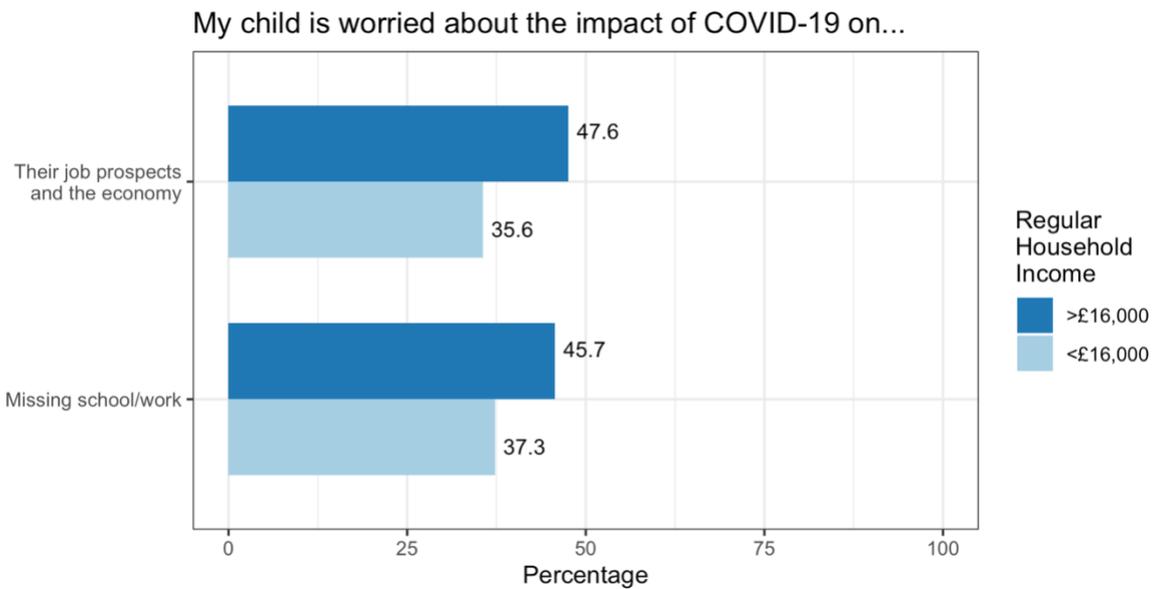


Figure 8. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their children are worried about their job prospects and school work, by household income above and below £16,000

3. Parent/carer reported stress about their child

Data in the graphs below represents the percentage of parents/carers reporting substantial stress (i.e., responses of “Quite a lot” or “A great deal” to the question) about their child’s future, education, wellbeing and behaviour.

a. By age group (n=987)

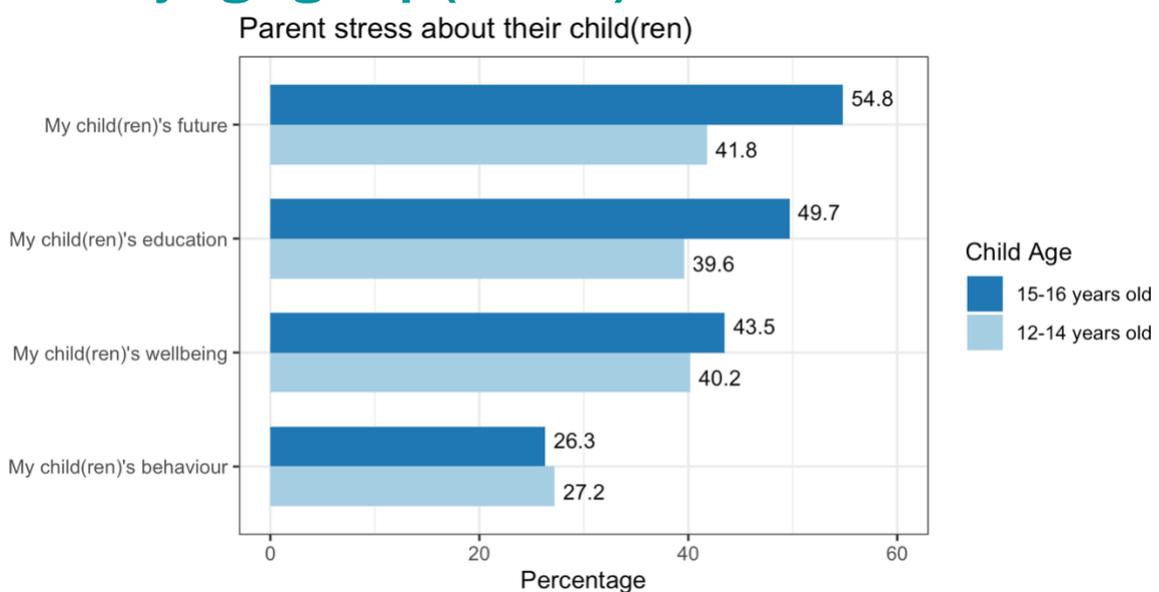


Figure 9. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that they are stressed about how their children are doing, by age group

b. By household income (15-16-year olds, n=342)

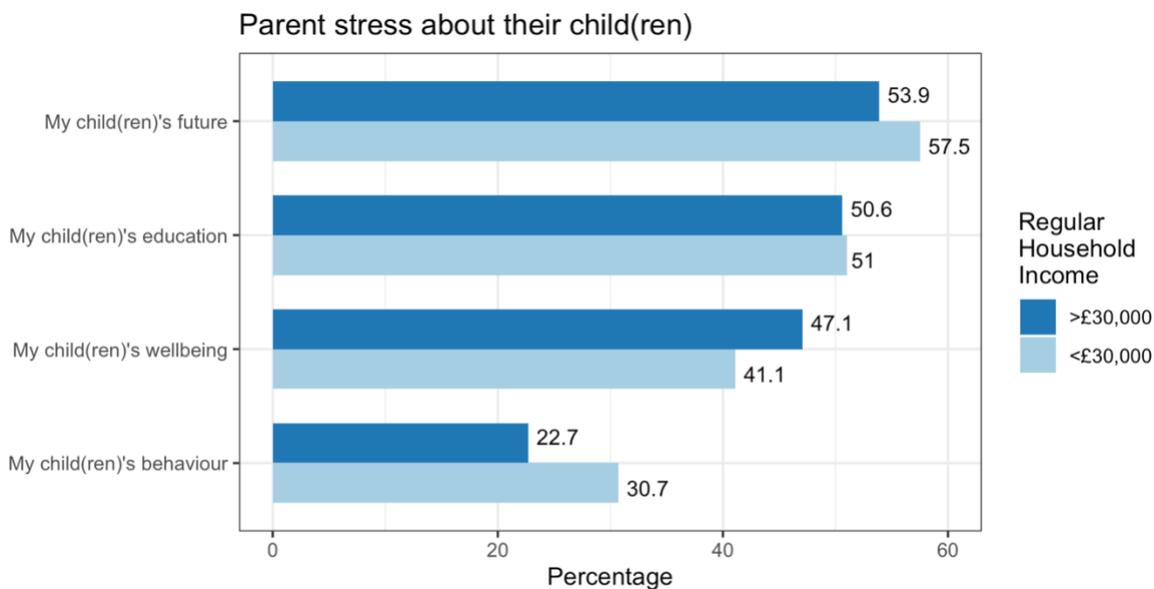


Figure 10. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that they are stressed about how their children are doing, by household income above and below £30,000

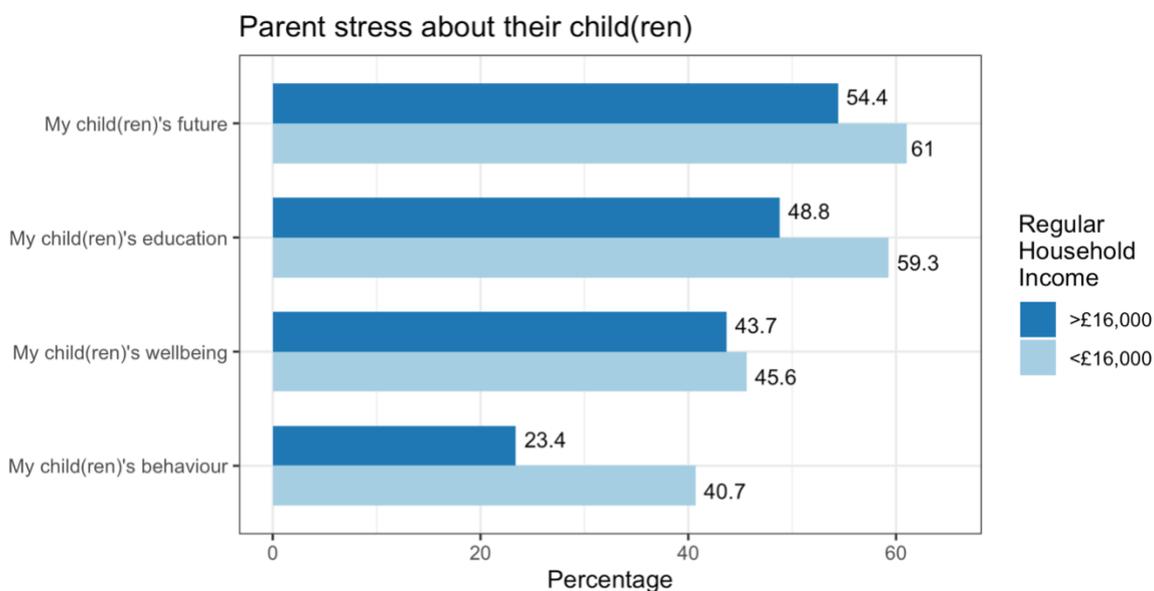


Figure 11. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that they are stressed about how their children are doing, by household income above and below £16,000

Change over time

142 parents/carers of young people aged 15-16 completed the survey in July and the monthly follow-up in August. Each analysis accounted for the effects of child gender, child ethnicity, household income (above/below £16,000 p.a.), and parent employment status.

1. Concerns around return to school

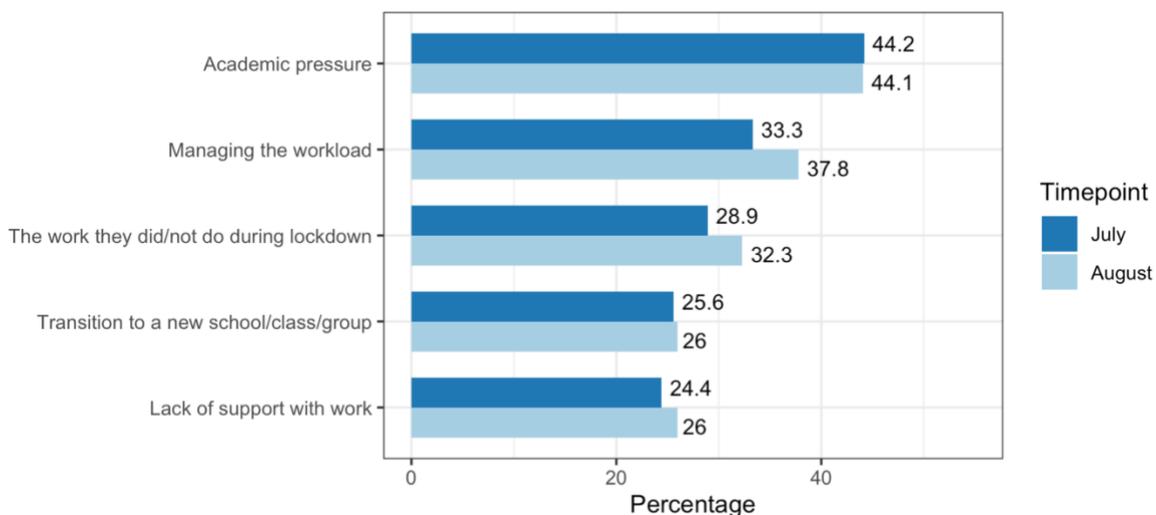


Figure 12. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their child has substantial worries around school work, comparison between their response in July and August

Child worries about returning to school remained similar from July to August. There was a small increase in child worries about managing the workload.

2. Worries about the impact of COVID-19

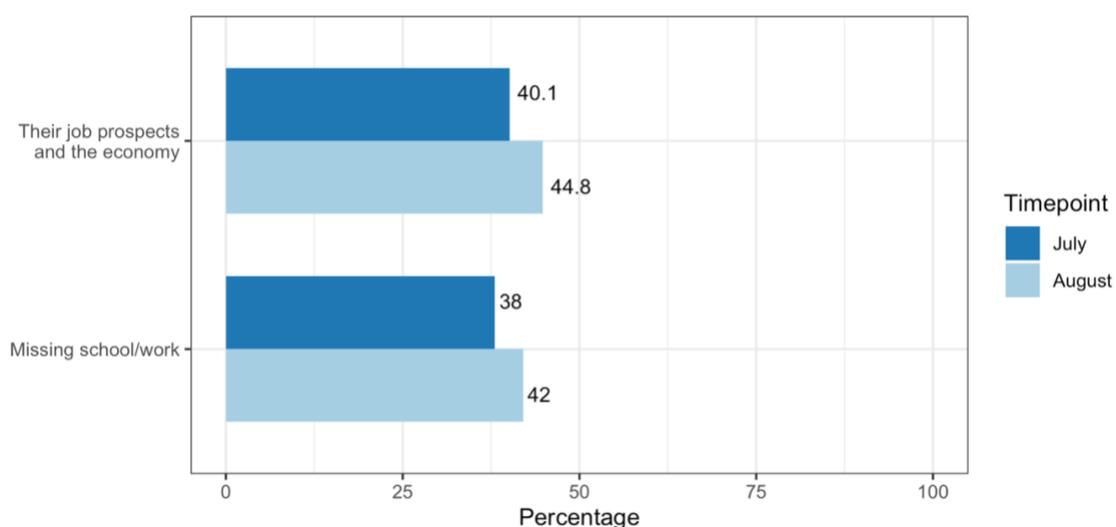


Figure 13. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that their children are worried about their job prospects and school work, comparison between their response in July and August

Parents reported an increase in their child’s worries about their job prospects and the economy. Worries about missing school/work remained similar from July to August.

3. Parent/carer reported stress about their child

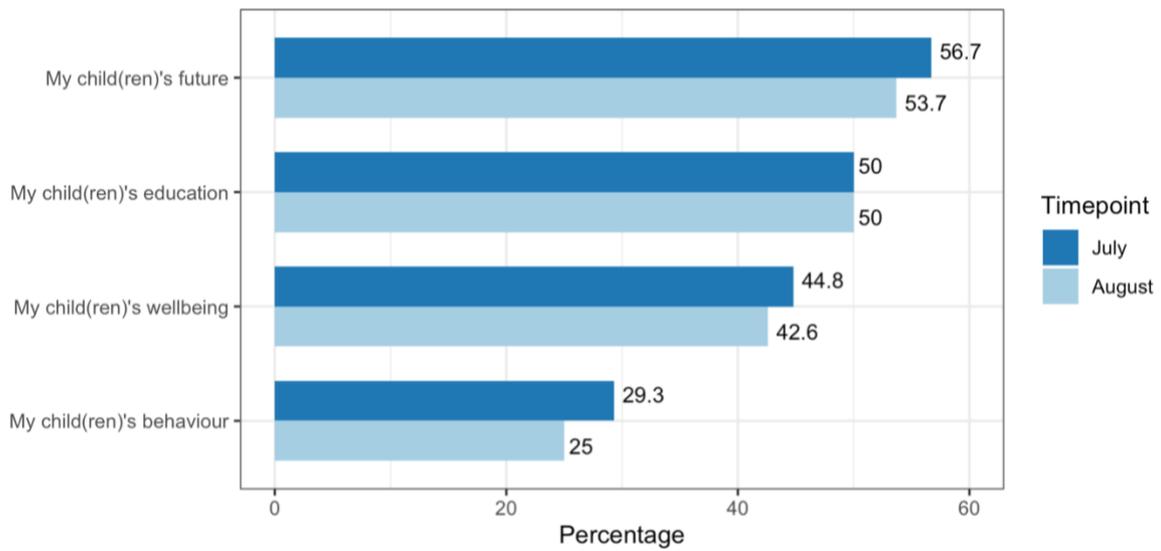


Figure 14. Percentage of parents/carers reporting that they are stressed about how their children are doing, comparison between their response in July and August

No significant changes were observed between July and August regarding parents/carers' levels of stress about their children’s future, education, wellbeing and behaviour.

Appendix A

Participants' demographics (parent/carers)

		Number of observations	%
<i>Child age</i>	12-14	645	65.3
	15-16	342	34.7
<i>Parent/carer gender</i>	Female	883	89.7
	Male	96	9.8
	Other	5	0.5
<i>Parent employment status</i>	Employed	738	74.8
	Not Employed*	249	25.2
<i>Annual household income</i>	< £30,000	462	46.8
	> £30,000	451	45.7
	< £16,000	738	74.8
	> £16,000	175	17.7
	Prefer not to say	74	7.5
<i>Child gender</i>	Female	483	48.9
	Male	495	50.2
	Other	9	0.9
<i>Child SEN</i>	SEN	208	21.1
	No SEN	779	78.9
<i>Existing MH concerns (child)</i>	Pre-existing MH difficulty	205	20.8
	No pre-existing MH difficulty	782	79.2
<i>Parent/Carer Ethnicity</i>	Asian/Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, other	27	2.7
	Black/Black British – Caribbean, African, other	14	1.4
	Middle Eastern/Middle Eastern British – Arab, Turkish, other	2	0.2
	Chinese/Chinese British	1	0.1
	Mixed race – other	16	1.6
	Mixed race – White and Black/Black British	7	0.7
	Other ethnic group	3	0.3
	White – British, Irish, other	911	92.3

*Not employed includes those who are homemakers/full-time parents, retired, at university, still at school, unable to work due to disability, or unemployed and seeking work.

Participants' demographics (self-report adolescent survey)

		Number of observations	%
<i>Child age</i>	12-14	196	69
	15-16	88	31
<i>Annual household income</i>	< £30,000	55	21.3
	> £30,000	203	78.7
	< £16,000	22	7.7
	> £16,000	236	83.1
	Prefer not to say	26	9.2
<i>Child gender</i>	Female	150	52.8
	Male	128	45.1
	Other/Prefer not to say	6	2.1
<i>Child SEN</i>	SEN	49	17.3
	No SEN	235	82.7
<i>Existing MH concerns</i>	Pre-existing MH difficulty	50	17.6
	No pre-existing MH difficulty	234	82.4
<i>Parent/Carer Ethnicity</i>	Asian/Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, other	4	1.4
	Black/Black British – Caribbean, African, other	1	0.4
	Mixed race – other	5	1.8
	Mixed race – White and Black/Black British	1	0.4
	Other ethnic group	1	0.4
	White – British, Irish, other	271	95.4