



How did COVID-19 affect children in Scotland?

Report 4 Final findings



Behaviour and emotion



Fewer than **5 in 10**
**children in
low-income households**
displayed the behaviour
and emotions expected
for their age

6.5 in 10
**children in
high-income households**
displayed the behaviour
and emotions expected
for their age

Reading



Less than **half
of children**
in low-income households
read books six or more days
a week during lockdown

**Three
quarters**
**of children in
high-income households**
read books six or more days
a week during lockdown



Outdoor space



Over 20%

**of children in
low-income
households**

do not have access
to a private garden

5%

**of children in
high-income
households**

do not have access to
a private garden

Mental wellbeing



A quarter

**of parents in
low-income households**

experienced poor mental
wellbeing during lockdown

1 in 10

**parents in
high-income households**

experienced poor mental
wellbeing during lockdown



Employment



6 in 10
of main earners in
low-income households
experienced no change
in employment
during lockdown

8 in 10
of main earners in
high-income households
experienced no change
in employment
during lockdown

Household income



50%
of **low-income**
households
experienced a reduction
in household income
during lockdown

36%
of **high-income**
households
experienced a reduction
in household income
during lockdown





Sleep



Over **4 in 10**
**children in
low-income households**
slept less well
during lockdown

Fewer than **3 in 10**
**children in
high-income households**
slept less well
during lockdown



COVID-19 Early Years Impact and Resilience Study (CEYRIS)

Briefing
paper



Background

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have had an impact on the lives of all young people and their families in Scotland.

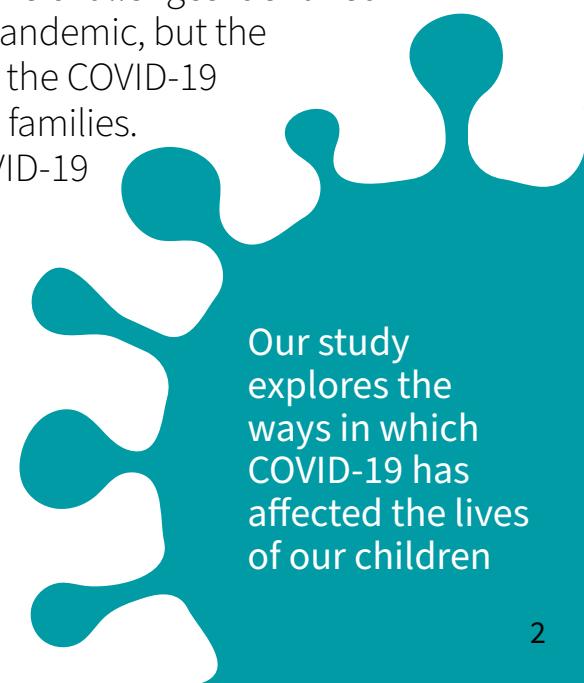
In March 2020, schools, nurseries and childminders were closed for the majority of face-to-face care and teaching.

- Activities were restricted to staying at home for the majority of the day.
- Children were unable to spend time with family and friends from other households.
- Parents and carers were required to work at home and support home schooling.
- Potential stressors included ill health, income reduction and unemployment.

Public Health Scotland carried out the first round of the COVID-19 Early Years Impact and Resilience Survey (CEYRIS) in summer 2020. It was conducted online with parents of 2 to 7 year olds and 11,228 responses were obtained.

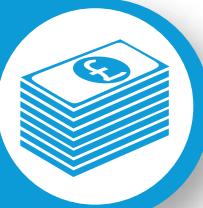
The survey explores the health and wellbeing of children and their parents. It shows that some families have been affected more than others, and that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have disproportionately affected children, and their families, who were already experiencing significant challenges. To access the full findings from the survey please go to **www.publichealthscotland.scot/our-areas-of-work/covid-19/covid-19-data-and-intelligence/covid-19-and-children-research**

It is worth noting that some of the challenges identified are likely to have predicated the pandemic, but the study suggests they have made the COVID-19 situation more difficult for some families. Others are a direct effect of COVID-19 and associated restrictions.



Our study explores the ways in which COVID-19 has affected the lives of our children

What we found – income



- Children in poorer households experienced poorer psychological and emotional wellbeing during lockdown than children in more affluent households.
- Parents in lower-income groups reported greater deterioration in sleeping, behaviour and eating. However, there was some improvement in imaginative and outdoor play across all income groups.
- Children in lower-income groups took part in fewer home learning activities on a less frequent basis and were less likely to have access to a garden and/or good quality greenspace. This is likely to have predated COVID-19, but it would have made the COVID-19 situation much more difficult for some families.
- Parents in lower-income households experienced poorer mental health and were more likely than high-income families to be living with a long-term physical or mental health condition.
- Parents in lower-income households who wanted access to health visitor or GP services were less likely to have successfully accessed it compared to parents in high-income households.
- Despite already being less well-off prior to COVID-19, a greater proportion experienced a reduction in income as a result of lockdown.

Lockdown was **WORSE for children living in **lower-income** households in almost **all** areas asked about in the survey**

Single-adult households



- Children in single-adult households experienced a greater decline in areas such as sleeping, concentration and eating.
- Children from single-adult households took part in fewer home learning activities on a less frequent basis. They also played outside, visited parks, walked, cycled and scooted on fewer occasions. However, they spoke to family and friends on a more frequent basis.
- Prior to lockdown, single-adult households were significantly less well-off than parents living in two-adult households in terms of income category.
- A greater proportion worked on fixed-term contracts, or were students, stay-at-home parents or unemployed prior to COVID-19. However, they fared slightly better than two-adult households in terms of income reduction as a direct result of lockdown.

Poorer emotional wellbeing was experienced by both children and adults in single-adult households

Large families



- Children in large families more frequently played outside or played screen-based games.
- A smaller proportion of main earners in large families were employed on permanent contracts and were more likely to be self-employed/freelance or stay-at-home parents prior to COVID-19.
- A higher proportion had their hours or pay reduced as a result of COVID-19 and associated restrictions.

Children in large families participated in fewer home learning activities and had fewer visits to the park or other greenspace

Long-term conditions (LTCs) in children



- Children with an LTC were less likely to be doing well emotionally or psychologically than other children.
- Children with an LTC experienced greater deterioration in sleeping and the ability to concentrate.
- Parents of children with an LTC were more likely to fare poorly in terms of their own mental health and wellbeing. This is likely to have been the case prior to lockdown, but may have been exacerbated as a result.
- Parents of children with a long-term health condition needed access to more services during lockdown, and in some cases were unable to access them.

A greater proportion of parents of a **child** with an **LTC** experienced a **reduction** in household income during lockdown

Parental long-term conditions



- Children of parents with an LTC were doing much worse than other children in relation to psychological wellbeing and behaviour during lockdown.
- Parents with an LTC reported significantly lower mental health and wellbeing than other parents. This is likely to have been the case prior to lockdown, but made worse as a result of the pandemic and associated restrictions.
- Parents living with an LTC were more likely to want to access services during lockdown, and were in some cases unable to gain access.
- Parents with a long-term health condition were less well-off than other families prior to lockdown.

**Eating and sleeping
were the worst affected
areas during lockdown
for this group of children**

Parental mental health and wellbeing



- For children scoring poorly on the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) a much higher proportion of parents had poor mental health and wellbeing.
- There was a much greater decline in behaviour and mood for children living in households where parents were experiencing low wellbeing.
- Parental wellbeing was also worse where a reduction in income had occurred. This may be one of the contributing factors to the decline in child wellbeing during this period.

There was a clear association between how well **children and their **parents** were doing during lockdown in terms of **wellbeing****

Conclusions and next steps

- Overall COVID-19 and the associated restrictions have had a negative impact on children and their families.
- Crucially, this effect has been more severe for some families that were already experiencing challenging circumstances.
- Some effects predated COVID-19, but have been made worse by it. Others are the direct effect of the pandemic and associated restrictions.
- Many of these factors are outwith the control of individual families.
- We are working with partners to develop recommendations, policies and interventions to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people as we live through and beyond the pandemic.

Other formats of this publication are available on request at:



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