

# COSPACE study

COVID-19: Supporting Parents, Adolescents and Children during Epidemics

## **Report 01: Findings from the first 1500 participants on parent/carer stress and child activity**

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**Report Authors: Polly Waite & Cathy Creswell**

NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration  
Oxford and Thames Valley  
NIHR | Oxford Health Biomedical  
Research Centre



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For further information or to request specific analyses, please visit [www.cospaceoxford.org/](http://www.cospaceoxford.org/) or contact the research team at [co-space@psy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:co-space@psy.ox.ac.uk)

# 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. In the current report, 97% of respondents were parents and over 90% of respondents were female. Child age ranged from 4-16 years.

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>**

## Funding

This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as part of the UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19 and the Westminster Foundation, and supported by the NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre, the Oxford and Thames Valley NIHR Applied Research Consortium and the UKRI Emerging Minds Network Plus.

# ***Focus of this report***

This report is based upon the data from the first 1,500 parents/carers who have taken part. These participants completed the survey during a 6-day period, between Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March and Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April. For most young people, this will have been the last week of the school term prior to the Easter holiday.

In this report, we focus on the following outcomes:

1. Parent/carer stress
2. How children and young people are reported to spend their time

## ***Key findings***

- **The top 3 stressors for parents/carers were (i) work, (ii) their children's wellbeing, and (iii) their family and friends (outside their household).**
- **Nearly 2/3 of parents/carers reported that they were not sufficiently meeting the needs of both work and their child.**
- **Just over half the children and young people completed 2 or more hours of schoolwork per day.**
- **Nearly 3/4 of children and young people are keeping in contact with friends via video chat.**
- **Around 3/4 of children and young people are getting more than 30 minutes of exercise per day.**

# Findings

## 1. Parent/carer stress

### (a) Work

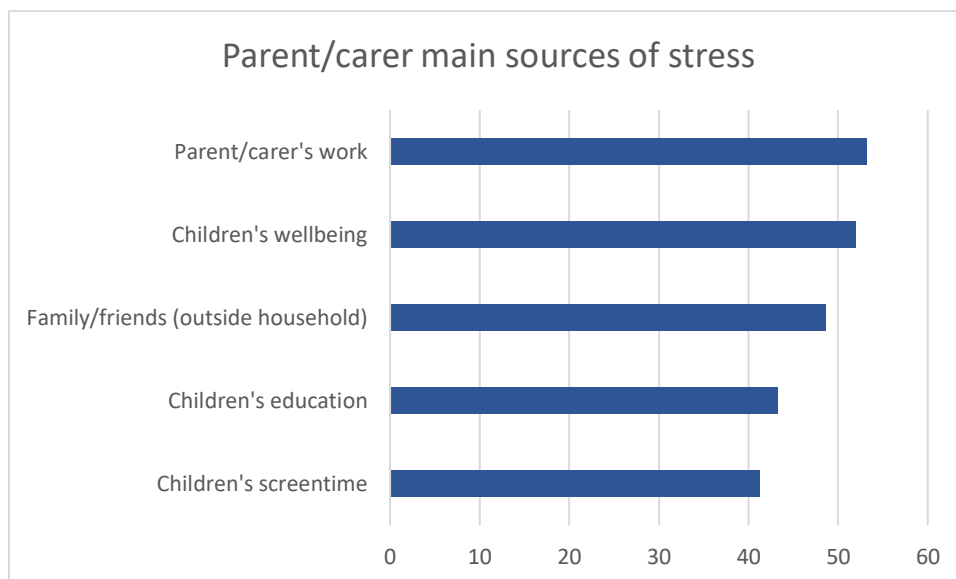
74% of parents in the survey were working. Of these, 64% were working part-time and 36% were working full-time. 81% were working from home and 19% were working out of the home.

### (b) Combining work and child's needs

63% reported that they were either 'not' or only 'a bit' currently able to meet the needs of both their work and their child, compared to 37% who reported that they were meeting the needs of both 'a lot' or 'completely'.

### (c) Main causes of stress

The top five sources of stress (that were causing parents/carers either 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of stress) related to work, children and family/friends outside the household.

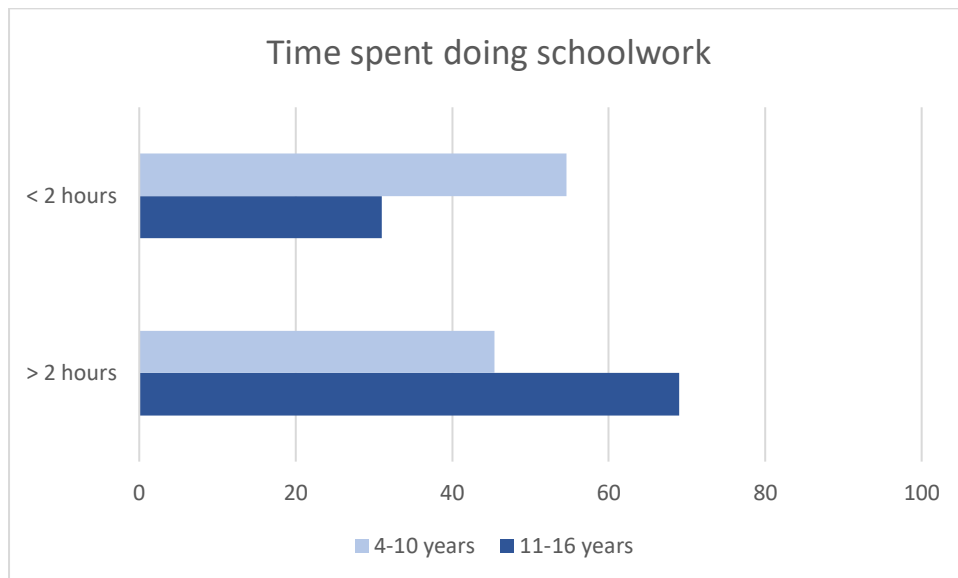


## 2. How children and young people spent their time

### (a) Schoolwork

Parents reported that very few of their children were completing no schoolwork (3% of children and 6% of adolescents) each day.

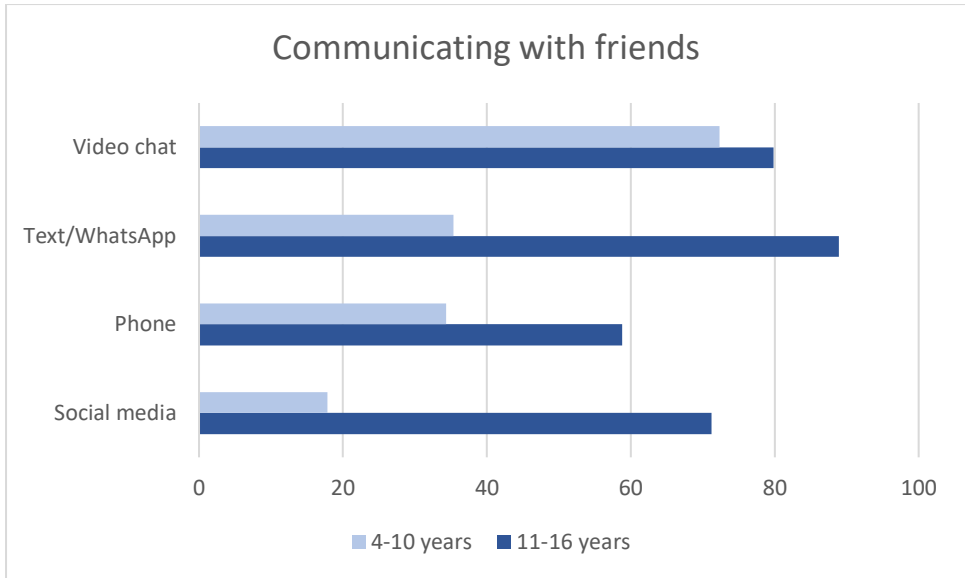
On average, over half the children and young people were completing more than 2 hours of schoolwork per day. Broken down by age, over two thirds of the adolescents and nearly half the children were reported to be completing more than 2 hours of schoolwork per day.



Around two thirds (69.1%) of parents of children and just over half (59%) of parents of adolescents reported that they were able to support their children around schoolwork.

## **(b) Communicating with friends**

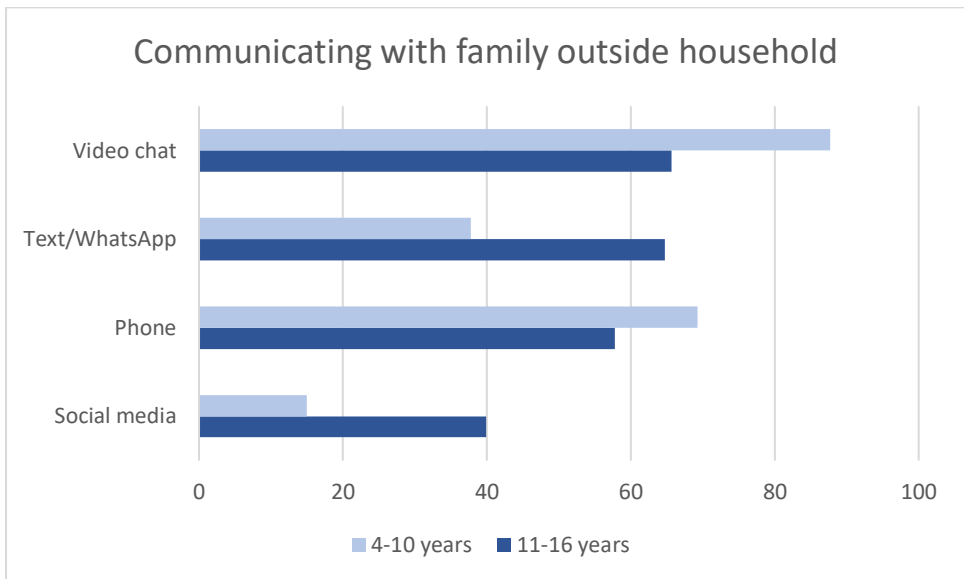
Around three quarters of children and adolescents were reported to be regularly communicating with friends using video chat (72% of children and 80% of adolescents). More than half the adolescents were using a range of other means to communicate with friends over the last week (social media 71%; phone 59%), with the most popular being WhatsApp/text messaging (89%). Less than half the children were using other means to communicate with friends (WhatsApp/text messaging 35%; phone 34% and social media 18%).



**(c) Contact with family living outside the household**

For children, nearly three quarters (72%) were regularly communicating with family members outside the household via video chat and over two thirds (69%) by phone. WhatsApp/text messaging (38%) and social media (15%) were less regularly used by children.

For adolescents, between half and two thirds were regularly communicating with family members outside the household using video chat (66%), WhatsApp/text messaging (65%) or the phone (58%), with social media less regularly used (40%).



### **(d) Physical activity/being outside**

74% of parents reported that, on average, their children took part in at least 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day, inside or outside the house. Broken down by age, 81% of children and 61% of adolescents were reported to take part in more than 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day.

83% of parents reported that, on average, their children were spending more than 30 minutes a day outside. Broken down by age, 90% of children and 69% of adolescents were reported to be spending more than 30 minutes outside per day.

