



**SIMPSON
MILLAR**
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Protecting our Children through the Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond

June 2020



Executive Summary

This research has been carried out during the Covid-19 Pandemic to identify and highlight the issues faced by parents and families across the UK during Lockdown.

School closures and the challenges faced by parents who are balancing working from home whilst caring for and home schooling children has impacted on all aspects of children's wellbeing, both emotionally and physically.

The report also explores the support that's been provided by the Government, Local Authorities and schools during Lockdown and whether this has been adequate to protect our children during this unprecedented time.

About Simpson Millar

This Research was commissioned by Simpson Millar, a national law firm with over 500 staff and offices across England & Wales. Simpson Millar provides a range of services to the consumer market including Conveyancing, Wills, Litigation and Personal Injury, but they also have one of the largest teams of Education Law specialists in the UK.

The Education Team help parents find solutions to make sure that their children get the education they deserve. They provide support for parents with:

- ▶ Children with an (Education and Health Care Plan) EHCP that have been affected by Phased Transfer,
- ▶ Issues with the school admissions process,
- ▶ children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or with Special Educational Needs Tribunals,
- ▶ Children that have been unfairly excluded from school or college

Research Methodology

This data was independently collated by Trinity McQueen, an independent market research company. Trinity McQueen, on behalf of Simpson Millar, carried out an online survey of 1,000 parents across the UK between 04/06/20 and 19/06/20.

Contact Us

For more information please contact us on **0808 239 4202**.



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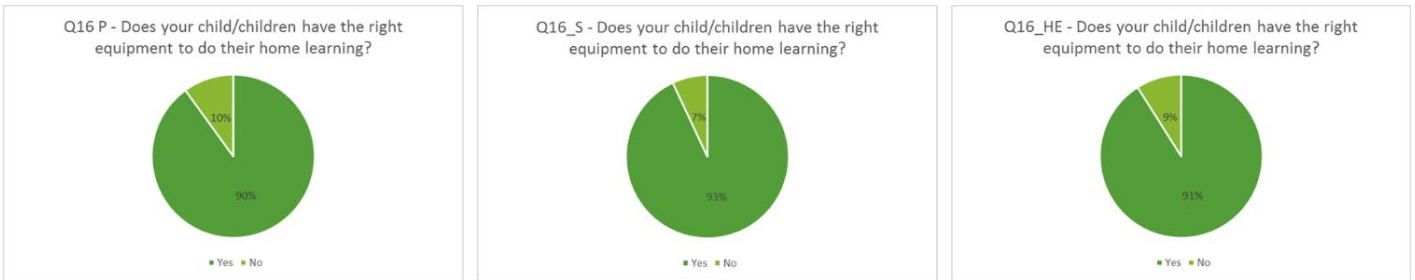
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 - 1.2. Support from Schools, Colleges & Universities during Lockdown
2. Impact of Lockdown on Children's Mental Health
3. Children's Physical Health during Lockdown
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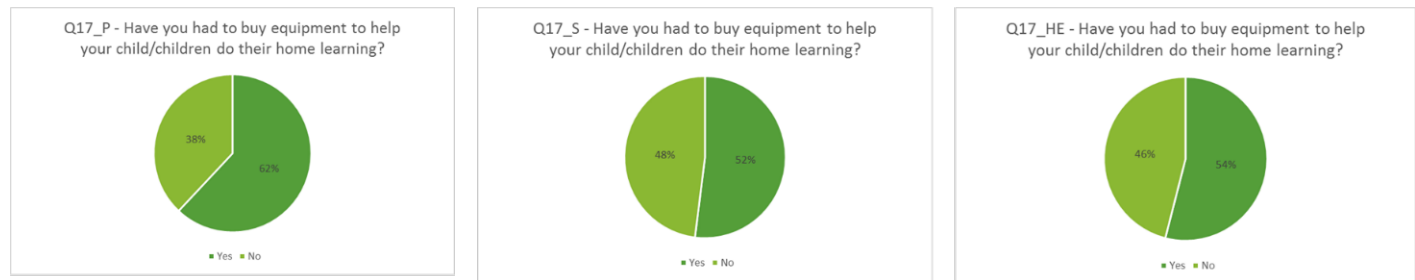
1. Home Learning

1.1. Equipment

7-10% of respondents said that their children did not have the right equipment for Home Learning. This was more likely to affect children whose household income was <£12,500.



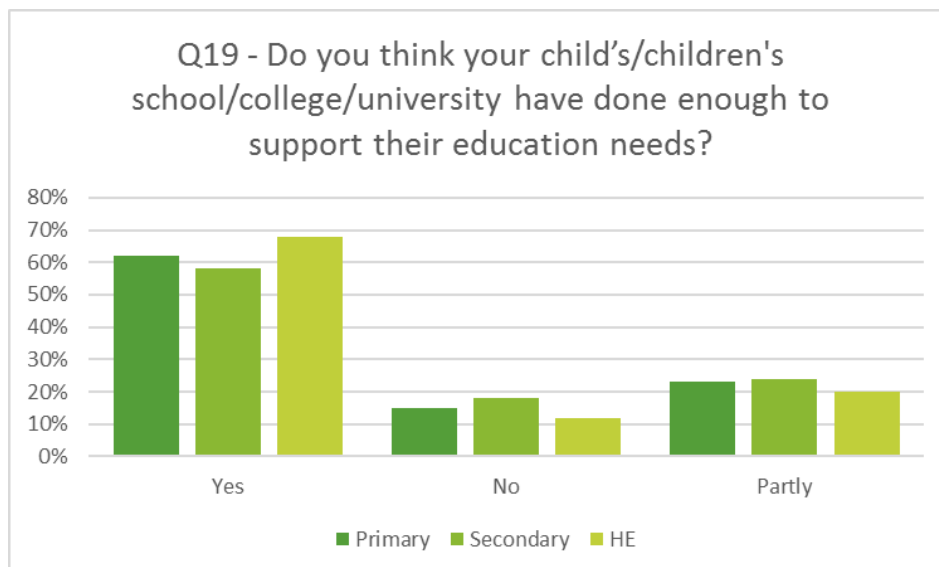
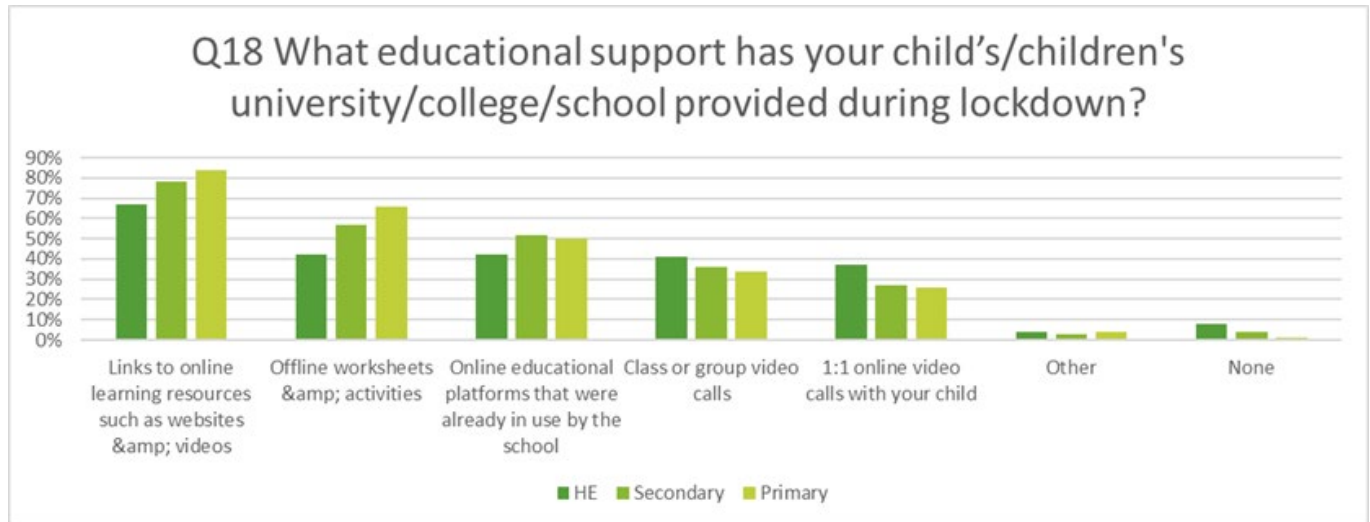
More than half of parents asked had to buy equipment so their children could do home learning. This was more pronounced in Primary school aged children.



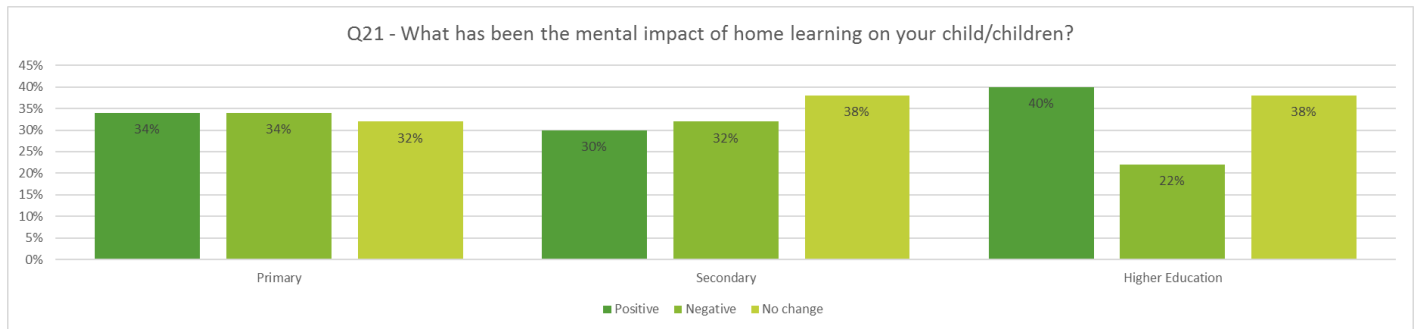
1.2. Support from Schools, Colleges & Universities during Lockdown

Only 63% of parents think schools, colleges & universities have done enough to support educational needs. Parents with children in secondary education were more likely to be dissatisfied.

Teachers in Primary and Secondary schools have predominantly used links to online resources & printouts to support learning from home. Colleges and Universities used more engaging and interactive methods such as video calling.



2. Impact of Lockdown on Children's Mental Health



Around a third of Primary and Secondary children have seen a negative effect on their mental health as a result of Lockdown, compared to a fifth of young people in Higher Education. This is an indication that younger children have found it more difficult to cope emotionally with the challenges of Lockdown.

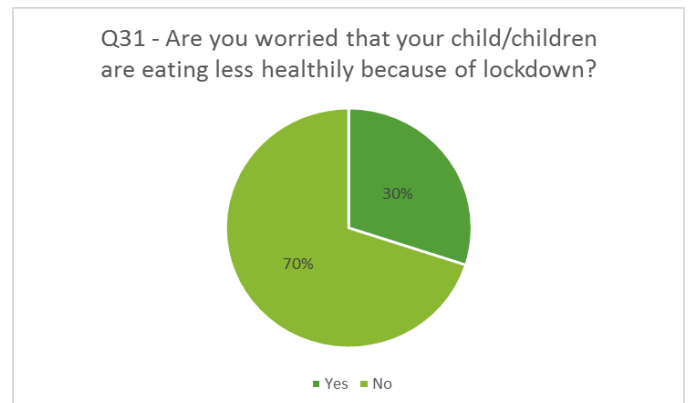
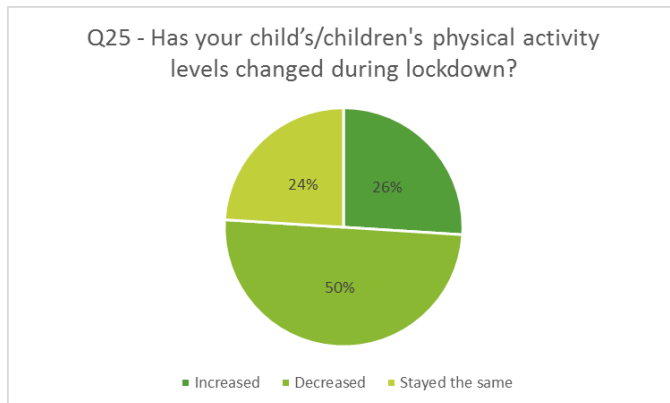
This raises concerns that there will be an increase in behavioural issues as a result of increased anxiety once children do return to school. This needs to be well managed now to prevent any escalation of issues in the future.

Because of a decrease in provision delivered to pupils with EHCPs and those with SEN who don't have an EHCP through the Lockdown, we expect a decrease in the skills of children who have missed out on support and a consequent increase in anxiety and behavioural incidents as a result. Local Authorities and schools will need to be prepared to increase levels of therapy and pastoral support as children reintegrate back into formal learning environments. Any attempt to focus on difficulties faced by young people during this process as purely behavioural will have a very negative impact and would be counterproductive.

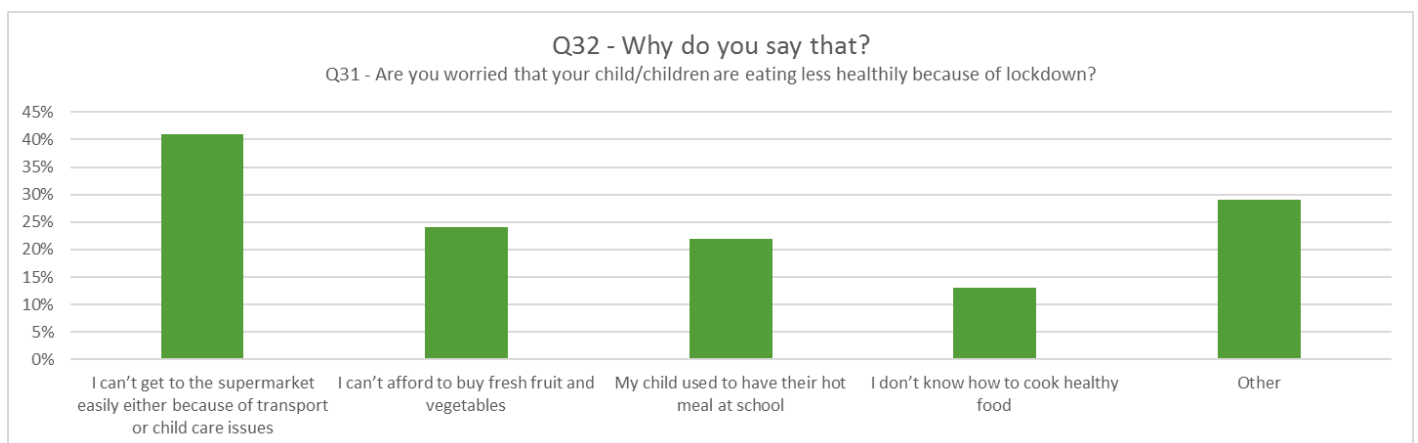
3. Children's Physical Health during Lockdown

3.1. Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Levels

There are warning signs that Lockdown could lead to future health and obesity issues as half of respondents have noticed lower levels of physical activity, whilst a third said that kids were also eating less healthily.



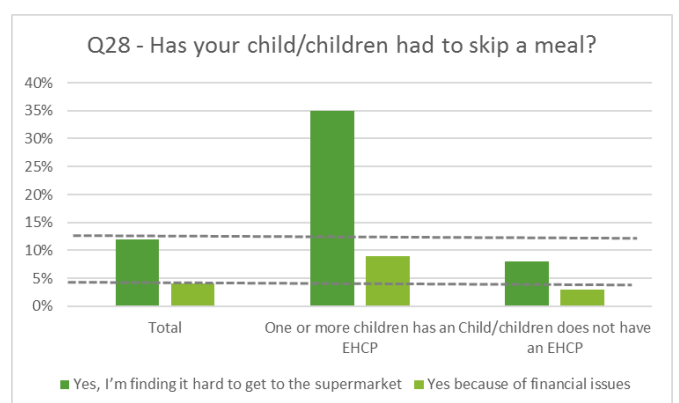
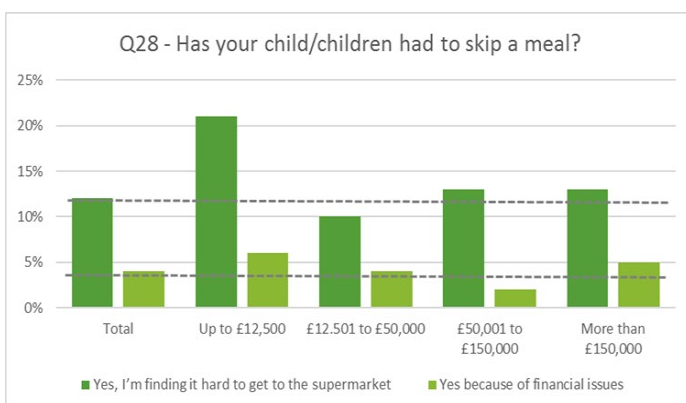
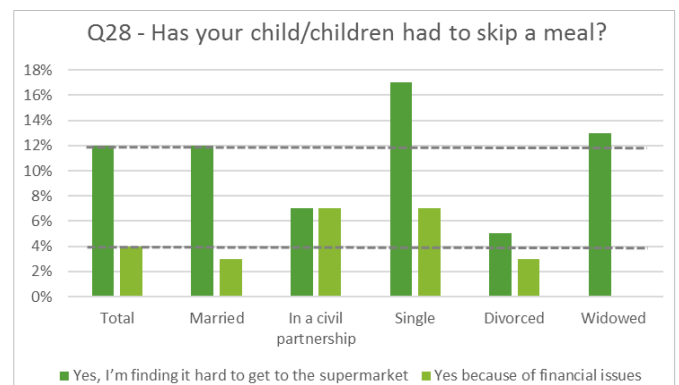
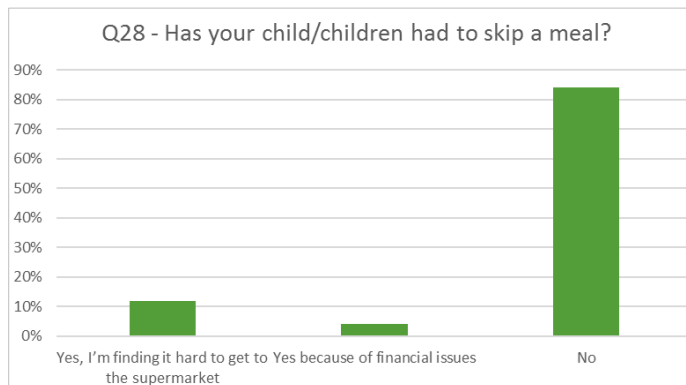
The parents surveyed felt that the main reason children were eating less healthily was because they couldn't get to the supermarket easily during lockdown. Affordability of fresh fruit and vegetables was also an issue, as well as the lack of school dinners. In 'other' parents also noted that there was less routine and structure around mealtimes and an increase in snacking which replaced 'proper' meals.



3.2. Children Missing Meals During Lockdown

Additionally, 16% of parents have said that their children have had to skip a meal during Lockdown. Some because of financial issues, but 12% also said they had issues with getting to the Supermarket.

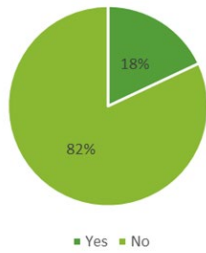
These issues were more prevalent amongst lower income households and single parent families. Younger parents, aged 18 to 24 and parents with children with Special Educational Needs were also affected.



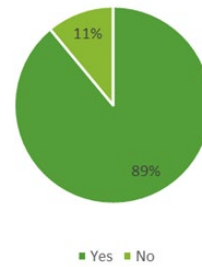
3.3. Accessibility & Use of Food Vouchers

Nearly a fifth of parents have received support from schools with food or vouchers during Lockdown. The majority have used these without any issues.

Q29 - Have you had support with food or vouchers from your child's/children's school during lockdown?



Q30a - Have you managed to use the vouchers without any issues?

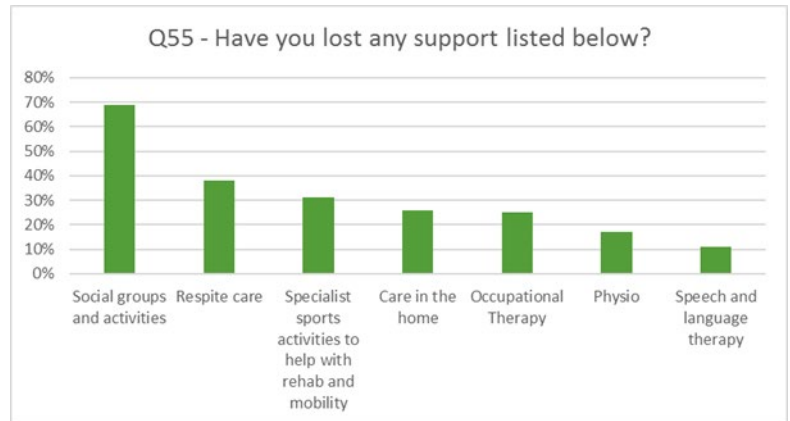


4. Provisions & Support for Children with EHCPs during Lockdown

Whilst Lockdown has presented challenges for all families, those with children with EHCPs have been frustrated by a lack of support from Local Authorities.

44% of parents who have children with an EHCP have struggled to get support from their Local Authority during lockdown and 55% have seen a reduction in the support for their family.

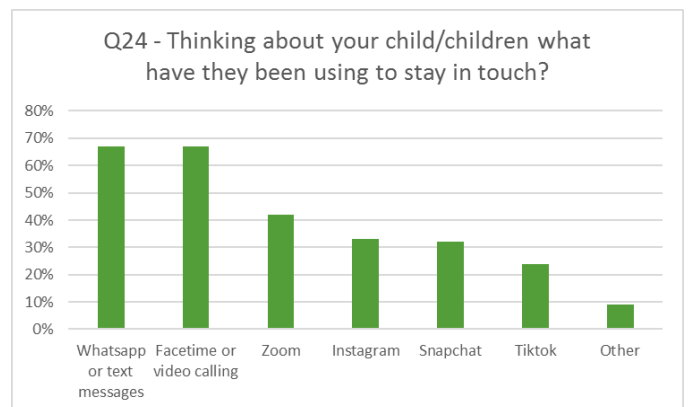
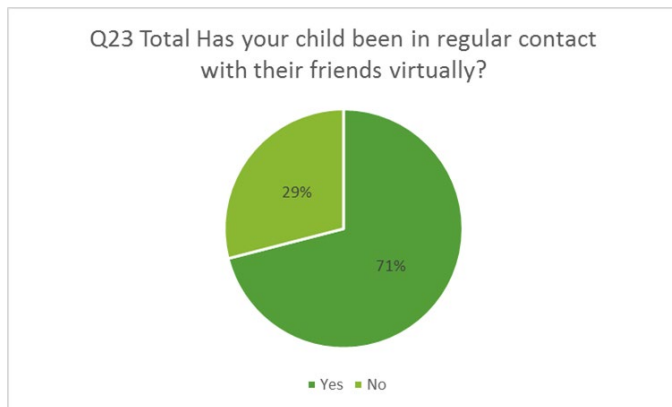
The key issues have been around social groups and activities, respite care and specialised sports activities which have been withdrawn or limited because of the restrictions in place to stop the spread of Covid-19.



5. Social Impact of Lockdown

5.1. Friendships during Lockdown

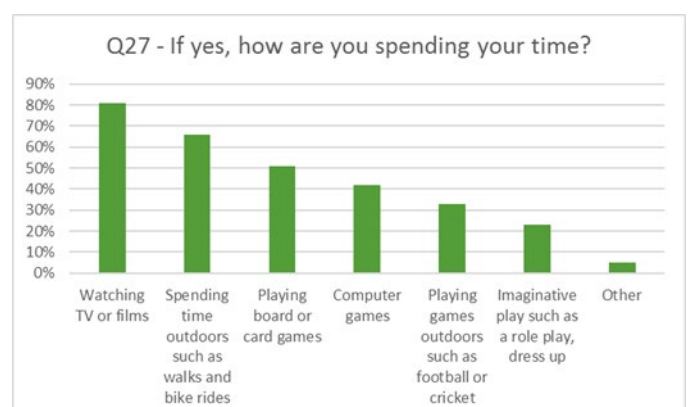
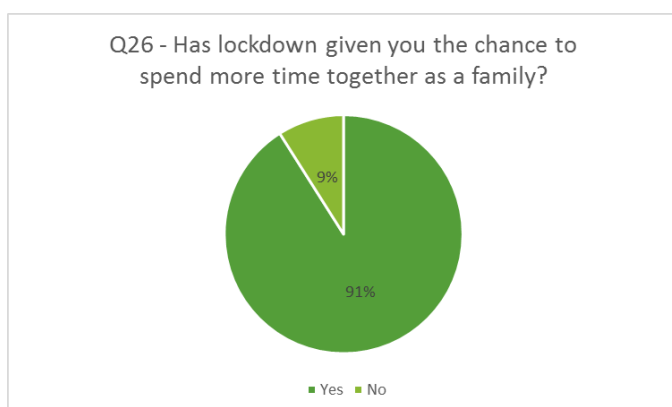
Children have relied on group messaging and video calling to stay connected through the Pandemic, with 71% saying they had been in regular contact with their friends.



5.2. Family Time

There are some positives to come out of Lockdown. The change in pace of lifestyles has allowed families to spend more time together.

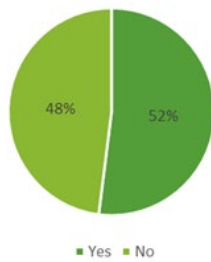
Families have spent more time watching TV & films, but also enjoyed time outdoors on walks and bike rides. Classic family pastimes such as board and card games were also popular.



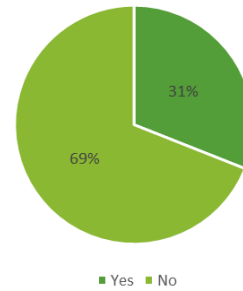
6. The Challenges of Returning to Work

Three quarters of respondents said that childcare would be an issue for them once they went back to work after furlough, with half who were going back to work after saying that their childcare presented s a big issue whilst schools are not fully open and many grandparents and relatives still can't help out.

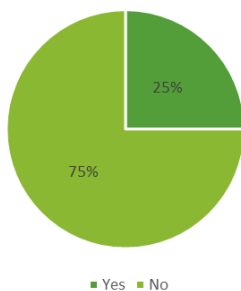
Q35 - Will going back to work have an impact on whether you can continue to look after your children?



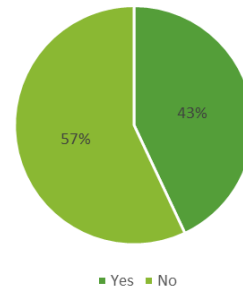
Q36 - Do you have alternative childcare available at the moment?



Q37 - Are you thinking about giving up work or reducing your hours because of childcare issues?



Q38 - Have you spoken to your employer about flexible working?

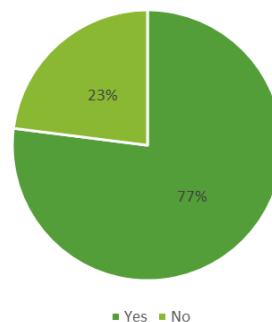


Over half of respondents said that returning to work would impact on whether they could continue to look after their children. 70% said they didn't have alternative childcare available to them.

This led to 25% considering giving up work or reducing their hours so that they could care for their children.

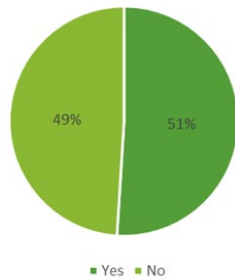
This shows that there is a real need for employers to be more flexible and accommodate working parents as they try to balance childcare and working. 43% had already spoken to employers about flexible working and over three quarters said that they their employers could accommodate some flexibility.

Q39 - Can they accommodate some flexibility?



7. Views on Schools Reopening

Q41 - Do you agree with government plans to send some children back to school from 1st June?



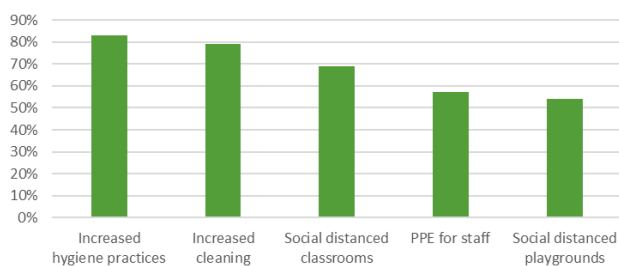
At the time of the survey, the UK Government had just announced the reopening of schools to selected age groups - Nursery, Reception, Years 1 & 2 in addition to the Key Worker children and children with a Care Plan in place.

Views were split with 51% supportive of the schools reopening.

For those who had children returning, around 25% were unclear on the plans to keep their children and teachers safe and only 63% believed that the plans were enough.

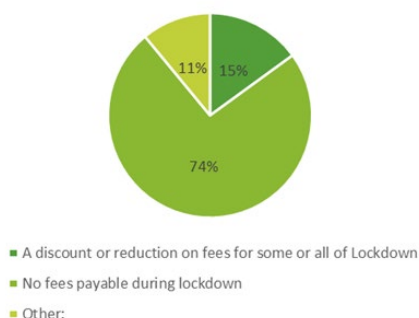
The people surveyed believed that increased cleaning and hygiene practices were the most important to prevent the spread of the virus, although there was still substantial support for social distancing in classrooms and playgrounds as well as PPE provisions for staff

Q45 - What do you think are the most important things for the school to have in place to protect children and teachers?



8. Childcare & School Fees During Lockdown

Q47 - If no, what have they put in place:



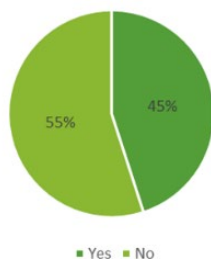
Whilst Private Schools and other private childcare settings remained closed, around 25% of parents said they were still paying 100% of school fees.

Nearly three quarters weren't paying fees at all during Lockdown, whilst 15% were receiving some kind of discount or reduction.

For those that were still making a contribution towards fees, around half felt that it didn't reflect the level of care or education that they'd received in return.

9. Parents Mental Health

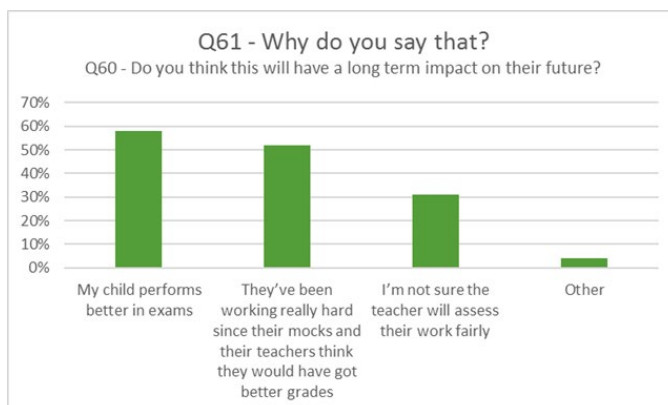
Q53 - Has your mental health been impacted by being at home with your child/children in lockdown?



As parents faced the challenges of home schooling, some balancing working from home and reduced support, nearly half said that their mental health had been impacted by being at home with their children during lockdown.

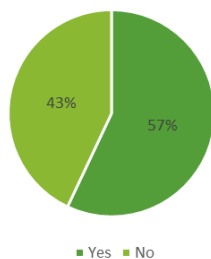
10. The impact of Covid-19 on Children who were due to sit GCSEs & A-Levels in Summer 2020

There appears to be ongoing confusion and a need for clearer information on how children will be graded for their GCSEs and A-Levels during Lockdown. Over a quarter of respondents with children due to sit exams this summer said they were unclear on how grading would work. A third were also concerned that their child(ren) would be graded fairly. 70% of parents believed that the outcomes would have a long term impact on their children's future as they believed that their results would have been better if they'd sat their exams.



11. Apprenticeships

Q62 - Has your young person not been able to finish their apprenticeship because they can't complete the work based part?



Young people on Apprenticeships have been unable to complete the work based part of their course, which means they can't complete their apprenticeship.

81% of parents believe that this will impact their ability to get a job in the longer term.

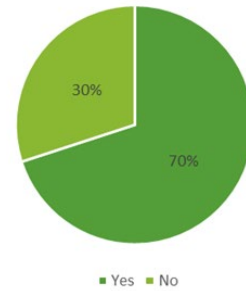
12. Vaccinations

Support for a compulsory Covid-19 vaccination was high at the time of the survey.

From a base where 84% of parents said that their children had received all recommended vaccinations and 81% of them believed that the MMR vaccination should be compulsory.

70% of parents believed that if a Covid-19 vaccination become available, it also should be made compulsory.

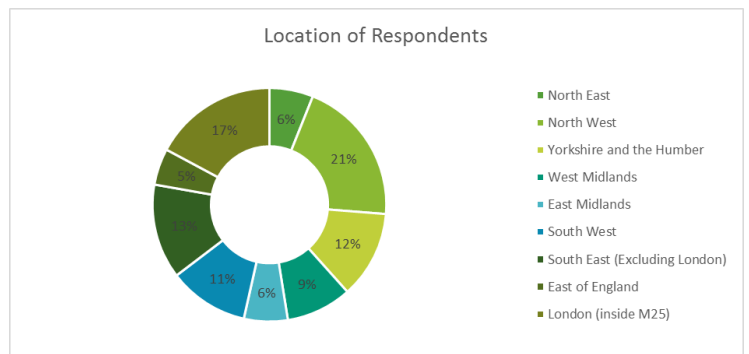
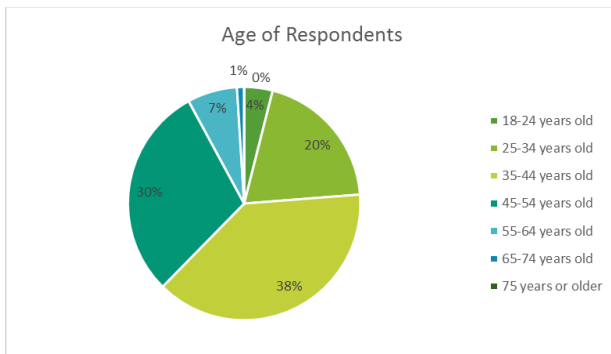
Q66 - Do you think that any future Covid-19 vaccine should be compulsory for children?



13. Appendix

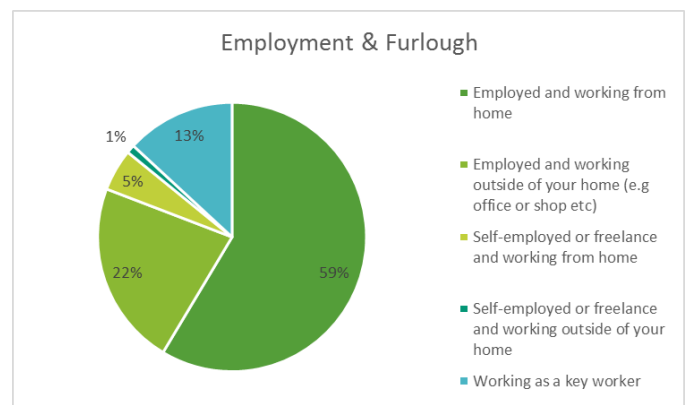
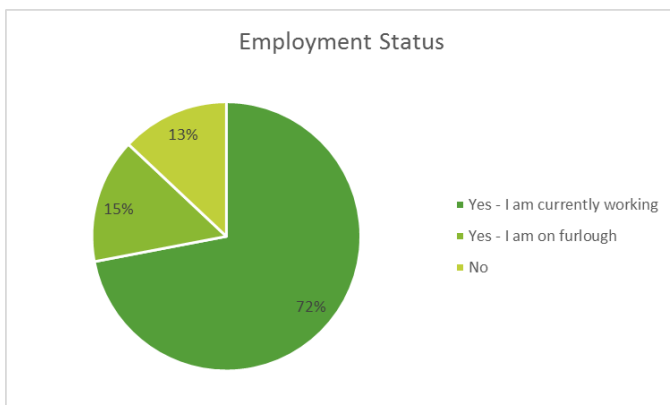
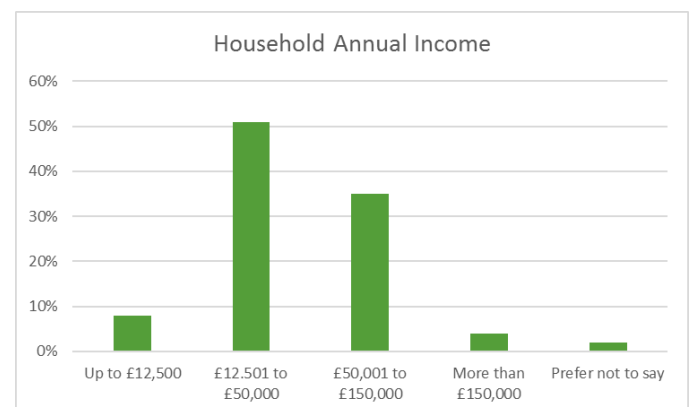
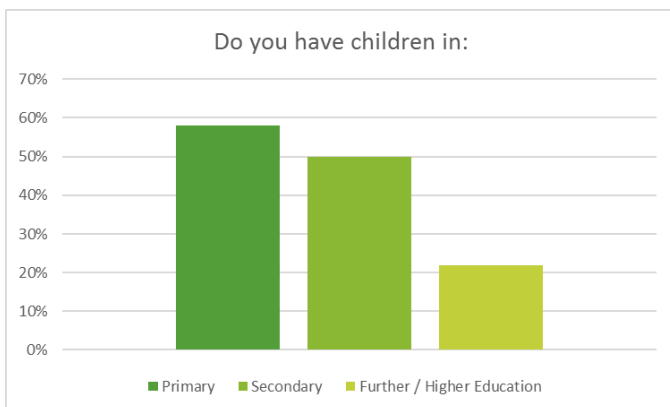
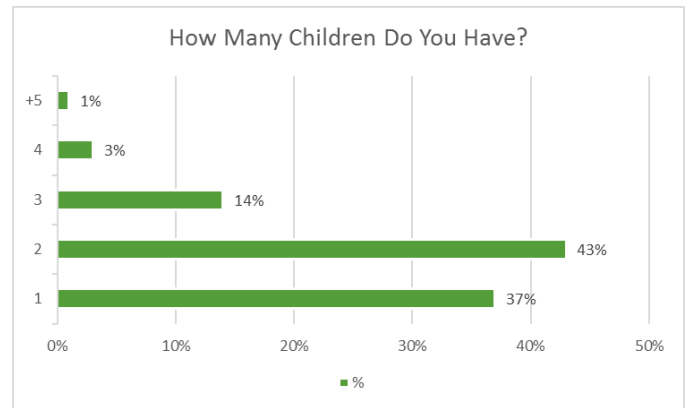
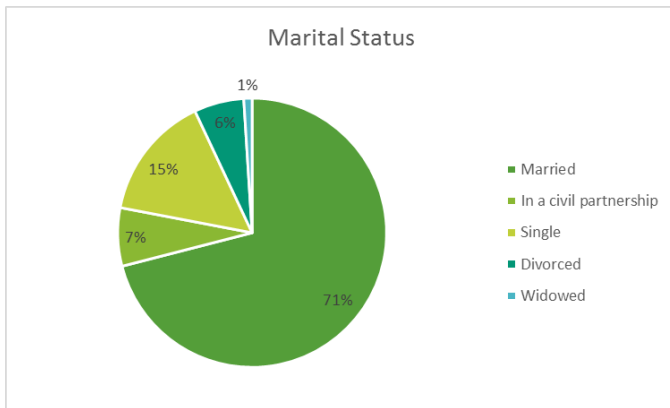
13.1. Overview of Respondents

13.1.1. Demographic Information



Ethnic Origin	#	%
British / English / Welsh / Northern Irish / Scottish	772	77.0%
Any other white background	46	5.0%
Irish	11	1.0%
Pakistani	33	3.0%
Indian	29	3.0%
Bangladeshi	11	1.0%
Any other Asian background	18	2.0%
African	28	3.0%
Caribbean	12	1.0%
White and black Caribbean	8	1.0%
Any other black background	6	1.0%
Arab	4	0.0%
Any other mixed / multi ethnic background	11	1.0%
Any other ethnic group	5	0.0%
Prefer not to say	7	1.0%

13.1.2. Lifestyle Information





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