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Introduction

When speaking with children to inform the 2020/21 business plan, feeling stressed emerged as a common theme among the challenges that children were facing. Part of the consultation for the business plan included asking 1,924 children in December 2019 what they worry about. Feeling stressed and/or sad was the most common choice, with 33% choosing this as one of their top three worries¹.

To better understand children's levels of stress, the Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO) conducted a survey on stress among 1,851 children and young people aged 8 – 17 in England, from 13th to 27th March 2020. The timing of the survey coincided with the closure of schools and the beginning of 'lockdown' in England due to the Covid-19 pandemic. From this initial survey, we began to see evidence of Covid-19 emerging as a new cause of stress amongst children, and we reported initial findings in a series of blogs². More broadly, the survey showed that 88% of children reported that they had ever felt stressed while 24% of children felt stressed most days or every day.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has unfolded, there have been concerns about the potential impacts on children's levels of stress – initially during the lockdown. The CCO therefore designed a second survey to explore how children's experience of stress had changed since lockdown began. The survey involved another panel of 2,000 children aged 8 – 17 and ran from 18th to 25th June.

The first survey was run by YouGov, the second by Opinium. The providers used different nationally representative panels of children to administer the survey, so results have been harmonised by CCO through weighting the two samples to be nationally representative based on age, gender and region of residence³. Full details of both surveys, including survey questions, can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Executive summary

- > Overall, the frequency of feeling stressed declined during lockdown between March and June 2020. This was mainly driven by a decline in the percentage of children feeling stressed some of the time, from 47% to 34%, and an increase in children feeling stressed rarely or not at all (from 23% to 42%).
- > However, the proportion of children experiencing stress most days or every day remained broadly consistent between the two surveys, 24% in March and 22% in June.
- > Results from the June survey show that:
 - > 55% of children said that they had felt stressed, even if just a little bit, since schools closed. 61% of girls had felt stressed compared to 48% of boys.
 - > There was variation in children's stress levels according to the employment status of the parent responding to the first part of the survey:
 - > Children whose parent was unemployed in June were the most likely to feel stressed most/every day (29%)

¹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/cco-childhood-in-2020.pdf>

² <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2020/05/20/children-and-stress-whats-worrying-them-most/>,

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2020/04/03/angry-fed-up-isolated-coronavirus-and-childrens-mental-health/>

³ All analysis conducted in this report is the work of the CCO using survey data commissioned from YouGov and Opinium except for the significance tests for the June data, which were carried out by Opinium on behalf of CCO.

- > Children whose parent was furloughed in June were the least likely to feel stressed most/every day (13%) and were the most likely to have not felt stressed in the four weeks prior to the survey (23%).
- > 19% of children chose 'Schoolwork I had to do whilst I was at home' as their primary cause of stress in general during lockdown. This was the joint most common choice, along with 'Not being able to see my friends or relatives'.
- > 41% of children reported that they had become more stressed about their schoolwork and/or exams during lockdown, while only 17% reported that they had become less stressed about this topic.
- > 24% of children reported that they had become more stressed about their future and finding a job during lockdown, while only 12% reported that they had become less stressed about this topic.
- > 26% of children reported that they had become more stressed about their mental and physical health during lockdown, while only 15% reported that they had become less stressed about this topic.
- > 13% of children reported that they had become more stressed not having enough food or clothes during lockdown, while 26% reported that they had become less stressed about this topic.
- > 49% of children chose 'not being able to see my friends or relatives' as one of their top three causes of stress during lockdown out of topics related to school or Coronavirus, while 39% of children chose 'schoolwork I had to do whilst I was at home' as one of their top three causes.
- > We asked children to tell us in their own words what made them feel stressed. In the June survey, the wide-ranging impact of Coronavirus on their stress levels was clear:
 - > *"My mum is a nurse and working in the corona intensive care I was worried about her dying"* (Boy, 15)
 - > *"I could not take my gcse's and that my results have been taken out of my hands. It feels like a violation and I am not in control of my destiny."* (Girl, 15)
 - > *"Doing my schoolwork at home. I find it harder than in the classroom. There are lots more distractions. ... My parents are stressed because they have to work and teach us. I miss my friends."* (Girl, 8)
 - > *"Being stuck in one place with everyone at home arguing all the time"* (Boy, 15)
 - > *"The changes as to what will happen with exams and my upcoming university life. How I will be graded. How it will impact my life"* (Girl, 17)

Frequency of stress during lockdown

Children were asked in both surveys how often they had felt stressed in the last four weeks.

In June, 22% of children had felt stressed every or most days. Figure 1 shows that girls were statistically significantly more likely to feel stressed most days than boys (19% compared to 14%), while boys were more likely to have not felt stressed once in the four weeks prior to the survey (21% compared to 12%). Children aged 12-17 were statistically significantly more likely to feel stressed every day than those aged 8-11 (7% compared to 4%).

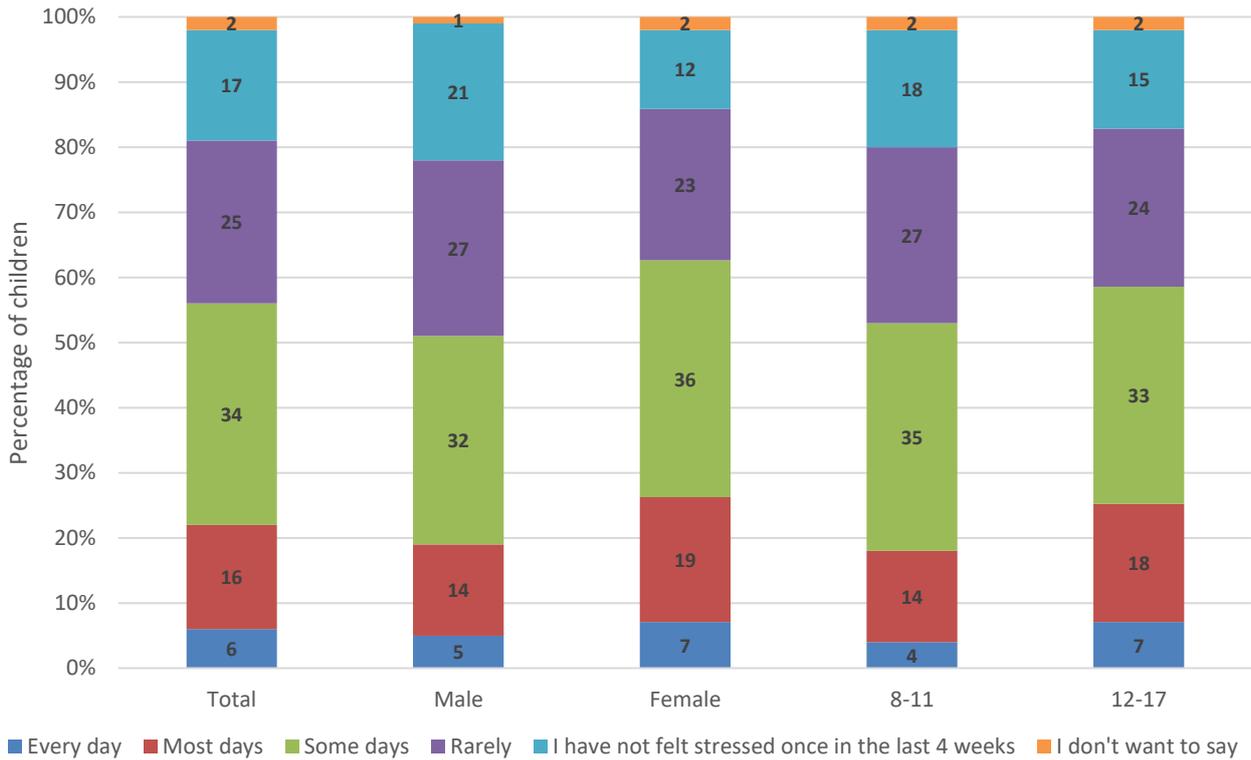


Figure 1 – Frequency of feeling stressed in the previous four weeks, June survey, by gender and age (%)

The survey asked only one parent for their employment status at the time of survey. Figure 2 below shows how children’s levels of stress varied according to the employment status of the parent who responded to the survey. Children whose parent was unemployed were the most likely to feel stressed most days or every day (29%) compared to other children. Interestingly, children whose parent was furloughed were the least likely to report feeling stressed every/most days (13%) and the most likely to have not felt stressed at all (23%). Children whose parent was furloughed, or non-working/retired were statistically significantly less likely to feel stressed every or most days compared to those whose parent was employed full time.

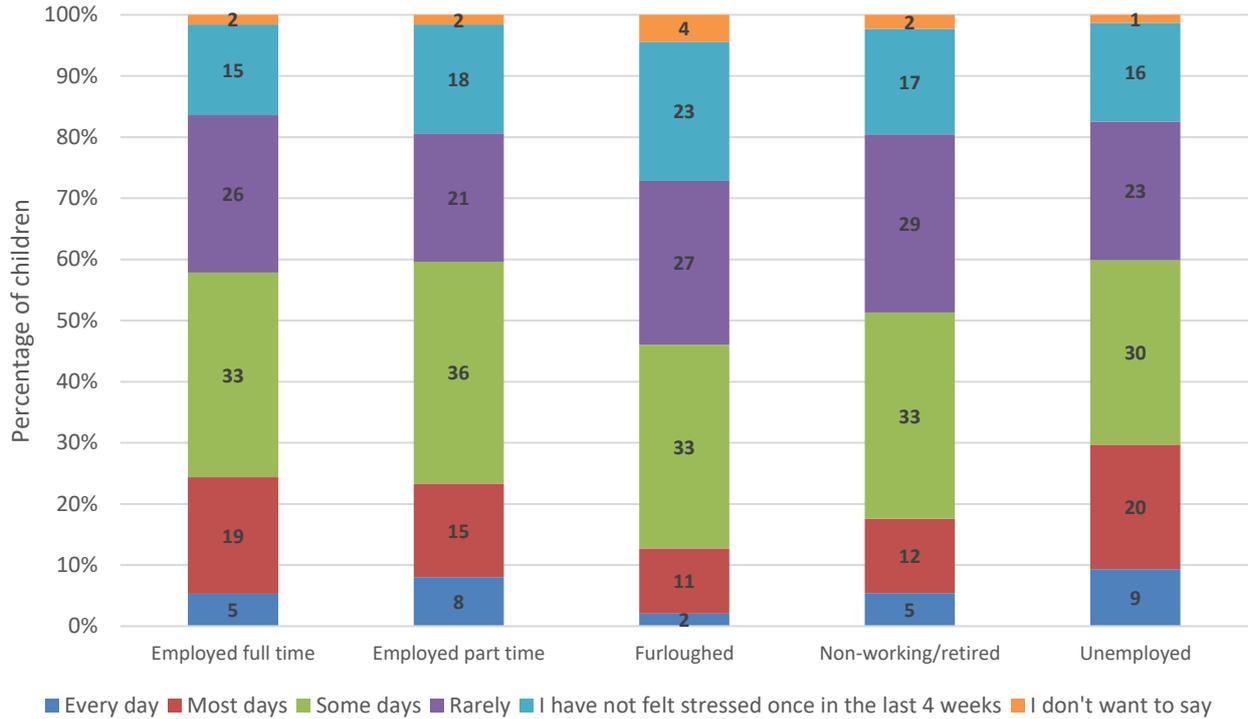


Figure 2 – Frequency of feeling stressed, June survey, by parent employment status (%)

Figure 3 below shows that 55% of children in the survey responded that they had felt stressed, even if just a little bit, since schools closed. Girls were statistically significantly more likely to have felt stressed than boys (61% compared to 48%), and children aged 12-17 were more likely than those aged 8-11 to have felt stressed (58% compared to 50%).

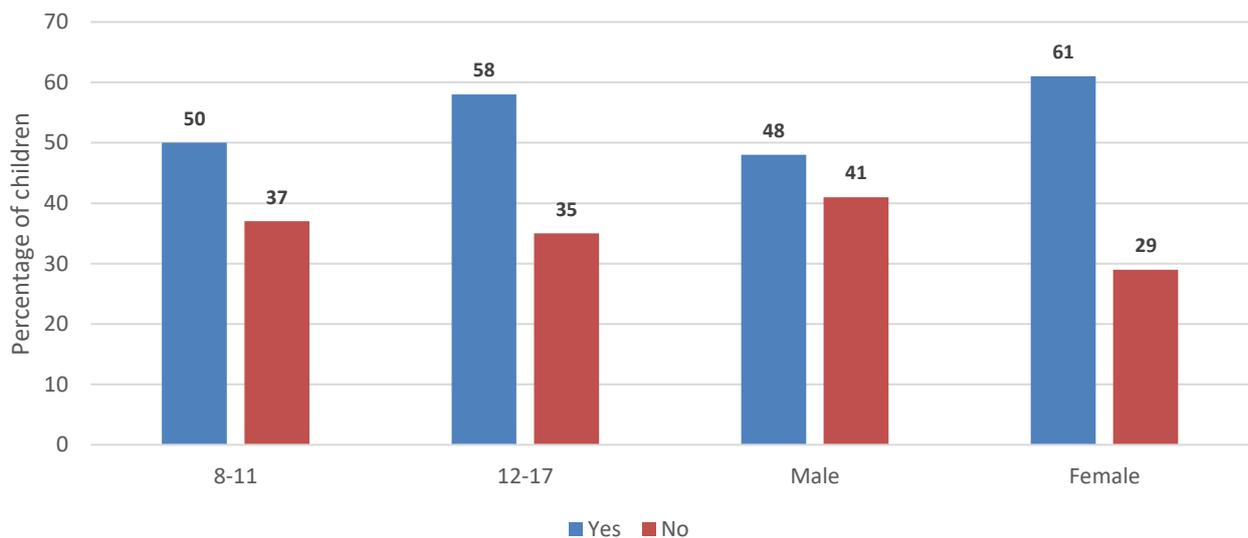


Figure 3 – Whether children had felt stressed since schools closed, June survey, by age group and gender (%)

How stress has changed during lockdown

Change in overall stress levels between March and June

Comparing the June and March data, the key change which we observe between surveys is that children responding to the second survey were less likely to report having frequently felt stressed during the previous four weeks, and more likely to report having felt stressed rarely or not at all.

Frequency of feeling stressed in the past four weeks	First survey (March 2020)					Second survey (June 2020)				
	Total	Male	Female	8-11	12-17	Total	Male	Female	8-11	12-17
Base size (unweighted)	1,851	947	919	624	1,009	2001	858	1,143	500	1,505
Every day	8%	7%	9%	5%	11%	6% (-2pp)	5% (-2pp)	7% (-2pp)	4% (-1pp)	7% (-4pp)
Most days	16%	13%	19%	8%	21%	16%	14% (+1pp)	19%	14% (+6pp)	18% (-3pp)
Some days	47%	48%	46%	49%	46%	34% (-13pp)	32% (-16pp)	36% (-10pp)	35% (-14pp)	33% (-13pp)
Almost never / rarely	12%	13%	11%	16%	10%	25% (+13pp)	27% (+14pp)	23% (+12pp)	27% (+11pp)	24% (+14pp)
I have not felt stressed once in the last four weeks	11%	12%	9%	14%	8%	17% (+6pp)	21% (+9pp)	12% (+3pp)	18% (+4pp)	15% (+7pp)

Table 1 – Frequency of feeling stressed in the four weeks prior to the survey, first and second survey and change in percentage points between surveys⁴

Overall, there was a statistically significant rise in the probability of children reporting feeling stressed rarely or not at all in the previous 4 weeks, between the first survey and the second survey (Table 1). This is mostly the result of a reduction in the proportion reporting feeling stressed sometimes during the previous 4 weeks, which fell from 47% to 34% between the two surveys.

The proportion of children reporting feeling stressed often fell slightly between the two surveys, but to a lesser extent. In the first survey 8% of children reported feeling stressed every day; compared to 6% in the second survey. The percentage of children feeling stressed most days was the same in both surveys (16%). The proportion of children which reported feeling stressed at least most days therefore fell from 24% to 22%.

This shift in frequency of stress was not experienced evenly by age groups. In the first survey 12-17 year olds had generally higher levels of stress: they were just over twice as likely as 8-11 year olds to report being stressed most days or every day, and 40% less likely to report feeling stressed rarely or not at all. During

⁴ Note: to ensure comparability between surveys, in the first survey children reporting that they had never been stressed who were therefore not asked this frequency of stress question were recoded to have the response 'I have not felt stressed once in the last four weeks'

lockdown, these differences narrowed considerably.

Table 1 also demonstrates that the overall reduction in the proportion reporting feeling stressed everyday/most days was predominantly amongst older children. In March, 32% of 12-17 year olds reported feeling stressed every/most days falling to 25% in May, a 7 percentage point fall. 8-11 year olds on the other hand saw a slight rise in this proportion over the same period, going from 13% in March to 18% in May. This difference in trend is statistically significant and robust to differences between the surveys in terms of a child's gender, region of residence and their parents' marital status.

Change in specific types of stress between March and June

The second survey carried out in June also asked children whether they had felt more stressed, less stressed or about the same level of stress, in relation to different issues since schools closed for most children. The results for all children are shown in Figure 4.

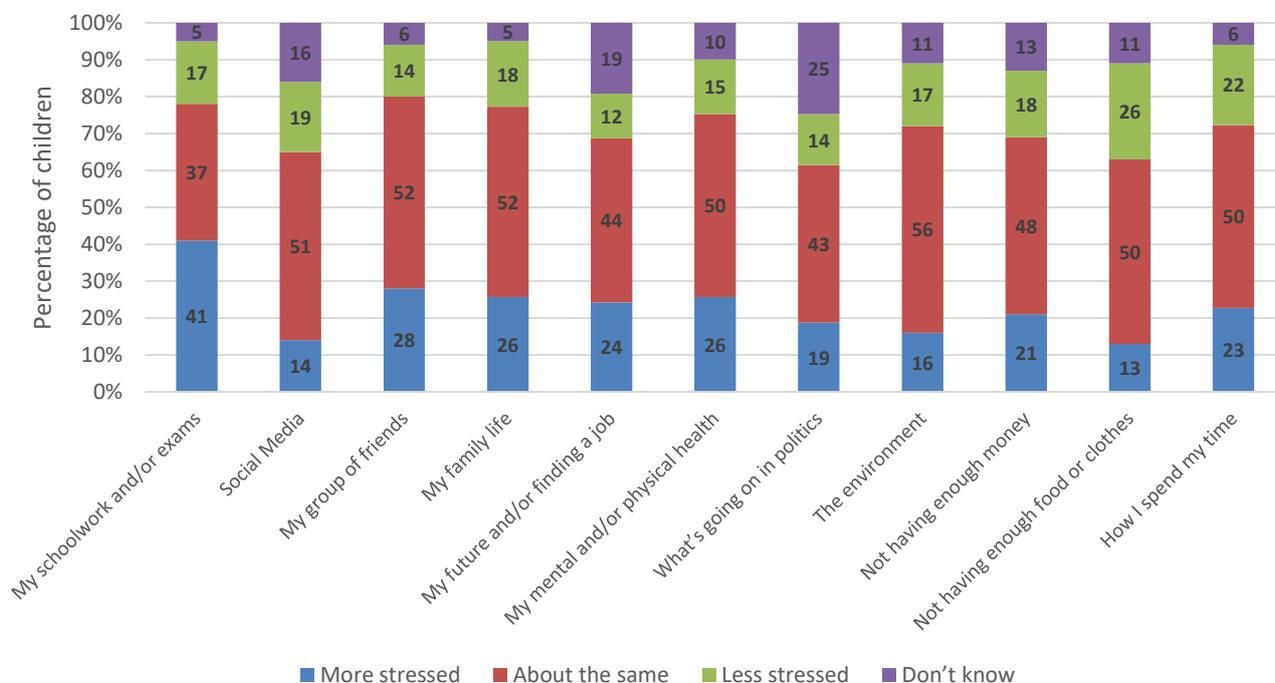


Figure 4 – Whether children felt more stressed, less stressed or about the same level of stress since schools closed, on a range of different topics, June survey (%)

Overall, 41% of children reported that they were more stressed about their schoolwork and/or exams since schools closed, while only 17% were less stressed about this topic. Around a quarter of children reported that they had become more stressed about their future and finding a job, while only 1 in 8 reported that they had become less stressed about this topic. A quarter of children also reported that they had become more stressed about their mental and physical health, while only 15% reported that they had become less stressed about this topic.

Conversely, there were other issues where children appeared to be more likely to be less stressed. Only 13% of children reported that they had become more stressed about not having enough food or clothes, whereas 26% reported becoming less stressed about it. Around 1 in 7 children reported becoming more stressed about social media whereas 1 in 5 children reported becoming less stressed about it.

Table 2 below breaks these figures down by gender and age group. It shows, for example, that 45% of girls reported feeling more stressed about their schoolwork and/or exams, compared to only 16% who felt less stressed about this topic. In comparison, 37% of boys were more stressed about this topic (statistically significantly less than girls) and 17% reported feeling less stressed about this.

Cause of stress	More stressed					Less stressed				
	Total	Male	Female	8-11	12-17	Total	Male	Female	8-11	12-17
My schoolwork and/or exams	41%	37%	45%	34%	46%	17%	17%	16%	18%	16%
Social Media	14%	11%	17%	11%	17%	19%	19%	19%	16%	21%
My group of friends	28%	26%	30%	27%	29%	14%	13%	15%	13%	15%
My family life	26%	23%	28%	24%	27%	18%	17%	19%	16%	19%
My future and/or finding a job	24%	22%	26%	12%	33%	12%	13%	12%	15%	10%
My mental and/or physical health	26%	22%	30%	21%	30%	15%	15%	14%	14%	15%
What's going on in politics	19%	16%	21%	15%	21%	14%	14%	14%	11%	16%
The environment	16%	14%	18%	14%	18%	17%	17%	18%	15%	19%
Not having enough money	21%	18%	24%	16%	25%	18%	17%	19%	17%	19%
Not having enough food or clothes	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	26%	24%	29%	24%	28%
How I spend my time	23%	21%	25%	17%	27%	22%	24%	19%	20%	23%

Table 2 – Percentage of children who felt more, or less stressed about the given topic since schools closed, June survey, by gender and age group.

The table also shows that 30% of girls were more stressed about their mental and/or physical health (statistically significantly more than the rate of 22% among boys) and 14% were less stressed about this. Similarly, 30% of 12-17 year olds were more stressed about this topic (statistically significantly more than the rate among 8-11 year olds).

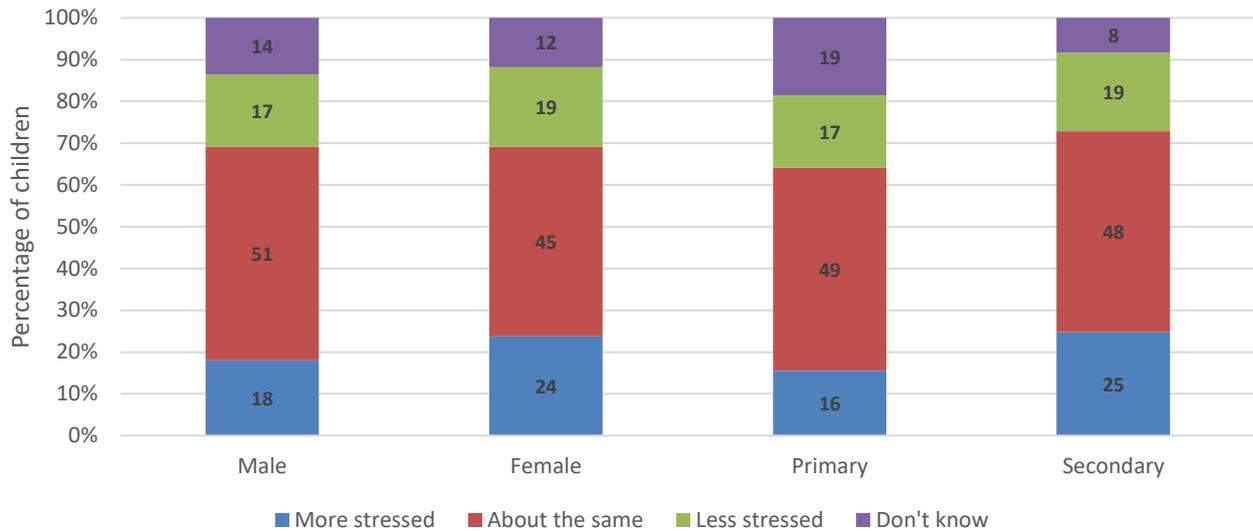


Figure 5 – ‘Having enough money’ – Change in stress since lockdown, June survey (%)

24% of girls reported feeling more stressed about having enough money (statistically significantly more than boys). Similar proportions of girls and boys were less stressed about this topic (19% and 17% respectively). 1 in 4 secondary school age children reported feeling more stressed about this topic (statistically significantly more than primary school age children), although primary school children were more likely to answer ‘don’t know’ to this topic (19% compared to 8%) (Figure 5).

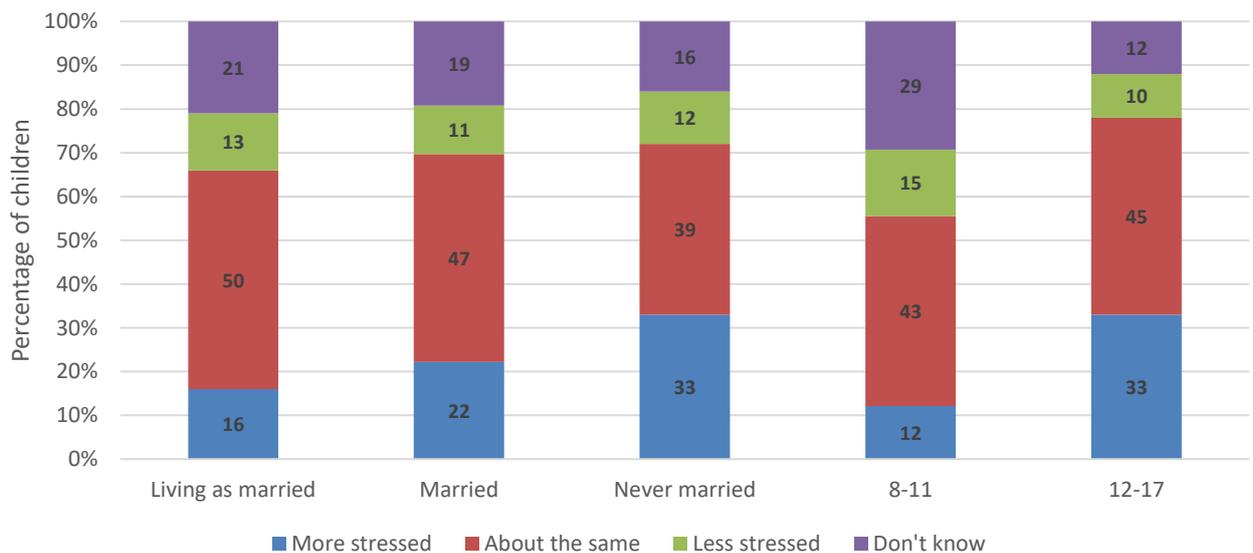


Figure 6 – ‘My future and/or finding a job’ – Change in stress since lockdown, June survey (%)

33% of children whose parents were never married reported feeling more stressed about their future or finding a job, statistically significantly more than children whose parents were married or living as married (22% and 16% respectively). The ‘never married’ category is a useful proxy for single parent households; however it will include those with a partner who does not live with them and those living with a partner or extended family.

A third of children aged 12-17 were more stressed about this than before lockdown, whereas only 12% of 8-11 year olds had become more stressed about this (Figure 6).

Causes of stress during lockdown

Quantitative responses

Children who answered that they had felt stressed (even a little bit) since schools closed were then asked: “Which of these things to do with school or Coronavirus have made you feel the most stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three which have made you feel most stressed.” The overall findings are shown in Figure 7 below.

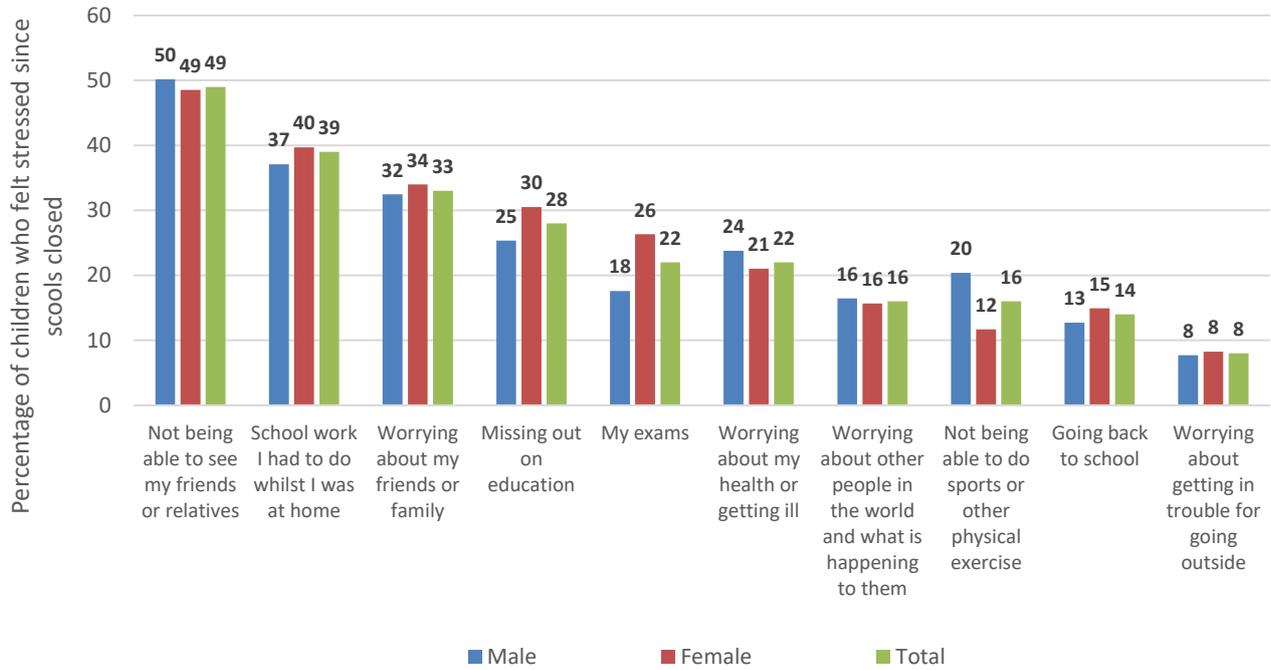


Figure 7 – Causes of stress to do with school or Coronavirus, June survey, by gender (base is children who had felt stressed since schools closed)

Girls were statistically significantly more likely than boys to select school related activities: ‘school work I had to do whilst I was at home’, ‘missing out on education’ and ‘my exams’ as one of their top three causes of stress (Figure 7). Despite small differences in the percentages of responses for boys compared to girls, for example 20% of boys reported being stressed due to not being able to do sports or other physical exercise compared to 12% of girls, these differences were not statistically significant.

14% of children in total selected going back to school as one of their top 3 causes of stress, 13% of boys and 15% of girls.

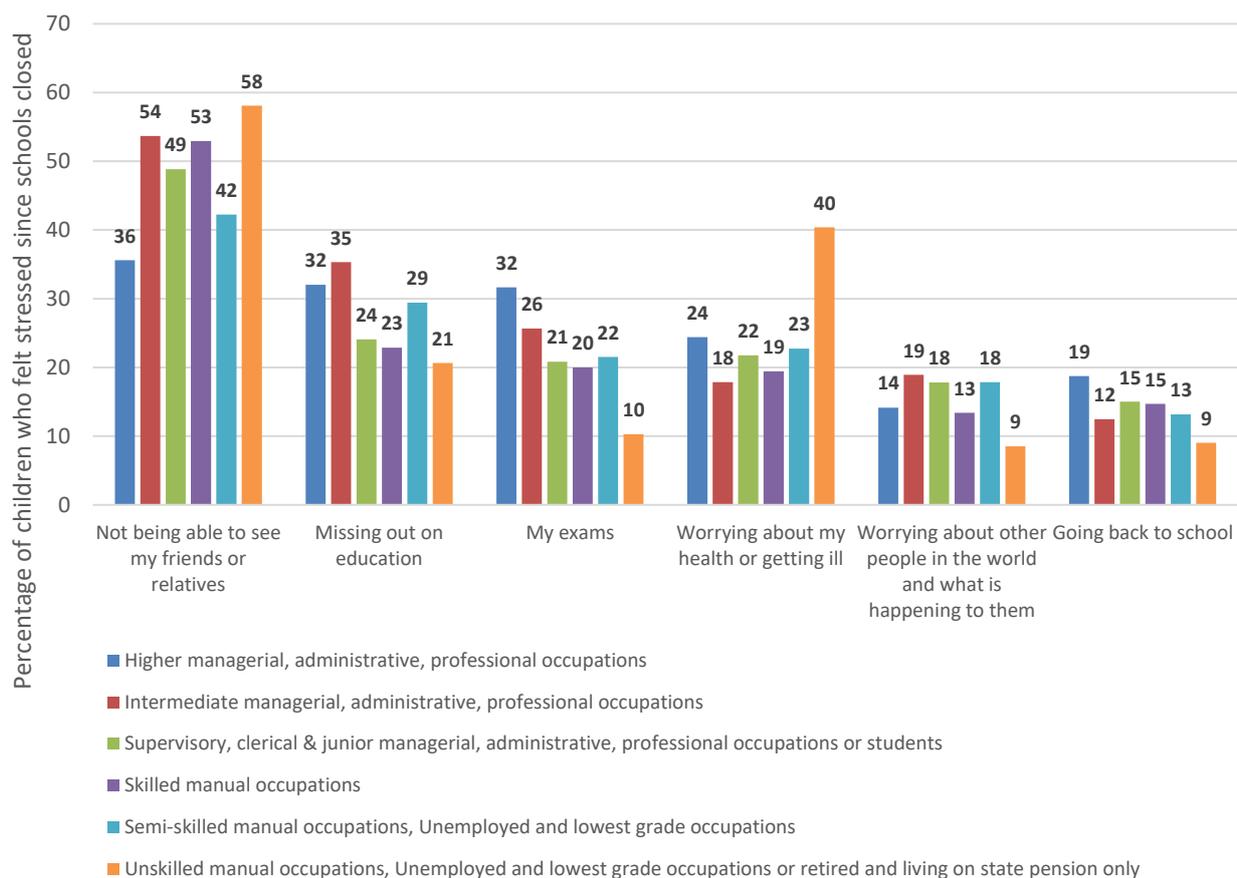


Figure 8 – Causes of stress to do with school or Coronavirus, June survey, by parental employment type (base is children who had felt stressed since schools closed)

As shown in Figure 8, 35% of children whose parents have middle management (‘intermediate managerial’) professions chose missing out on education as one of their top three causes of stress to do with school or Coronavirus. This was statistically significantly higher than children whose parents are in the lower skilled categories of supervisory or skilled manual professions (24% and 23% respectively).

32% of children whose parents have ‘higher managerial profession’ (e.g., a general manager) chose exams as one of their top three causes of stress. This was statistically significantly more than the rate among children whose parents are in an ‘unskilled manual’ occupation.

40% of children whose parents are from ‘unskilled manual professions’ (e.g., a supermarket worker) chose worrying about their health or getting ill as one of their top three causes of stress. This is statistically significantly more than children in all other social grades except higher managerial professions.

Children who answered that they had felt stressed (even a little bit) since schools closed were then asked ‘which of these things to do with life generally have made you feel most stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three which have made you feel most stressed’. The results are shown in Figure 9 on the next page.

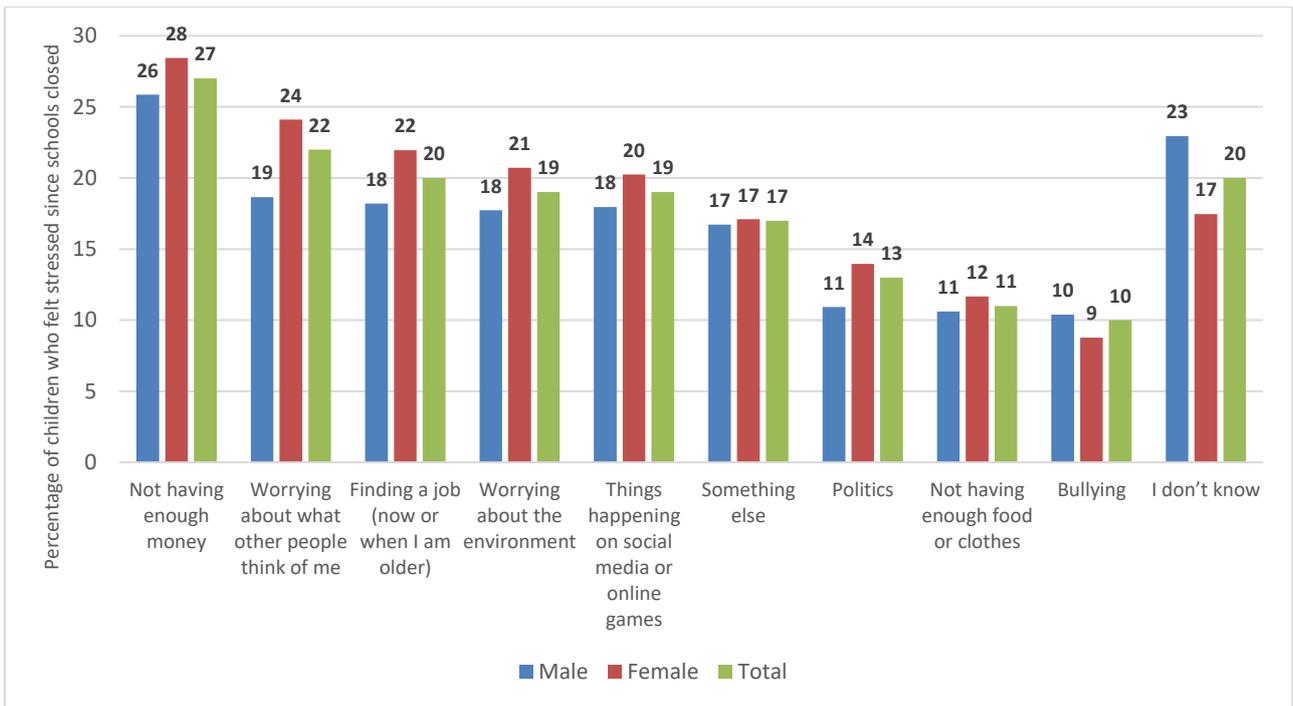


Figure 9 – Causes of stress to do with life generally, June survey, by gender (base is children who had felt stressed since schools closed)

Girls were statistically significantly more likely than boys to feel stressed about finding a job and worrying about what people think of them (22% compared to 18% and 24% compared to 19% respectively) (Figure 9). Boys were slightly more likely to select 'I don't know' (although the difference is not statistically significant) than girls, which suggests girls may be more able to define the things that cause them stress, or that the options presented were more relevant to girls than boys.

The final question in this section asked children who had felt stressed (even a little bit) since schools closed: 'of all the things that have made you stressed in the last 8 weeks, which one would you say has made you the most stressed?' (The survey presented children with a list of the options they had selected from the previous two questions, up to a maximum of 6 options). Around 50% of the survey sample responded to this question.

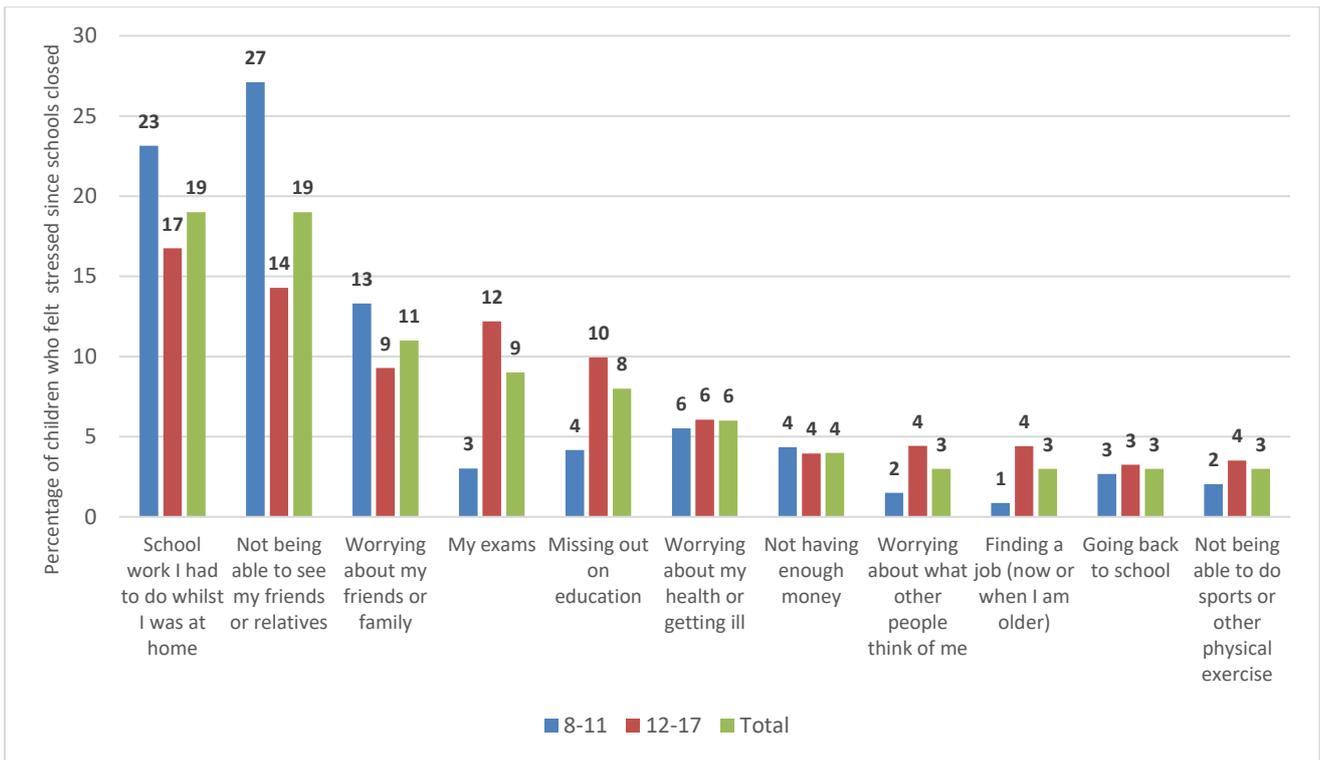


Figure 10 – Primary cause of stress, June survey, by age group (base is children who had felt stressed since schools closed)

‘School work I had to do whilst I was at home’ and ‘Not being able to see my friends or relatives’ were both the most common choice, with 19% of children selecting these options. ‘Worrying about my friends or family’ was the next most common selection with 11% selecting this (Figure 10).

Primary school age children were statistically significantly more likely to select ‘not being able to see my friends or relatives’ (27%) than secondary school age children (14%). Secondary school age children were statistically significantly more likely to select ‘my exams’ (12%), ‘missing out on education’ (10%) and ‘finding a job’ (4%) than primary school age children.

Changes in causes of stress since March 2020

Both surveys asked questions about causes of stress, the first survey (March) presented a list of nine possible causes of stress from which children were able to select the three most important ones. The second survey (June) presented two lists of 9 options: the original 9 from the first survey and additional potential causes related to Coronavirus. Children were able to choose up to three options which they felt caused them the most stress from each list. Due to the differences in the questions the data cannot be directly compared.

To understand which causes of stress were associated with increasing the likelihood of experiencing stress every day or most days (hereafter high stress), and produce comparable results between surveys, the CCO modelled cause of stress and the likelihood of experiencing feeling high stress, compared to feeling stressed 'sometimes'. Those who felt stressed rarely, or who had not felt stressed once in the past 4 weeks, were excluded from this analysis. Each independent cause of stress was entered into a model alone, to explore the effect of the cause of stress on the outcome of experiencing high stress versus feeling stressed sometimes, compared to those who selected any other option.

In the first survey, politics, not having enough money, finding a job (now, or in the future) and worrying about what others think of them were significantly associated with increased likelihood of experiencing high stress (i.e., every day or most days). Those who selected exams or 'what's going on, on social media or online games' were 24% and 67% less likely to experience high stress respectively than someone who did not select those options.

In the second survey, those who selected 'what's going on, on social media or online games' were now more than three times more likely to experience high stress than someone who did not select this option. Those who selected 'worrying about what other people think of me' were almost five times more likely to experience high stress than someone who didn't select this.

Children who selected 'schoolwork I had to do whilst I was at home' were 30% less likely to experience high stress than those who did not select this, that is, they were more likely to feel stressed only 'sometimes' than every or most days. Similarly, children who selected 'not being able to see my friends or relatives' were 37% less likely to experience high stress.

None of the other options particularly related to Coronavirus - worrying about their health or getting ill, worrying about their friends or family, missing out on education, or going back to school - were significantly associated with the likelihood of experiencing high stress. Finding a job (now, or in the future) and not having enough money were no longer associated with likelihood or experiencing high stress.

things children missed most about school was seeing their friends.

"because I can't see my friends and we've planned lots of fun things that I can't go to or do" Girl, 13

4% of children felt worried about their **families catching Covid-19**. Some children expressed worries specifically as their parents are key workers.

"My mum is a nurse and working in the corona intensive care I was worried about her dying" Boy, 15

"Both my parents are key workers, so it was stressful at times during the covid pandemic" Girl, 16

"My dad is shielding so I've been worried about him"

Girl, 15

Only two children used the words "**mental health**" explicitly; but 5% wrote about feeling isolated, anxious, depressed etc.

"Feeling lonely" Girl, 11

"My eating disorder. My depression. My family. Having exams next year" Girl, 15

"just don't feel happy" Boy, 12

12% of children wrote about **being at home making them feel stressed**, and some said this was specifically because they feel they have no privacy, or their house is too small. Related to this, boredom also appeared frequently; 5% said being bored made them feel stressed. 4% mentioned family issues and arguments at home made them feel stressed.

"Home is too small we live." Boy, 13

"being bored and not knowing what to do with my time" Boy, 14

"Being bored thinking it will never end" Girl, 17

"having endless time with nothing to do. It's so boring" Boy, 15

"Being stuck in one place with everyone at home arguing all the time" Boy, 15

It was striking that many children used the exact same formulations to express what makes them feel stressed. The word "able" was used a lot, in the sense of not being able to do something (see word cloud above). For example:

"been stuck at home and not able to go out to play or meet friends" Girl, 15

"before school stopped I was studying for tests and now I'm not but worried I won't be able to catch up or I've missed too much" Boy, 8

"A lack of being able to go out and play football or go to the cinema" Boy, 15

Children also frequently used the expressions "feeling trapped", "being locked", "feeling stuck".

6% felt confused and uncertain about what the pandemic meant for their futures and what was generally going to happen.

"what to do for the right reasons, do I do this or do I do that, so confusing the virus" Boy, 12

For some children and young people, there was a **combination of things** that was on their minds in their replies, e.g.:

"Missing my friends and family, having to deal with my autistic brother constantly being around me, the school work set by the school was difficult to do at home" Boy, 11

"worried about my family catching it, especially my little brother who is disabled. the government don't care"

about children like him. Not going out and seeing my friends too.” Boy, 13

“Not seeing friends, overwhelmed by work with lack of motivation to do it, poor diet” Girl, 17

“having to be around my family all the time, and not being able to go out as even if I do later on they would still be worried. Also school, not knowing how I am going to apply to university or choose my courses, studying has been very difficult at home as I cant get concentrated. Feeling alone everyday” Girl, 17

Comparison with causes of stress in March 2020

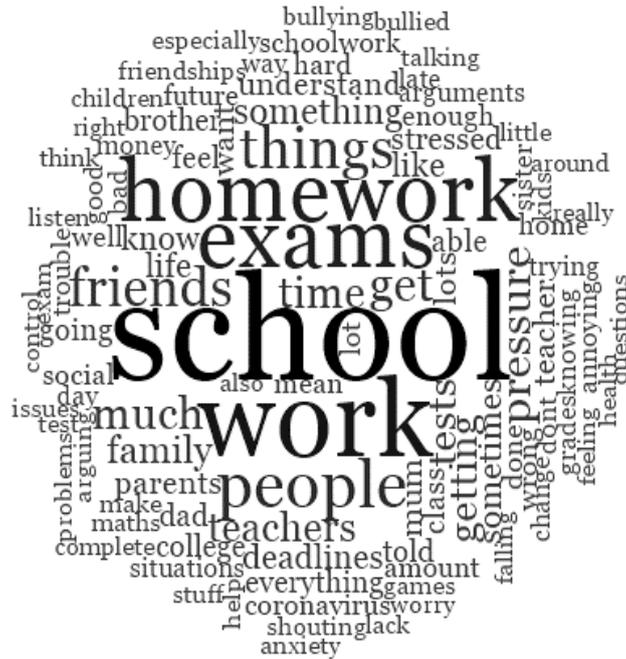


Figure 12 – Word cloud of responses to ‘what makes you feel stressed’, March survey

In the June survey, the free text answers to the question “What makes you feel stressed?” were mostly about issues related to Coronavirus, with a few exceptions. By comparison, the answers to the first survey were much more diverse – they included school, big crowds, children’s outward appearance, bullying, gaming, and allergies. Some themes that many children mentioned in our first survey (e.g. being hurried, rushed; being told off; feeling stressed by other people and other children for different reasons) did not appear in the second survey. This might partly explain why we see an overall decrease in children’s frequency of stress. These ‘extra little’ stresses that children deal with on a day to day basis became redundant during the pandemic.

In children’s open responses to this question in the first survey, 75% of the responses mentioned stresses to do with school. Topics under this theme included doing homework, studying for exams, and issues faced at school such as being pressured, being distracted by others, and not feeling understood by teachers. By comparison, in the second survey only 46% of the open responses from children mentioned school as a cause of stress.

The reduction suggest that issues experienced at school contributed to the stress children felt before lockdown. But it also means that stress does not disappear completely when children no longer have to go to school. Children have always been told that exams, A Levels, and GCSEs, are crucial for them to achieve the placement at University they want, to get a good job etc; and all of the sudden this narrative has changed with exams being cancelled and grades being decided in a different way. It is not surprising that children still feel worried about the outcome for them, and about their futures, with some stating they would like to sit their exams.

Concern for the future was mentioned more frequently in our second survey (3% of those who responded) than in our first survey (1.5% of those who responded). In the second survey, children were a bit more concerned about the future in general, but importantly, about their personal futures **going to University**, too.

“That I'm not getting the education I need and that I'm missing a year of school” Boy 16, survey 2

“Not being able to attend careers fairs and college open days” Girl, 16, survey 2

“The changes as to what will happen with exams and my upcoming university life. How I will be graded. How it will impact my life” Girl, 17, survey 2

In the second survey, family issues or issues at home were mentioned by only 4% of children as opposed to 13% in our first survey. 3.3% of children wrote about being told off or **getting into trouble** as a cause of stress in the first survey, but this was not mentioned at all in the second survey.

Perhaps surprisingly, **money or financial worries** were only mentioned eight times (0.8%) in the second survey, with 2 children speaking about food (0.2%); although it is not clear whether the references to food imply not being able to eat. Financial worries were mentioned slightly more frequently in our first survey by 20 children, 1.75%.

In our second survey, there was only one mention of **outward appearance** with relation to hair; and 2 mentions of bullying; one of them cyberbullying. Feeling stressed about what others thought of the children or how they looked (2%) and bullying (4%) were both mentioned more in our first survey. This may not be surprising given that most children would have been at home and less likely to see their peers in person.

“The fact that I have to feel like I have to act and present myself in a way that pleases others and tests.” Girl, 12, survey 1

“When I get bullied by other kids or get frustrated because another child does not pass me the ball when playing football” Boy, 9, survey 1

In both surveys, children mention being **stressed about their friends** (10%, in survey 1; 21%, in survey 2). However, this stress manifested itself in very different ways between the two surveys. In the first survey, the focus was around negative interactions with friends, and how they were perceived by their friends, as well as their role in the group. In our second survey, it related to not being able to see friends and in some cases, being concerned about friends during lockdown.

“If my friends are kind of leaving me out and not getting me involved.” Girl, 8, survey 1

“when friends fall out and I get stuck in the middle” Girl, 13, survey 1

“being more lonely and missing friends” Girl, 12, survey 2

“I worry about my friends” Boy, 14, survey 2

In our first survey, 7.6% mentioned “people” sometimes generally, sometimes with regards to crowds, or other children – that they didn’t name as their friends – as a cause for their stress. This is not the case in our second survey. This is understandable as during lockdown, children would not have been able to encounter “**other people**” while out and about.

“People annoying me.” Boy, 10, survey 1

“People in general, feeling ill, being at school” Girl, 12, survey 1

“When people annoy me or bad things happen” Girl, 9, survey 1

In our first survey, 2%, felt stressed about **not being listened to** and less than 1% (only 9 children), wrote about feeling uncertain about things making them feel stressed. In the second survey, children did not directly write about not being listened to, but a larger number of children now mentioned being confused or uncertain about what is happening (6%). The stress around **not being spoken to, not being heard, not feeling informed** is present in both surveys but becomes more dominant with children rather speaking about feeling confused and uncertain in a global pandemic, where the right information and communication is important for emotional wellbeing.

“Confusion and lack of knowing what is going to happen” Girl, 16, survey 2

In the second survey more children (5%) wrote about their **emotional wellbeing**; e.g. feeling lonely, depressed, or anxious, compared to our first survey (3%).

“Depressing, sitting at a computer, doing work all day, nothing much to life really.” Boy, 13, survey 2

“I have adhd and dyspraxia and have felt a lot more stressed and upset feeling isolated” Boy, 16, survey 2

In our second survey, there was no mention of **social media** in the qualitative responses and only 2 mentions of gaming. But in the first survey 2% of children mentioned gaming alongside 7 mentions of social media; 2 of device time; 1 of IT.

In our first survey 6% wrote about meeting deadlines, **feeling hurried or rushed**. This theme did not appear in our second survey.

“When feel rushed to do something” Boy, 14, survey 1

“Not being ready for things” Boy, 15, survey 1

How did children manage stress during lockdown?

Children were asked in the second survey ‘which of these have you done most often to feel less stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three options of what you do most often’. Children were given the list of options shown on the horizontal axis in Figure 13.

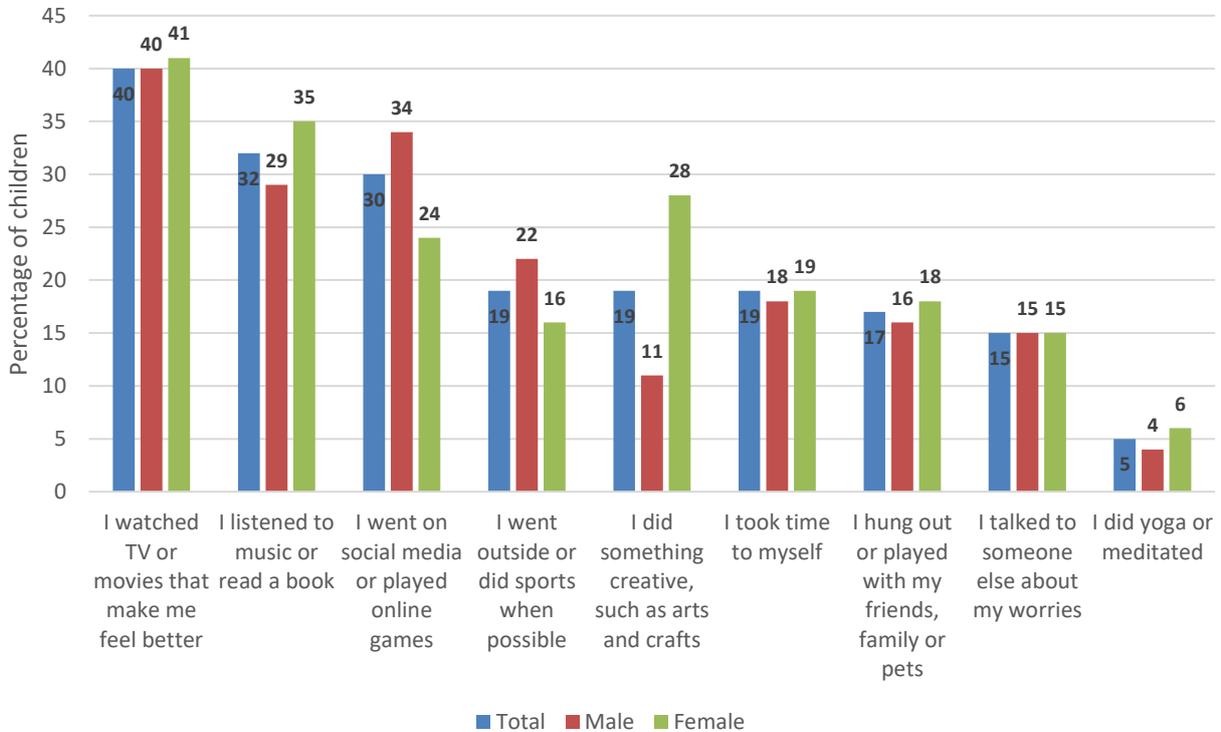


Figure 13 – What children do to manage stress, June survey, by gender (%)

Watching TV or movies that made them feel better was the most popular choice for children: 40% selected this as one of their three strategies for managing stress. Boys were statistically significantly more likely than girls to select ‘I went on social media or played online games’ or ‘I went outside or did sports when possible’ (34% and 22% respectively compared to 24% and 16%). Girls were statistically significantly more likely than boys to choose ‘I did something creative, such as arts and crafts’ (28% compared to 11%).

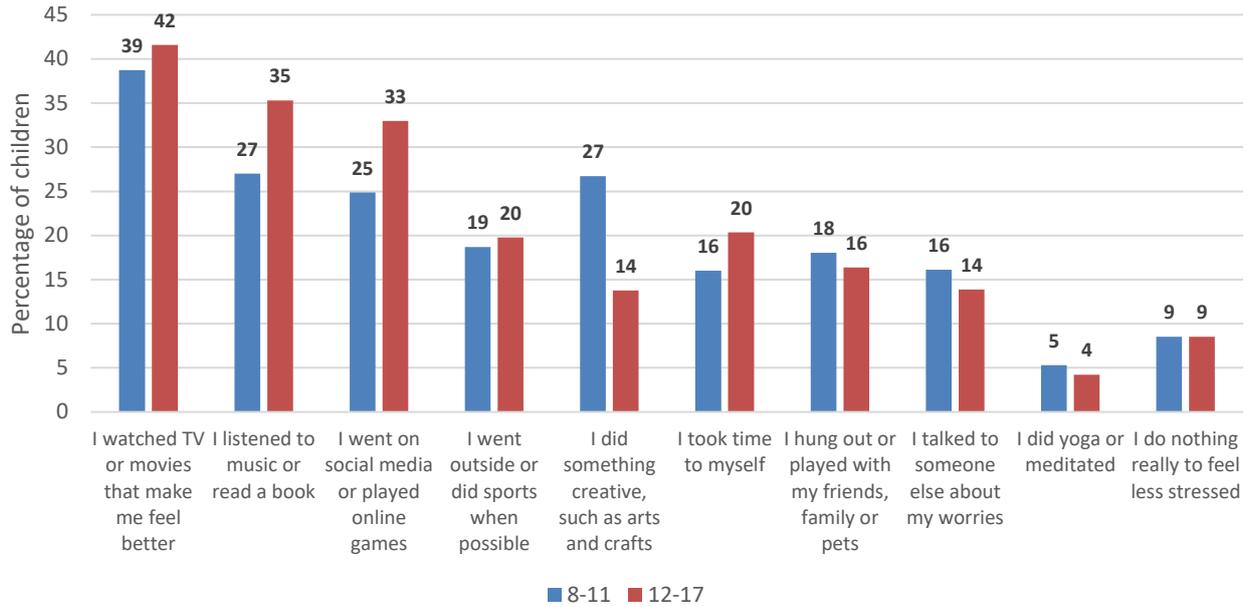


Figure 14 – What children do to manage stress, June survey, by age group (%)

Children aged 12-17 were statistically significantly more likely to listen to music or read a book, or go on social media or play online games to feel less stressed than younger children (35% and 33% respectively compared to 27% and 25%). Conversely, 27% of children aged 8-11 reported that they do something creative, such as arts and crafts to feel less stressed, statistically significantly more than older children.

Appendix: Survey questions

Questions in March survey

YG1: Have you ever felt stressed (even if just a little bit?)

- > Yes
- > No
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

YG2: For this question, please type your answers in the box...What makes you feel stressed? [free text]

YG3: Which three of these make you feel most stressed? (Please choose up to three answers)

- > My homework and/or exams
- > Things happening on social media and/or online gaming
- > Worrying about what other people think of me
- > Finding a job (now or when I am older)
- > Not having enough food or clothes
- > Not having enough money
- > Worrying about the environment
- > Bullying
- > Politics
- > Something else
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

YG4: For this question, please type your answers in the box...How does being stressed make you feel? [free text]

YG5: Which of these describes how being stressed makes you feel? (For this question, please choose as many answers as you like)

- > Low on energy
- > Anxious/worried, like I am on edge
- > Sad
- > Like I don't want to talk to anyone
- > Sometimes like I can still enjoy doing other things
- > Sometimes like I cannot enjoy doing anything
- > Like I want to tell someone about it
- > The same as I always feel/I don't feel different
- > Like I want to change the thing that makes me feel stressed
- > Something else
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

YG6: Which three of these do you do most often to feel less stressed? (Please choose up to three answers)

- > I talk to someone else about my worries

- > I do yoga or meditate
- > I go outside or play sports
- > I go on social media or play online games
- > I listen to music or read a book
- > I hang out or play with my friends, family or pets
- > I do something creative, such as arts and crafts
- > Something else
- > I don't know
- > I do nothing really to feel less stressed

YG7: In the last 4 weeks how often have you felt stressed (please select only one option for how often you felt stressed)

- > Every day
- > Most days
- > Some days
- > Almost never
- > I have not felt stressed once in the last 4 weeks
- > I don't want to say

YG8: Please pick the one statement that best describes how involved an adult was while you were answering the questions."

- > An adult helped me understand a lot of the questions and answers
- > An adult helped me understand some of the questions and answers
- > An adult helped me read the survey but did not to help me understand anything
- > An adult was with me but did not read anything or help in any way
- > An adult was not with me

The survey also collected data on the following demographic characteristics:

- > Age
- > Gender
- > Parent/Guardian's Social Grade (YouGov categories)
- > Region
- > Parent/Guardian's Employment Status
 - > Working full time (30 or more hours per week)
 - > Working part time (8-29) hours a week
 - > Working part time (less than 8 hours a week)
 - > Full time student
 - > Retired
 - > Unemployed
 - > Other
- > Parent/Guardian's marital status
 - > Civil partnership
 - > Divorced
 - > Living as married
 - > Married
 - > Never married
 - > Separated (after being married)
 - > Widowed

Questions in June survey

OPQ1: Have you been back to school yet?

- > Yes, I'm back to school every day now
- > Yes, I'm back to school on some days
- > No, I'm not in school on any days
- > N/A – I didn't stop going to school
- > N/A – I don't go to school
- > I don't want to say

OPQ2: What have you been doing back at school? Please select all you've done since returning to school

- > lessons with my normal teacher(s)
- > lessons with teachers who aren't my normal teacher(s)
- > been given some work to do but it wasn't like a normal lesson
- > played with my friends
- > done the same work I was doing at home, but in school on a computer
- > had school lunches
- > clubs or activities that I would normally do after school
- > spend time away from the rest of my class
- > something else that is not on the list
- > I don't want to say

OPQ3: Thinking about how your life has changed since schools closed for most children (23 March), what have you missed most about your life before this happened? Please pick up to three things

- > Seeing my friends
- > going shopping
- > seeing my relatives
- > doing sports or other physical activity
- > going outside, for example to the playground or park
- > going to school
- > school lunches/food
- > Days out with my family
- > youth clubs
- > Taking part in religious activities
- > Other hobbies not mentioned that I haven't been able to do
- > I don't want to say

OPQ4: Since schools closed for most children, have you ever felt stressed (even if just a little bit)?

- > Yes
- > No
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

OPQ5: What had made you feel stressed? Please write in the box below things that have made you feel stressed [free text]

OPQ6: Which of these things to do with school or coronavirus have made you feel most stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three which have made you feel most stressed

- > School work I had to do whilst I was at home
- > My exams
- > Missing out on education
- > Not being able to see my friends or relatives
- > Worrying about getting in trouble for going outside
- > Not being able to do sports or other physical exercise
- > Going back to school
- > Worrying about my friends or family
- > Worrying about other people in the world and what is happening to them
- > Worrying about my health or getting ill
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

OPQ7: Which of these things to do with life generally have made you feel most stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three which have made you feel most stressed.

- > Things happening on social media or online games
- > Worrying about what other people think of me
- > Finding a job (now or when I am older)
- > Not having enough food or clothes
- > Not having enough money
- > Worrying about the environment
- > Bullying
- > Politics
- > Something else
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

OPQ8: Of all the things that have made you stressed in the last 8 weeks, which one would you say has made you the most stressed? [All selected answers from OPQ6 – OPQ7 1-10:13-20 (skip if none selected)]

OPQ9: We would like to find out whether you have felt more or less stressed about different issues since schools have closed for most children. For each of the below, please tick whether you feel 'more stressed, less stressed, about the same, don't know'.

COLUMNS

- > More stressed
- > About the same
- > Less stressed
- > Don't Know

ROWS

1. My schoolwork and/or exams
- > 2. Social media
3. My group of friends
4. My family life
5. My future and/or finding a job
6. My mental and/or physical health
7. What's going on in politics
8. The environment
9. Not having enough money
10. Not having enough food or clothes
11. How I spent my time

OPQ10: Which of these best describes how being stressed makes you feel?

- > Low on energy
- > Anxious / worried, like I am on edge
- > Sad
- > Like I don't want to talk to anyone
- > Sometimes like I can still enjoy doing other
- > Sometimes like I cannot enjoy doing anything
- > Like I want to tell someone about it
- > The same as I always feel / I don't feel different
- > Like I want to change the thing that makes me feel stressed
- > Something else (open text response)
- > I don't know
- > I don't want to say

OPQ11: Which of these have you done most often to feel less stressed over the past 8 weeks? Please select up to three options of what you do most often.

- > I talked to someone else about my worries
- > I did yoga or meditated
- > I went outside or did sports when possible
- > I went on social media or played online games
- > I listened to music or read a book
- > I hung out or played with my friends, family or pets
- > I did something creative, such as arts and crafts
- > I took time to myself
- > I watched TV or movies that make me feel better
- > Something else [open]
- > I don't know
- > I do nothing really to feel less stressed

OPQ12: In the last 4 weeks how often have you felt stressed?

- > Every day
- > Most days
- > Some days
- > Rarely
- > I have not felt stressed once in the last 4 weeks
- > I don't want to say

OPQ13: Please pick the one statement that best describes how involved an adult was while you were answering the questions."

- > An adult helped me understand a lot of the questions and answers
- > An adult helped me understand some of the questions and answers
- > An adult helped me read the survey but did not to help me understand anything
- > An adult was with me but did not read anything or help in any way
- > An adult was not with me

The survey also collected the following demographic information from the child's parent/guardian:

- > Gender of child
- > Age of child
- > Region of residence
- > Ethnicity (of parent)
- > Marital status (of parent)
- > Socio-economic group
- > Employment status
- > Type of school the child attends



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