



Understanding  
Society

# COVID-19 Survey

## BRIEFING NOTE

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### FAMILIES BEYOND HOUSEHOLDS

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# The *Understanding Society* COVID-19 study is a monthly survey on the experiences and reactions of the UK population to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey is an integral part of *Understanding Society*: the UK Household Longitudinal Study. Researchers can link the data from the COVID-19 survey to answers respondents have given in previous (and future) waves of the annual *Understanding Society* survey.

The survey is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Health Foundation.

## Fieldwork

The COVID-19 survey is an online questionnaire.

From April 2020 participants from our main *Understanding Society* sample have been asked to complete a short web-survey. This survey covers the changing impact of the pandemic on the welfare of UK individuals, families and wider communities.

Participants complete a regular survey, which includes core content designed to track changes, alongside variable content adapted each month as the coronavirus situation develops. For participants who do not use the internet, there is a telephone version of the questionnaire in some of the months.

# The sample

All *Understanding Society* adult sample members aged 16+ invited to participate in Wave 1 of the web survey were invited to participate in subsequent waves.

For more information on the design, fieldwork and using the COVID-19 survey data please see the [User Guide](#).

## Access the data

The COVID-19 survey data is available to researchers via the UK Data Service, Study Number 8644. University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research. (2020). *Understanding Society: COVID-19 Study*, 2020. [data collection]. 3rd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8644, 10.5255/UKDA-SN-8644-3.

## Cite this briefing note

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# Survey content

The 20 minute questionnaire includes core content repeated monthly to track changes through the pandemic, as well as rotating content. In Waves 1 – 4 the survey carried questions on:

- Coronavirus symptoms and test results
- Management of long-term health conditions
- Housing
- Caring responsibilities
- Loneliness
- Employment, training and looking for work
- Financial situation
- Partnership changes and ‘living apart together’
- Division of domestic labour
- Relationships within the household
- Life satisfaction
- Mental wellbeing
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Diet and food security
- Home schooling
- Special educational needs (age 5–17)
- Food and alcohol consumption
- Exercise and smoking
- Travel to work
- Contact with family and friends outside the household
- Contact with grandchildren
- Transport use
- Neighbourhood cohesion
- Religion
- Volunteering
- Mental health for children over 5 years

Core content is repeated to track changes through the outbreak and rotating content is added on new topics reflecting the changing social, economic and policy context, as well as question proposals from researchers.

# Families beyond households

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# Data

On 23rd March 2020, the Prime Minister announced the UK 'Staying at home and away from others' policy, such that people could only leave home ' for a small number of purposes (shopping for basic necessities, one form of exercise a day, any medical need, to provide care or help for a vulnerable person, traveling to and from work where absolutely necessary). ... To ensure compliance, measures also include (a) closing all shops selling non-essential goods, (b) stopping all gatherings of more than two in public, excluding people from same household, (c) stopping all social events'.<sup>1</sup> This policy stayed in force for six weeks, and then began to be relaxed. On May 13th, people were told they could do 'unlimited exercise', on June 1st some school pupils returned to school, outdoor markets opened and support bubbles were announced for single adult households; in mid-June non-essential shops opened, people could meet outdoors in groups of six, drive-through outdoor attractions opened and people could attend places of worship for individual prayer. The major change in opening up society again came on 4th July, when the hospitality sector opened, two households could meet and stay overnight in same place, leisure and tourist industries opened as did hairdressers but 'close proximity venues' , such as gyms and spas, remained closed until the end of the month.<sup>2</sup>

The data in this briefing were collected at different points in time. Information on couples who live apart together (LATs) were collected at the end of May, so such couples may have benefited from the single adult household support bubbles. Data on contact with friends and family, between grandparents and grandchildren and within non-residential co-parents were collected at the end of June when some outdoor contact with other households (up to a maximum of six) was possible. Although it should be noted that from the start of 'lockdown' the Government made clear that 'Where parents or someone with parental responsibility do not live in the same household, children under 18 can be moved between their parents' homes to continue existing arrangements for access and contact'.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020>

2 <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/covid-19-policy-tracker>



The section on couples living apart together use the May COVID-19 data and LAT and education level data from Wave 9.

Keyworkers were identified from those respondents currently in paid work or self-employment who answered that they were working in one of eight key work sectors.

Furloughed workers were identified from those respondents currently in paid work or self-employment who answered that they had received written confirmation of being furloughed in the survey month or in any previous survey months.

Respondents working from home were identified from those respondents currently in paid work or self-employment who answered that they were able to work from home at least some of the time.



## Non-resident parents

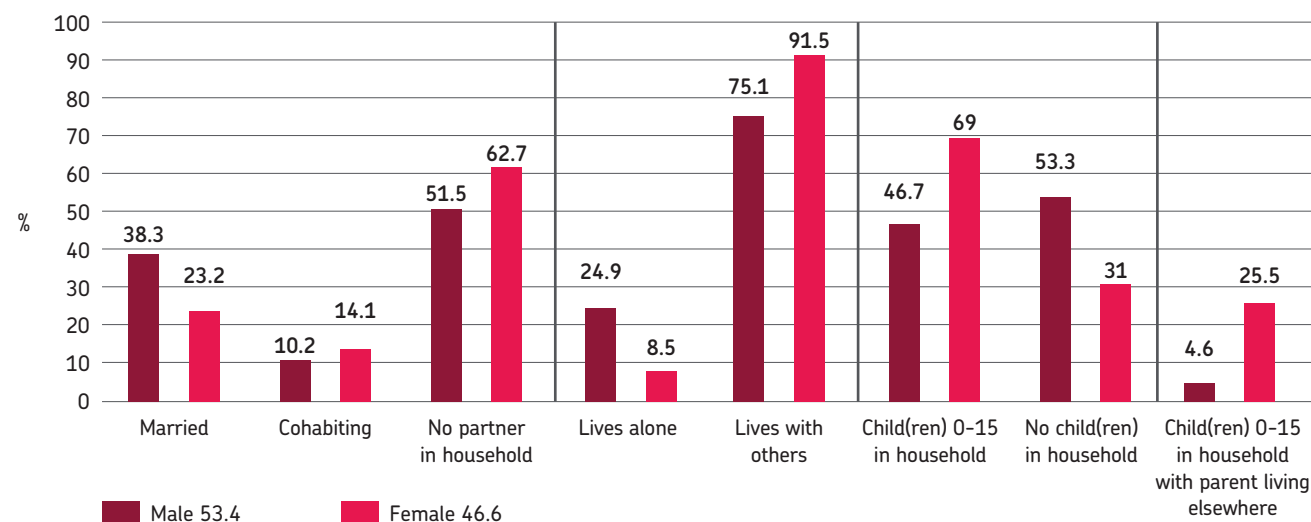
As noted above, during lockdown non resident parents were allowed to maintain contact, including overnight stays with their children. In this section we investigate the extent to which such contact continued in same manner as before lockdown or changed.

These questions were fielded to two groups: parents with children living elsewhere with another parent or guardian and parents with children in the household who had another parent or guardian living elsewhere. While there may be some overlap between cases, the two groups are reported distinctly for clarity.

## Parents with children living elsewhere

In June 2020, 338 respondents were non resident parents to children aged 0-15 years living elsewhere. Of non-resident parents whose children live elsewhere, 82% (n.277) live with others.

**Figure 1: Percent of non-resident fathers and mothers with children 0-15 living elsewhere\* with different household circumstances**



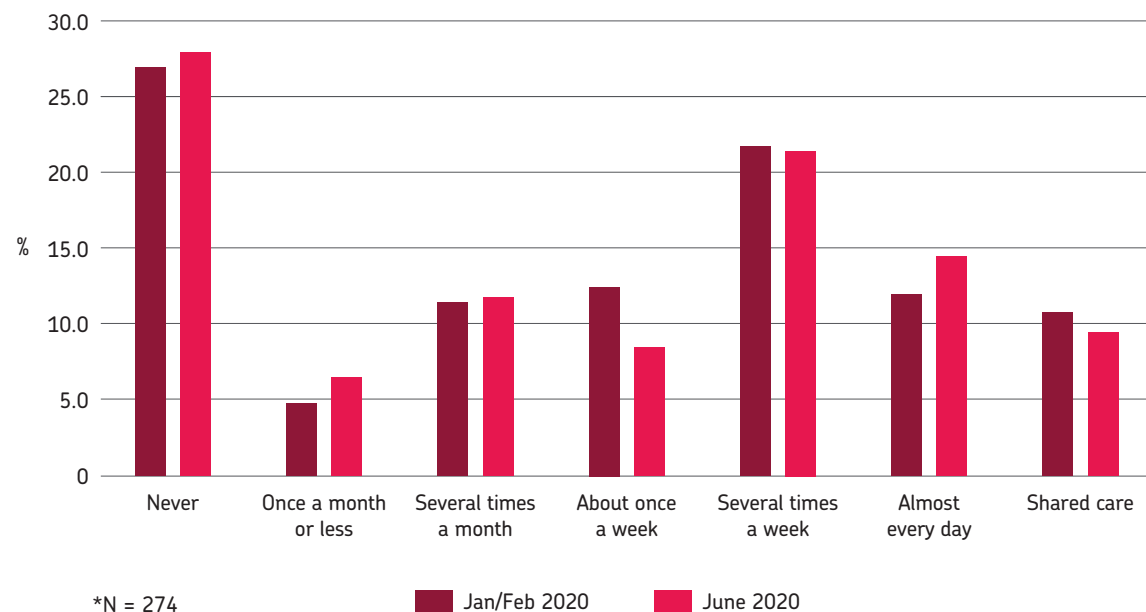
\*N = 338

- Figure 1 shows that non-resident fathers with children living elsewhere were more likely to be living alone compared to non-resident mothers.
- Figure 1 also shows that non-resident mothers were more likely than fathers to have a child aged 0-15 in their household as well as a child living elsewhere, and also much more likely to have a child in their household with a parent living elsewhere compared with non-resident fathers.

## Contact during lockdown

Overall parents with children living elsewhere reported a similar visiting pattern before and during lockdown

**Figure 2: Percent of non-resident parents with children living elsewhere\* and how often they saw their children aged 0-15 years before and during lockdown**



- During lockdown 44.4% [n.118] reported seeing their non-resident children as frequently as before lockdown.

**Table 1: Percent change in non-resident parent contact frequency with children living elsewhere\* during lockdown**

How does contact frequency during lockdown compare to before the pandemic?					
	N	See less often %	See same as before %	See more often %	Did not see before or during %
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	21.8	44.4	14.2	19.6
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	170	24.7	56.5	10.0	8.8
Women	96	16.7	22.9	21.9	38.5
<b>Age Group</b>					
16-29	42	14.3	50.0	31.0	4.8
30-39	109	17.4	51.4	5.5	25.7
40-49	74	23.0	33.8	18.9	24.3
50-59	23	30.4	34.8	13.0	21.7
60-69	17**	52.9	35.3	11.8	-
70+	2**	-	100	-	-
<b>Key Worker</b>					
No	87	13.8	59.8	10.3	16.1
Yes	117	23.1	46.2	8.5	22.2
<b>Work from home</b>					
No	149	18.8	51.7	5.4	24.2
Yes	57	21.1	50.9	19.3	8.8
<b>Furloughed</b>					
No	207	23.2	40.1	16.4	20.3
Yes	59	15.3	61.0	6.8	16.9

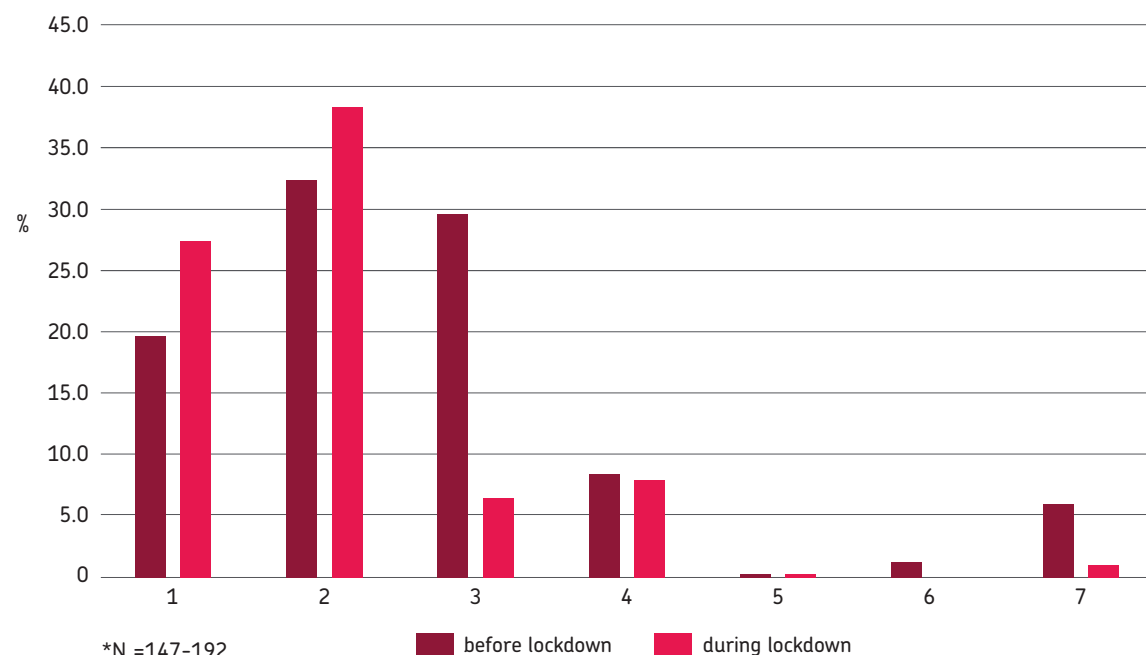
\*N=206-266 \*\* small sample numbers

- Table 1 summarises the difference in the frequency of contact non-resident parents reported having with their children living elsewhere between January and June 2020.
- It shows that 14.2% [n.38] of parents with children living elsewhere reported seeing their child(ren) more often and 21.8% [n.58] reported seeing them less or no longer.
- 9.1% [n.24] did not see their child(ren) during lockdown when they previously did.
- Table 1 shows that during lockdown, non-resident mothers were more likely than fathers to see their children living elsewhere more often than they did before lockdown, whereas non-resident fathers were much more likely than mothers to continue with the same contact pattern as before lockdown.
- Table 1 also shows that keyworkers were less likely to see their children living elsewhere during lockdown than before compared to non-keyworkers.
- Those who could work from home were more likely to see their children living elsewhere more often during lockdown compared to those who could not work from home.
- Those who had been furloughed were more likely to say that contact continued as it did before the pandemic than those who were not furloughed.

## Overnight stays with non-resident parents

Respondents were asked whether before lockdown their children stayed with them at weekends or school holidays on a regular basis, irregular basis or not at all. 67% (n.138) of parents with children living elsewhere said they had them stay overnight regularly, 9.3% irregularly and 23.7% not at all.

**Figure 3: Percent of non-resident parents reporting overnight stays per week\* from children living elsewhere before and during lockdown**



- Before lockdown, 147 parents reported having their child(ren) for overnight stays. During lockdown, 192 reported overnight stays.
- Figure 3 shows that during lockdown, one and two overnight stays per week were more common than before lockdown and 3 overnight stays per week less common.

**Table 2: Percent of non-resident parents reporting a change in the average number of overnight stays per week with child living elsewhere\* during lockdown**

How do overnight stays during lockdown compare to before the pandemic?					
	N	Stopped completely %	Reduced %	Same as before %	Increased %
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	10.0	40.9	37.7	11.4
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	112	11.6	33.0	44.6	10.7
Women	25**	4.0	64.0	16.0	16.0
<b>Key Worker</b>					
No	64	7.8	23.4	60.9	7.8
Yes	63	12.7	58.7	17.5	11.1
<b>Work from home</b>					
No	88	9.1	36.4	45.5	9.1
Yes	39	12.8	51.3	25.6	10.3
<b>Furloughed</b>					
No	96	12.5	44.8	29.2	13.5
Yes	41	2.4	31.7	58.5	7.3

\*N = 138 \*\* small sample numbers

- Table 2 summarises the difference in the average number of overnight stays between January and June 2020. Half of non-resident parents (50.9%) who previously had their child stay overnight reported a reduction in overnight stays per week during lockdown; 10% of whom said overnight stays stopped completely.
- It also shows that 37.7% reported no change and 11.4% reported an increase in the number of overnight stays on average per week.
- Table 2 shows that keyworkers were much more likely to report a reduction in overnight stays compared with non-keyworkers who were more likely to continue overnight stays as before lockdown.
- Non-resident parents who were furloughed were much less likely to report a reduction in overnight stays during lockdown compared with those who were not furloughed.

## Change in relationship since the pandemic

82.9% [n.220] of non-resident parents reported that their relationship with their child outside the household was the same as before lockdown. 14% [n.37] said it was better and 3.1% [n.8] said it was worse.

Those that said their relationship had improved during lockdown were much more likely to live close to their children (less than an hour away) compared to those who reported that their relationship had not changed or had become worse.

## Child support payments and contact

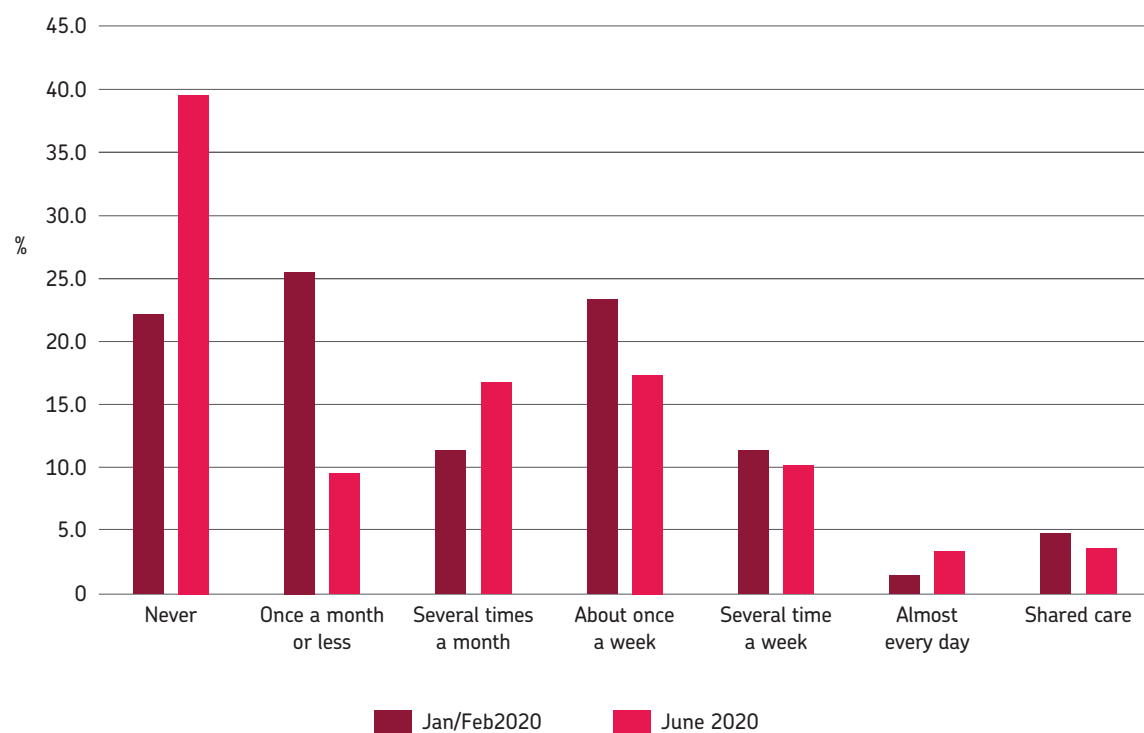
The vast majority of non-resident parents said that lockdown did not affect the amount of child support they paid; 80.3% [n.123] said they paid about the same as in January and February 2020.



## Co-Parents living elsewhere

In May, 309 respondents said they had children aged 0-15 in the household with a parent living elsewhere, this paper reports findings for this group.

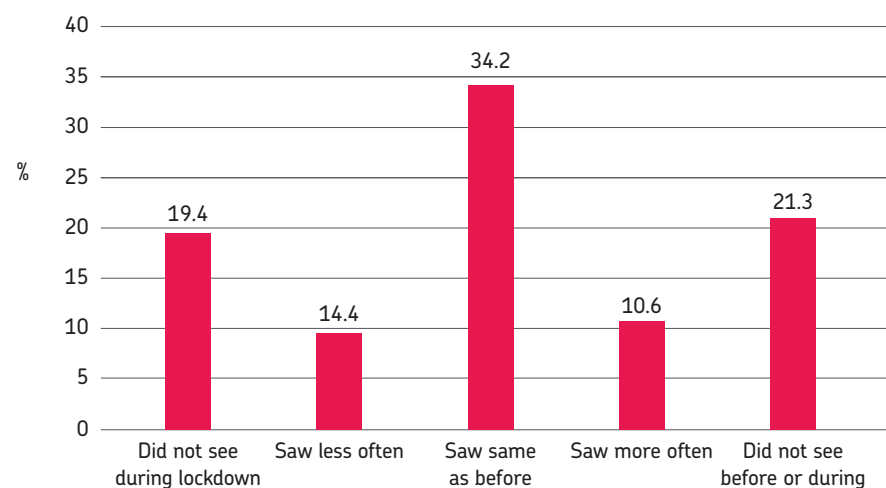
**Figure 4: Percent of resident parents\* reporting contact between their child and co-parent living elsewhere before and during lockdown**



\*N =307

- Figure 4 shows the frequency of contact co-parents living elsewhere had with their children before and during lockdown, as reported by resident parents.
- A greater number of resident parent respondents reported that their children did not see their non-resident co-parent in June 2020 compared with non-resident parent respondents reported above.

**Figure 5: Percent of resident parents reporting a change in contact frequency for their children with co-parents living elsewhere\* during lockdown**



\*N =298

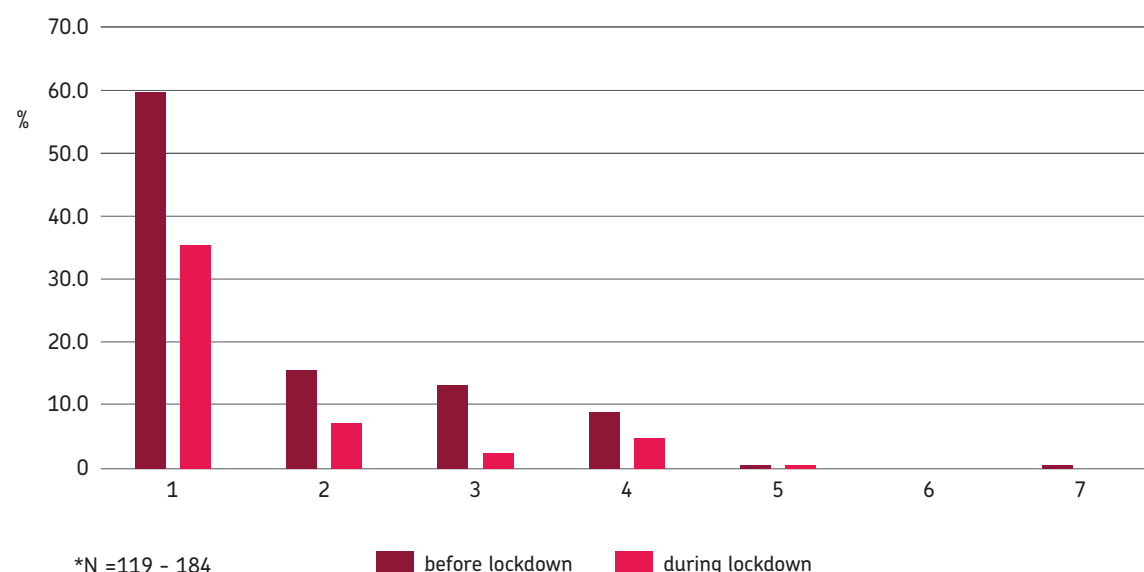
- Figure 5 summarises the difference in the frequency of contact resident parents reported that co-parents had with their children living elsewhere between January and June 2020.
- Figure 5 shows that 34.2% [n.102] reported no change in the frequency of contact between their child and non-resident co-parent compared to before lockdown. Of those who reported a change, 10.6% reported seeing more often [n.32], 33.8% [n.101] reported seeing less; 19.4% [n.58] of which said they did not see at all.

## Overnight stays with non-resident co-parents

Respondents were asked whether before lockdown their children stayed with their parent living elsewhere at weekends or school holidays on a regular basis, irregular basis or not at all.

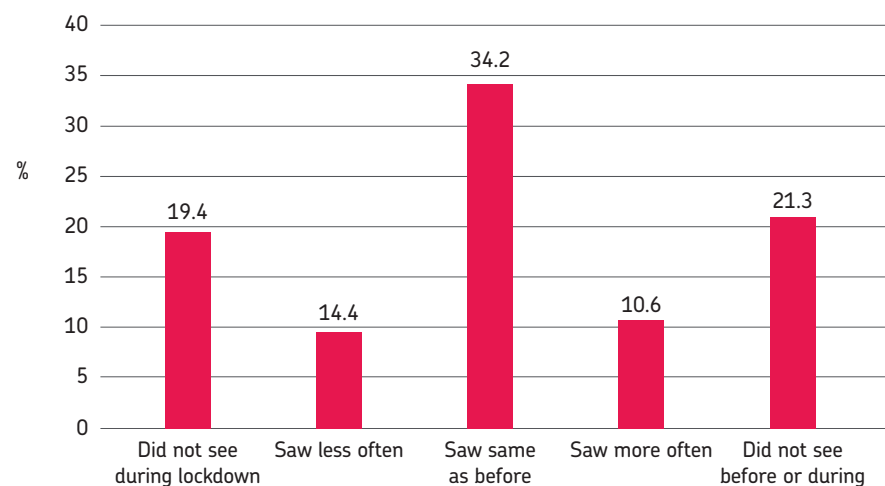
Figure 6 shows the frequency of overnight stays per week before and during lockdown; with overnight stays overall less frequent during lockdown.

**Figure 6: Percent of parents\* reporting overnight stays per week for their children with co-parents living elsewhere before and during lockdown**



- Before lockdown, 123 resident parents reported their child(ren) having overnight stays with their parent living elsewhere. During lockdown, 184 reported overnight stays.
- Before lockdown, 43% (n.103) of parents reported that their child(ren) stayed overnight with their non-resident co-parents regularly, 18.7% (n.45) irregularly and 38.3% (n.92) not at all.

**Figure 7: Percent of resident parents\* who reported a change in their child's overnight stays with their co-parent living elsewhere during lockdown**



\*N =138

- Figure 7 summarises the difference in the average number of overnight stays with parents living elsewhere between January and June 2020. 38.2% respondents reported that their children stayed overnight less or not at all with their non-resident co-parent during lockdown; with 15.2% saying there were no overnight stays.
- Figure 7 shows that 54.6% of parents reported that overnight stays remained constant during lockdown and 7.2% reported an increase in the number of nights per week compared to before lockdown.

## Change in relationship

Nearly three-quarters of resident parents reported that their child's relationship with their non-resident co-parent was the same during lockdown; 11.6% [n.38] said it was worse than before and 3% better than before [n.10]. This is different to that reported above for non-resident parents asked about the quality of their relationship with children living elsewhere, where only 3.1% [n.8] reported that the relationship has worsened and 14% [n.37] said it improved and may reflect different perspectives and different relationships.

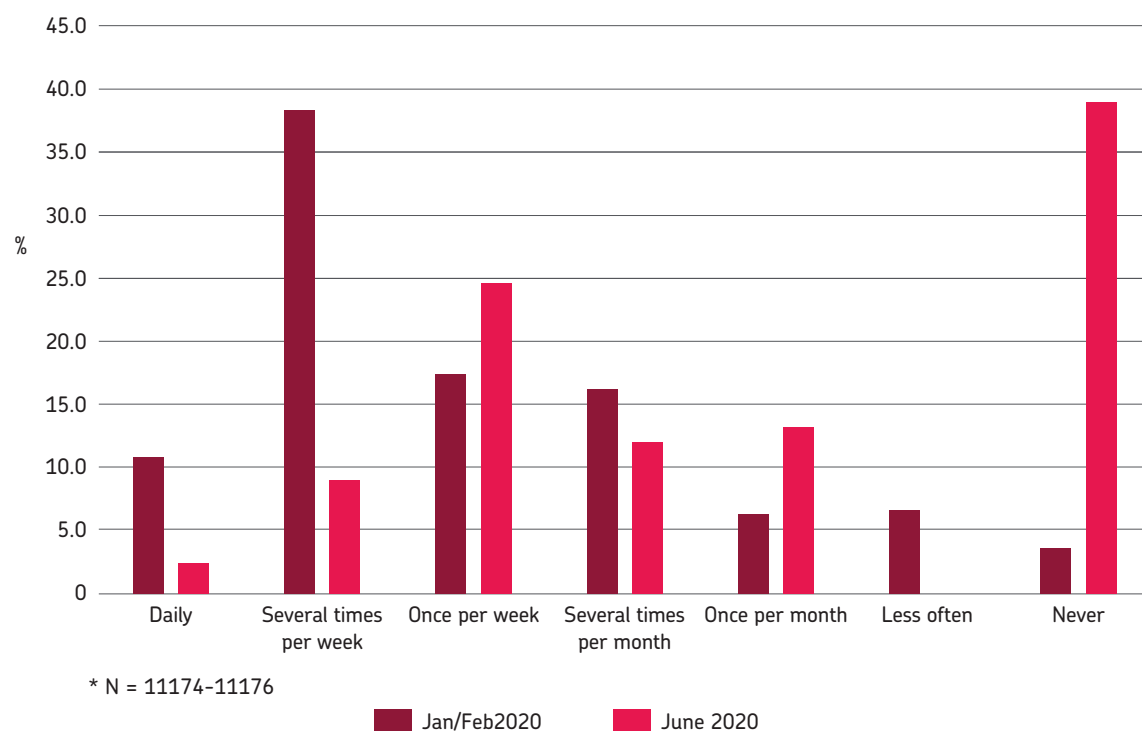
## Child support

The vast majority of resident parents said that lockdown had not affected the amount of child support they received from their child's non-resident co-parent; 82.9% [n.179] said they received about the same as in January and February 2020 and 11.1% [n.24] said they received less.

# Contact with family and friends outside of the household

In January/February 2020, 96% (n.10,731) of respondents were having some form of face to face contact with friends and family living outside of the household. In June 2020 this dropped to 64% (n.7150).

**Figure 8: Percent of respondents\* meeting in person with friends and family outside of the household in January/February compared with June 2020**



- Figure 8 shows that 39% (n.4358) of respondents did not see any friends or family outside of their household in June 2020.
- It also shows that during lockdown, almost a quarter of people (24.4% n.2728) reported having weekly contact and there was a significant drop in contact more than once a week compared with January/February 2020.
- Figure 8 shows that 2.3% (n.262) reported having daily contact with non-household family and friends in June 2020. Of those, 58.2% (n.152) reported that contact continued as it was in January/February, while 41.2% (108) said contact was more frequent during lockdown.

**Table 3: Percent of respondents with different characteristics\* and change in frequency of meeting in person with friends and family outside of the household before and during lockdown**

	N*	Did not see in May/June %	See less often %	See the same as before %	See more %	Did not see before or during lockdown %
<b>Total</b>	11158	35.9	36.2	16.4	8.5	3.0
<b>Gender</b>						
Men	5204	37.1	33.4	16.7	9.3	3.6
Women	5927	35.0	38.5	16.2	7.8	2.5
<b>Age Group</b>						
16-29	1886	30.4	41.7	13.9	10.1	3.9
30-39	1573	32.9	39.4	15.7	7.8	4.2
40-49	1768	36.0	36.5	16.5	7.6	3.3
50-59	2174	39.9	34.2	15.4	8.3	2.2
60-69	1832	40.7	32.9	15.8	7.2	3.4
70+	1924	34.7	33.3	20.7	9.8	1.5
<b>Country</b>						
England	9454	35.2	36.5	16.5	8.7	3.0
Wales	534	39.1	28.8	21.0	9.4	1.7
Scotland	900	40.7	38.1	12.0	5.8	3.4
Northern Ireland	271	37.4	34.1	16.3	8.9	3.7

- Table 3 summarises the difference in the frequency of contact respondents reported having with families and friends outside the household between January and June 2020.



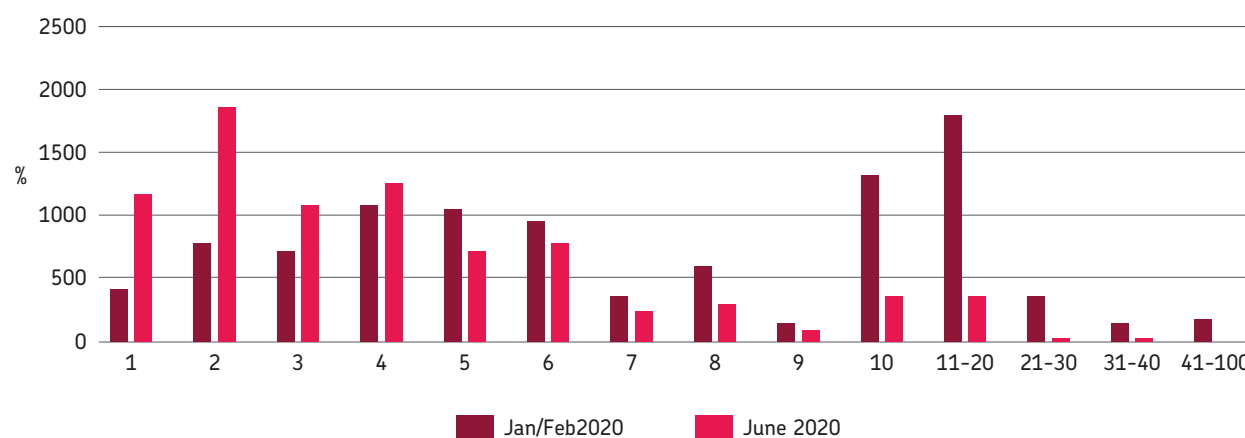
**Table 3: Percent of respondents with different characteristics\* and change in frequency of meeting in person with friends and family outside of the household before and during lockdown**

<b>Live alone</b>						
No	9651	36.2	36.7	15.7	9.0	2.4
Yes	1841	34.5	33.5	20.0	9.4	2.6
<b>Marital status</b>						
Married	5837	38.0	35.2	16.3	8.7	1.9
Cohabiting	1278	33.4	38.1	19.0	7.4	2.0
No partner in household	4380	33.9	37	15.8	10.1	3.3
<b>Children in household</b>						
No	6991	34.3	36.5	16.8	9.2	3.2
Yes	4167	38.6	35.6	15.7	7.3	2.7
<b>Household member shielding</b>						
No	8651	35.5	37.5	15.6	8.4	3.0
Yes	980	42.3	30.1	16.6	9.1	1.9
<b>Key Worker</b>						
No	3583	34.2	38.2	17.5	7.9	2.2
Yes	3128	35.1	38.1	15.5	8.4	2.9
<b>Furloughed</b>						
No	9752	37.0	36.1	15.7	8.1	3.1
Yes	1744	30.1	36.4	20.0	10.8	2.7

\* N = sample size differs by question but ranges from 6711-11158

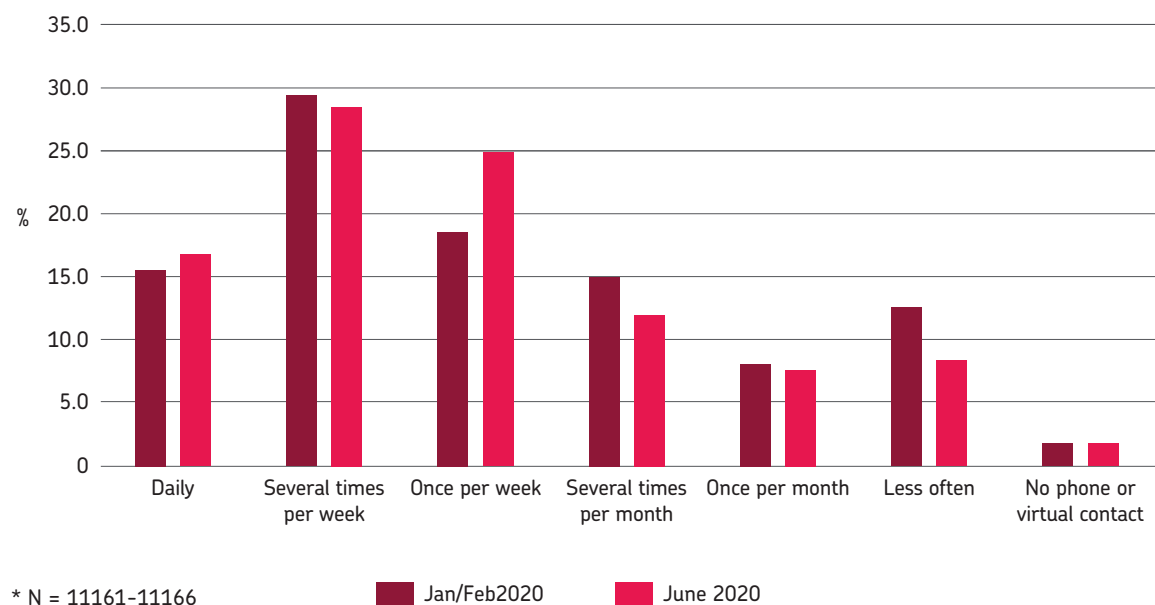
- Those who live alone were more likely to see family and friends in person during lockdown as before compared to those who live with others.
- Table 3 also shows that those with children in the household were less likely to see family and friends outside of the household at all in June compared to those without children.
- More people who had a household member shielding did not see family and friends at all in June compared to those not shielding.
- Those furloughed were slightly more likely to see family and friends in person in June than those who were not.
- It also shows that those without a partner in the household saw family and friends outside of the household in person more during lockdown than those living with a partner.

**Figure 9: Number of different friends and family members\* respondents deliberately met up with before and during lockdown**



- Figure 9 shows that overall those who were meeting families and friends living outside of the household met with fewer people during lockdown than in January and February.
- During lockdown, deliberately meeting with 1-4 friends and family members was more common than in January and February and deliberately meeting with 5+ was much less common, with very few meeting with more than 20.
- On average, in January and February respondents deliberately met with approximately 10 family and friends (range 1-100), during lockdown this dropped to an average of approximately 4 (range 1-40).
- Interestingly, 5.7% (n.656) of respondents reported bumping into families and friends not living with them during lockdown but not doing so deliberately. During January/February this figure was 3.7% (n.429).

**Figure 10: Frequency of phone or virtual contact with friends and family outside of the household before and during lockdown**



- Figure 10 shows that there was an increase in weekly phone or virtual contact during lockdown, from less frequent, compared with before lockdown.
- Otherwise, phone and virtual contact appears to have remained relatively consistent before and during lockdown.

**Table 4: Percent of respondents with different characteristics\* who reported receiving emotional support from friends and family outside of the household in June 2020**

	N	More %	About the same %	Less %
<b>Total</b>		13.5	72.3	14.3
<b>Gender</b>				
Men	5209	10.7	77.2	12.1
Women	5911	15.9	67.9	16.2
<b>Age Group</b>				
16-29	1891	14.5	70.8	14.7
30-39	1576	13.1	72.0	15.0
40-49	1770	12.1	70.9	16.9
50-59	2175	11.6	72.9	15.4
60-69	1814	12.2	73.6	14.2
70+	1919	17.2	73.4	9.4
<b>Country</b>				
England	9441	13.3	72.4	14.2
Wales	537	16.6	72.4	11.0
Scotland	896	12.7	71.1	16.2
Northern Ireland	270	13.3	71.5	15.2

- Table 4 shows that women were more likely to report having both more and less emotional support than men during lockdown.
- It also shows that respondents aged 70+ were more likely than other age groups to say that they got more emotional support whereas those aged 40-49 were slightly more likely to say that they got less emotional support.

**Table 4: Percent of respondents with different characteristics\* who reported receiving emotional support from friends and family outside of the household in June 2020**

<b>Live alone</b>				
No	1806	12.3	73.8	14.0
Yes	9339	19.7	64.7	15.7
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	5700	12.0	74.6	13.4
Cohabiting	1238	12.9	74.6	12.5
No partner in hh	4206	15.6	68.5	16.0
<b>Household member shielding</b>				
No	8368	12.0	73.9	14.0
Yes	959	14.4	71.9	13.7
<b>Key Worker</b>				
No	3544	12.9	74.8	12.4
Yes	3088	12.3	73.1	14.5
<b>Furloughed</b>				
No	9445	13.5	71.9	14.6
Yes	1700	13.2	74.5	12.3
<b>Lonely</b>				
Never	6619	10.9	79.4	9.7
Sometimes to often	4525	17.2	61.9	20.9

\* N = sample size differs by question but ranges from 6632-11153

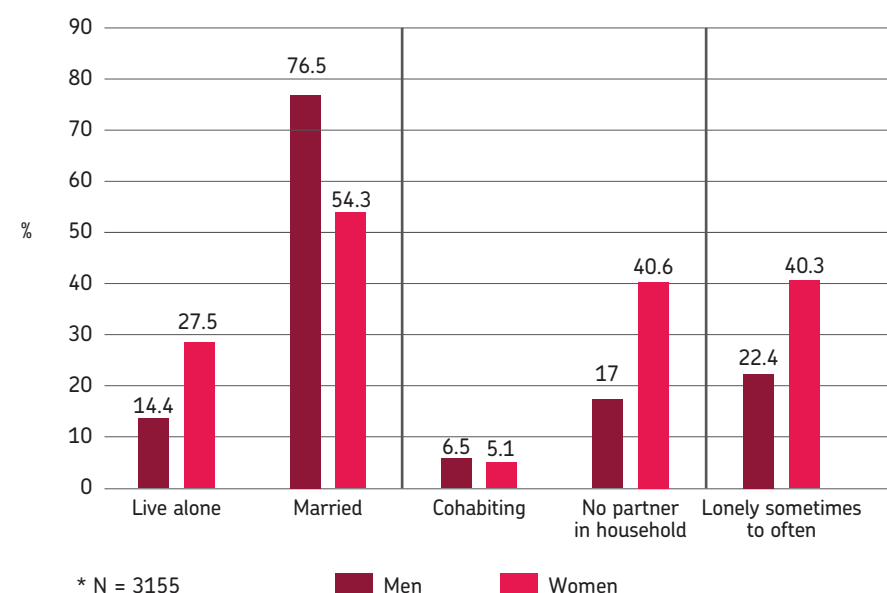
- Table 4 shows that those who live alone were more likely to report an increase in emotional support from outside the household compared to those who live with others.
- Table 4 shows that those who reported feeling lonely some or all of the time reported receiving both more and less emotional support during lockdown than those who were never lonely.
- It also shows that those without a partner in the household also reported receiving more and less emotional support from those outside the household than those living with a partner.
- Those who previously received emotional support from friends and family outside of the household were more likely to report an increase in emotional support during lockdown. In contrast, those who previously reported getting little to no emotional support were more likely to say this remained unchanged during lockdown.

# Grandparents contact with grandchildren

In June there were 3,198 grandparents in the sample. 97% have only grandchildren living elsewhere, 1.3% only grandchildren living with them and 3% (n.97) have both grandchildren living with them and elsewhere.

This paper reports findings for those respondents who have at least one grandchild not living with them.

**Figure 11: Percent of grandfathers and grandmothers\* with different circumstances who have grandchildren living elsewhere**

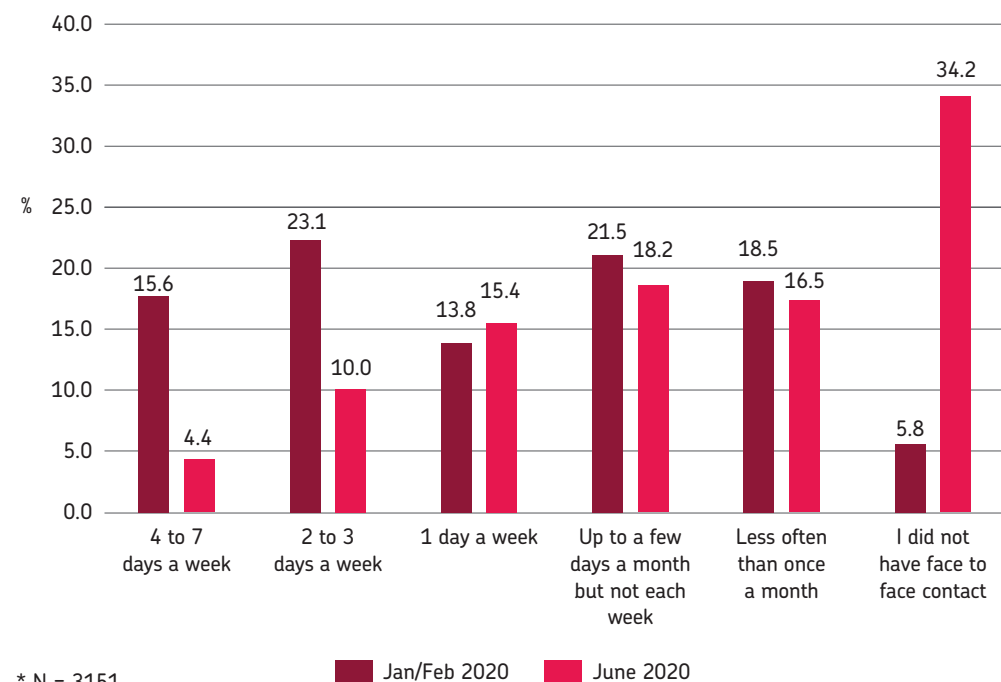


- Figure 11 shows that grandmothers are more likely to be living alone, without a partner in the household, compared with grandfathers. Grandmothers were also more likely than grandfathers to report feeling lonely sometimes to often during lockdown.
- 9.5% (n.301) of grandparents said that someone in their household was identified as at high risk and in need of shielding; over half of these grandparents (54.2% n.163) were aged 70+ and a further quarter (25.6% n.77) were aged 60-69.

## Impact on face-to-face contact

In June 2020 65.8% (n.2034) of grandparents still had some face-to-face contact with their grandchildren.

**Figure 12: Percent of grandparents\* having face-to-face contact with their grandchildren living outside the household before and during lockdown**



- Figure 12 shows the frequency of contact pre and post lockdown; 34.2% (n.1078) of grandparents did not have any face to face contact with their grandchildren during lockdown.
- Weekly contact was slightly higher during lockdown compared to January and February, with contact more than once a week being much less common during lockdown.



**Table 5: Percent of grandparents with different characteristics\* and change in frequency of face-to-face contact with their grandchildren before and during lockdown**

Has face to face contact with grandchildren changed since the stay at home policy?						
	N	Did not see in May/June %	See less often %	See the same as before %	See more %	Did not see before or during lockdown %
<b>Total</b>	2869	30.5	32.5	25.3	6.2	5.4
<b>Gender</b>						
Men	1237	30.2	32.2	26.5	5.7	5.5
Women	1628	30.9	32.8	24.4	6.6	5.3
<b>Age Group</b>						
40-49**	110	31.8	30.0	29.1	2.7	6.4
50-59	534	26.8	43.3	20.0	6.6	3.4
60-69	885	28.1	35.8	24.2	5.8	6.1
70+	1327	33.4	26.4	28.2	6.6	5.4
<b>Country</b>						
England	2429	30.6	31.9	25.5	6.4	5.5
Wales**	146	34.9	37.0	19.2	4.1	4.8
Scotland	239	29.7	35.1	24.7	5.4	5.0
Northern Ireland**	55	21.8	34.5	36.4	5.5	1.8
<b>Household member shielding</b>						
No	1980	29.2	33.9	25.3	6.5	5.1
Yes	252	40.1	28.6	19.8	6.7	4.8
<b>Key Worker</b>						
No	443	29.1	35.2	26.2	4.7	4.7
Yes	403	26.6	40.9	19.9	7.7	5.0
<b>Furloughed</b>						
No	2656	30.6	32.5	25.1	6.3	5.4
Yes	212	29.2	33.0	28.3	4.7	4.7

\*N=differs according to question but ranges from 846-2869 \*\* small sample

- Table 5 summarises the difference in the frequency of contact grandparents reported having with their grandchildren living elsewhere between January / February and June 2020.
- Table 5 shows that a quarter of grandparents (25.3% n.727) had face-to face contact as regularly as before lockdown. 32.5% (n.933) still had face to face contact, but less frequently and 6.2% (n.178) saw their grandchildren face-to-face more often.
- 30.5% (n.876) reported not seeing their grandchildren at all in June 2020, when they previously did in January/February.
- Table 5 shows that those living in a shielding household were less likely to see their grandchildren than those in non-shielding households.
- Those who had been furloughed were slightly more likely to see their grandchildren as before compared to those who had not been furloughed.
- Grandparents aged 50-59 were less likely to see their grandchildren as often compared to other age groups.

## Remote contact

Nearly 90% (n.2735) of grandparents reported having some form of remote contact with their grandchildren, with 48% (n.1512) having phone or video calls, 19.9% (n.627) texts 3.1% (n.135) emails in June 2020 and 2.9% (n.92) letters.

**Table 6: Percent of grandparents with different characteristics\* who had face-to-face and/or remote contact with their grandchildren during lockdown**

	N	Face to face and remote %	Face to face only %	Remote only %	No contact %
<b>Total</b>	3108	57.7	7.7	29.2	5.4
<b>Gender</b>					
Men	1376	57.0	8.5	28.1	6.3
Women	1732	58.2	7.0	30.1	4.7
<b>Age Group</b>					
40-49**	114	54.4	8.8	21.1	15.8
50-59	571	59.9	11.6	26.3	2.3
60-69	960	58.2	8.0	26.5	7.3
70+	1450	57.2	5.8	33.0	4.0
<b>Key Worker</b>					
No	480	59.8	8.1	27.1	5.0
Yes	429	60.8	9.1	23.5	6.5
<b>Furloughed</b>					
No	2877	57.4	7.8	29.4	5.5
Yes	232	61.6	6.5	27.2	4.7
<b>Household member shielding</b>					
No	2134	59.3	7.7	27.1	5.9
Yes	294	52.7	6.1	36.7	4.4

\*N=3108 \*\* small sample

- Table 6 summarises grandparents' responses to the questions about face-to-face and remote contact with their grandchildren during lockdown. It shows that 29.2% (n.909) of those not having face-to-face contact, had remote contact with their grandchildren during lockdown, and 5.4% [n.168] had neither remote nor face-to-face contact.
- Grandfathers were more likely than grandmothers to have no form of contact with their grandchildren at all during lockdown.
- Those who had been furloughed were more likely to have both face to face and remote contact than those who had not been furloughed.

## Looking after grandchildren

Half of grandparents (50.2% n.2051) said they regularly looked after their grandchildren in January and February. In June 2020 77.7% (n.1066) grandparents reported looking after their grandchildren less.

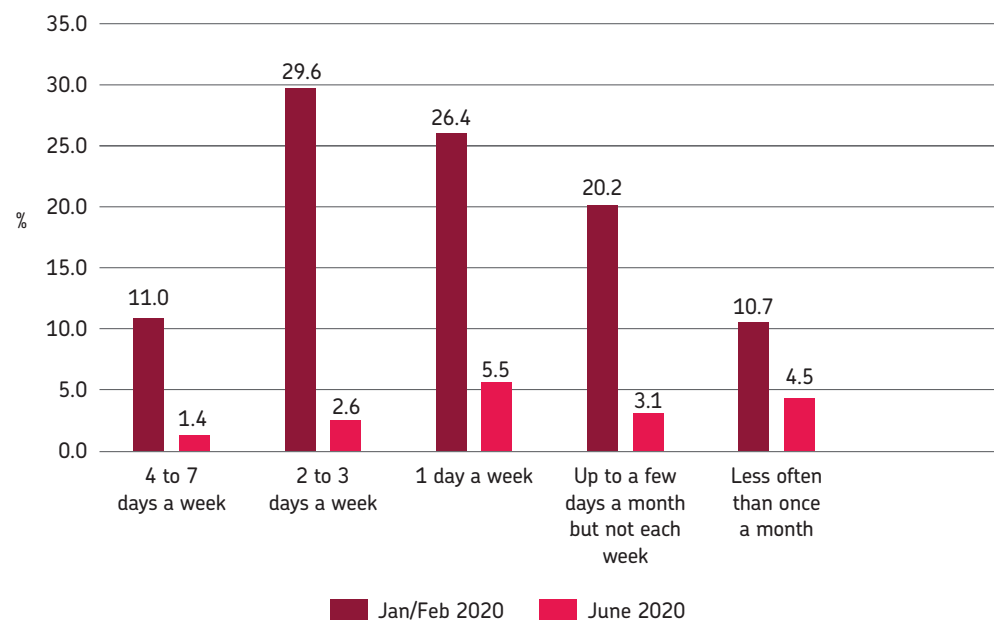
**Table 7: Percent of grandparents with different characteristics\* who looked after their grandchildren both before and during lockdown**

	N	Did not look after in June %	Less often %	Same as before %	More often %	Do not know %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1372</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
Men	594	60.1	18.5	17.2	1.3	2.9
Women	778	64.1	13.0	16.1	2.1	4.8
<b>Age Group</b>						
40-49**	60	58.3	18.3	16.7	3.3	3.3
50-59	320	50.0	24.1	21.3	2.8	1.9
60-69	538	62.3	15.2	15.1	1.5	5.9
70+	449	71.7	8.9	15.1	1.1	3.1
<b>Country</b>						
England	1129	62.4	16.9	15.1	1.9	3.7
Wales**	64	70.3	7.8	15.6	1.6	4.7
Scotland	145	60.7	7.6	27.6	0.7	3.4
Northern Ireland**	33	54.5	12.1	24.2	0	9.1
<b>Household member shielding</b>						
No	967	64.5	16.8	13.1	2.2	3.4
Yes	138	60.9	15.9	21.0	0	2.2
<b>Key Worker</b>						
No	250	57.2	18.4	16.4	3.6	4.4
Yes	256	52.0	26.2	19.1	1.2	1.6
<b>Furloughed</b>						
No	1242	63.0	14.7	16.5	1.5	4.2
Yes	130	55.4	21.5	17.7	3.1	2.3

\*N=differs according to question but ranges from 506-1372 \*\*small sample

- Table 7 summarises the difference in the frequency of grandparents looking after their grandchildren living elsewhere between January/February and June 2020.
- It shows that 16.6% (n.228) reported looking after their children the same as before, and only 1.7% (n.24) said they looked after them more often.
- Table 7 also shows that grandparents aged 70+ were less likely to look after their grandchildren at all during lockdown compared to other age groups.
- Those households where a member was shielding were slightly more likely to look after their grandchildren as before and none of these households looked after more often than before.
- 27% (n.855) of grandparents said they did not look after their grandchildren at all during lockdown.

**Figure 13: Percent of grandparents who previously looked after their grandchildren\* and who still were looking after them during lockdown**



\* N = 533-1344 chart does not display those who did not look after during lockdown (n.2578)

- Figure 13 shows the frequency of grandparents looking after their grandchildren before and during lockdown.
- There was a large drop in the frequency Grandparents looked after their children in June 2020 compared to earlier in the year.

# Couples living apart together

The data on couples living apart together was collected in the May Covid study.

Before lockdown, in Wave 9 of the survey (2017-19), 22% [n.2825] of those not living with a partner were in a steady relationship with a partner living outside of the household

When lockdown was announced, 12.7% of couples living apart moved in together; 95 people joined sample households to live with a partner and 32 left sample households to live with a partner. The majority of those respondents who moved in to live with their partner were female (72.3% n.68), 48.4% were aged 16-29 and a further 18.3% aged 30-39.

In April 2020 19.7% [n. 870] of those not living with a partner were in a steady relationship with a partner living outside of the household. This section of the paper is about these couples living apart together during lockdown.

**Table 8: Percent of respondents in a couple living apart together\* during lockdown with different household circumstances**

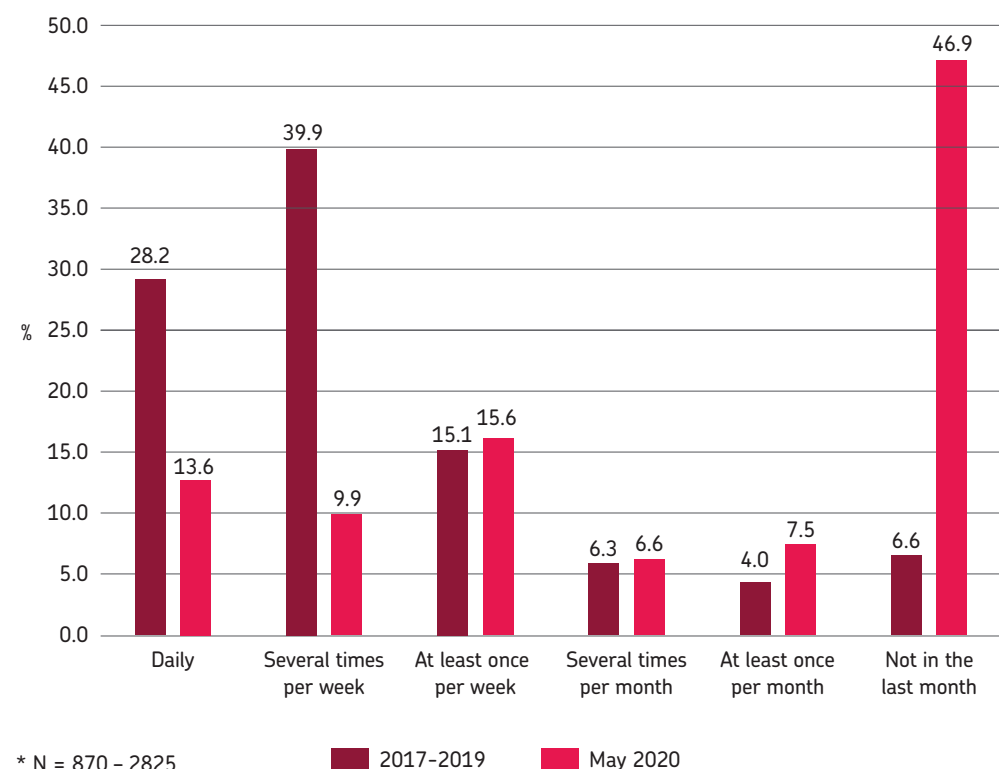
	N	Live with others in the household %	Live alone %	Parent to a child in household %
<b>Total</b>	870	60.7	39.3	14.3
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	504	70.2	29.8	18.8
Male	366	47.7	52.3	8.2
<b>Age</b>				
16-29	409	88.8	11.2	3.2
30-39	108	59.3	40.7	28.7
40-49	94**	42.6	57.4	36.2
50-59	118	40.3	59.7	31.9
60-69	80**	11.3	88.8	6.3
70+	60**	6.7	93.3	5.0
<b>Education</b>				
GCSE or lower	260	43.8	56.2	10.0
A-level	289	77.2	22.8	12.8
Degree	319	59.6	40.4	19.1

\*N = 870 \*\* small sample

- Table 8 shows that 60.7% (n.528) of respondents with a partner outside of the household live in a household with others. Younger respondents were more likely to live with others, and older respondents more likely to live alone, although the sample number is small for the latter.
- It also shows that 14.3% of respondents with a partner outside of the household are a parent to a child in their household, and women are much more likely than men to have a child in their household.

## Contact before and during lockdown

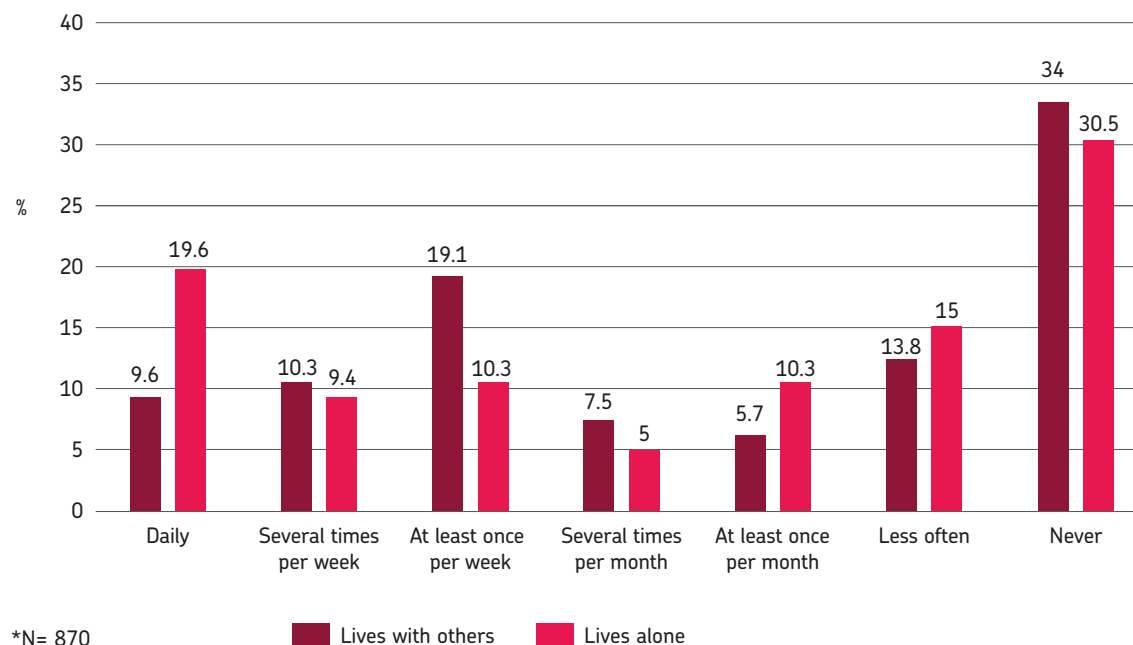
**Figure 14: Percent of couples living apart together\* and how often they met in person in Wave 9 and during lockdown**



- Figure 14 shows that in 2017-19, 28.2% [n.793] of respondents with a partner outside of the household reported seeing their partner daily, with 83.1% [n.2338] reporting that they saw their partner at least once a week and only 6.6% [n.186] saying they saw them less often than once a month.
- It also shows that during lockdown 46.9% (n.405) of respondents with a partner outside of the household reported not seeing their partner at all during May.
- During lockdown daily contact halved: in May 2020, 13.6% [117] reported that they saw their partner daily. Contact weekly and several times per month was similar to pre-lockdown levels.



**Figure 15: Percent of couples living apart together\* and how often they met in person during lockdown according to living circumstances**



### Phone contact

During lockdown, in May 2020, the vast majority of couples living apart together spoke on the phone daily [71.5%] with 94.6% speaking at least once per week.

- Figure 15 shows that those respondents with a partner outside of the household who live alone were more likely to see their non-co-resident partner daily in May compared with those who live with others; and those who live with others were less likely to see their non-co-resident partner at all during lockdown compared to those who live alone.

## Happiness and loneliness

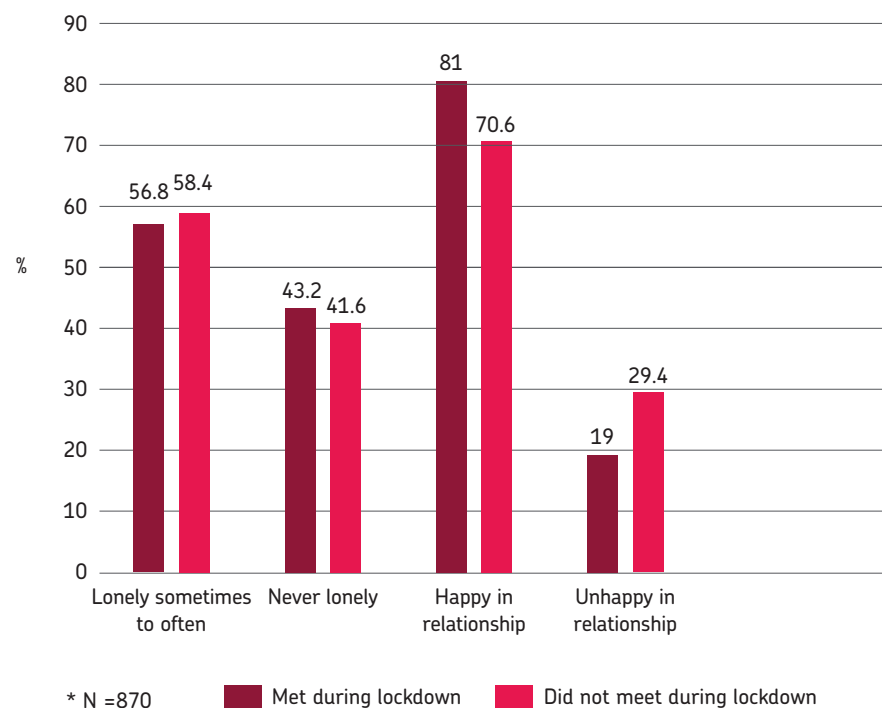
**Table 9: Percent of couples living apart together\* with different characteristics reporting happiness and loneliness during lockdown**

	N	Happy in relationship %	Unhappy in relationship %	Felt lonely some or all of the time	Never felt lonely %
<b>Total</b>	870	76.3	23.7	57.5	42.5
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	504	76.9	23.1	61.1	38.9
Male	366	75.9	24.1	52.5	47.5
<b>Age</b>					
16-29	409	78.4	21.6	59.6	40.4
30-39	108	71.0	29.0	73.1	26.9
40-49	94**	62.1	37.9	72.3	27.7
50-59	118	78.0	22.0	51.3	48.7
60-69	80**	81.3	18.8	35.0	65.0
70+	60**	84.7	15.3	35.0	65.0
<b>Education</b>					
GCSE or lower	260	75.2	24.8	62.2	37.8
A-level	289	76.1	23.9	58.1	41.9
Degree	319	77.7	22.3	53.0	47.0

\* N =870 \*\* small sample

- Table 9 shows that 76.3% of respondents with a partner living outside of the household reported being happy with their relationship during lockdown and 23.7% as being unhappy.
- Table 9 also shows that over half (57.5%) of all respondents with a partner outside of the household reported feeling lonely some or all of the time, this is higher than that of the general population, which is 39.8%.
- It also shows that women were more likely than men to report feeling lonely some or all of the time.

**Figure 16: Percent of couples living apart together\* reporting happiness and loneliness according to whether they met in person during lockdown**



- Figure 16 shows that there was no discernible pattern between loneliness and meeting in person with a partner living outside of the household during lockdown.
- It does show that those who met in person during lockdown were more likely to report being happy in their relationship than those who did not meet in person.

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[www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/themes/covid-19](http://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/themes/covid-19)

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