



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

Report 02: Parent/carer stress, work and child's needs, reported child activity, communicating with friends and family living outside the household

Results from the first 1600 participants in Iran

Date: 10 September 2020

Report Author: Mohsen Rajabi



University of Tehran

The Co-SPACE Study

Background

COVID-19 has caused major disruptions to families' lives, through social distancing, school closures and lock-down. This is also a rapidly changing situation where different pressures will arise for children, young people and their families over time. While research has provided valuable information about how parents can support their children's mental health in general, we know little about what is most effective in the current, changing context. The Co-SPACE project (Iranian study) is tracking the mental health of school-aged children and young people aged 4-18 years throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The study has full ethical and data protection approval (Young Researchers and Elite Club). The findings will help identify what protects children and young people from deteriorating mental health over time, and at particular stress points.

Co-SPACE Iran is led by Mohsen Rajabi, at the University of Tehran. The study is linked to research of the Co-SPACE project, funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), led by Professor Cathy Creswell and Dr Polly Waite from the University of Oxford and is conducted in co-operation with University College London (UCL) and University of Leicester in the UK.

Recruitment & Sample

The study sample has been recruited through a variety of means, including social media, distribution through partner organisations, networks and charities, the media and targeted online advertising. The self-selecting nature of recruitment means that this will not be a nationally representative sample.

For the long-term, we are aiming to have good representation across a wide range of socio-demographic and health factors (e.g., income, ethnicity, pre-existing mental/physical health difficulties) to investigate the experiences for different groups that may be particularly vulnerable during and after the pandemic.

We are keen to recruit as many families as possible to the study. Parents/carers can sign up and take part at any point: <http://cospaceoxford.org/take-part/>

Further information

For further information or to request specific analyses, please contact the research team at rajabimohsen@ut.ac.ir

To learn more about this research, please visit:

1. **University of Oxford:** <https://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/research/topic-research-group/supporting-parents-adolescents-and-children-during-epidemics>
2. **Co-SPACE Website:** <https://cospaceoxford.org/>
3. **Emerging Minds:** <https://emergingminds.org.uk/>

Focus of this report

This report provides cross-sectional data from the approximately 1,600 parents/carers who have taken part, and completed the survey between 10/04/20 and 15/08/20. We aimed to report some preliminary findings from the first 1,600 participants who completed the survey¹ and this was reached on 15/08/2020 by when 1,624 parents/carers had taken part. In this report, we focus on the following outcomes:

1. Parent/carer sources of stress
2. The percentage of children and young people who have not been communicating with their friends and family outside the household
3. The percentage of children and young people who have not spent time on physical activities and being outside
4. How children and young people are reported to spend their time
5. The percentage of children and young people who have not been communicating with their friends and family outside the household
6. The percentage of children and young people who have not spent time on physical activities and being outside

¹ "Completion" of the survey is based on participants having completed items up to and including the pre-defined main outcome measure (the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – parent reporting on child).

Key findings

- **Nearly all of parents 93% of parents in the survey were working in different forms. 7% were unemployed or seeking work.**
- **Child's wellbeing is the most frequent source of stress for Iranian parents, followed by their child's future.**
- **The top 3 stressors for parents/carers were (i) child's wellbeing, (ii) children's future, and (iii) child's screen time.**
- **Over two thirds of parents/carers reported that they were sufficiently meeting the needs of both work and their child during the pandemic.**
- **Just over one third of the children and young people completed 2 or more hours of schoolwork per day.**
- **Nearly just 20% of children and young people are keeping in contact with friends via video chat.**
- **Around 35% of children and young people are getting more than 30 minutes of exercise per day.**
- **Over two thirds of parents reported that their children were spending "nothing" or less than 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day, inside or outside the house.**

Findings

1. Parent/carer Stress

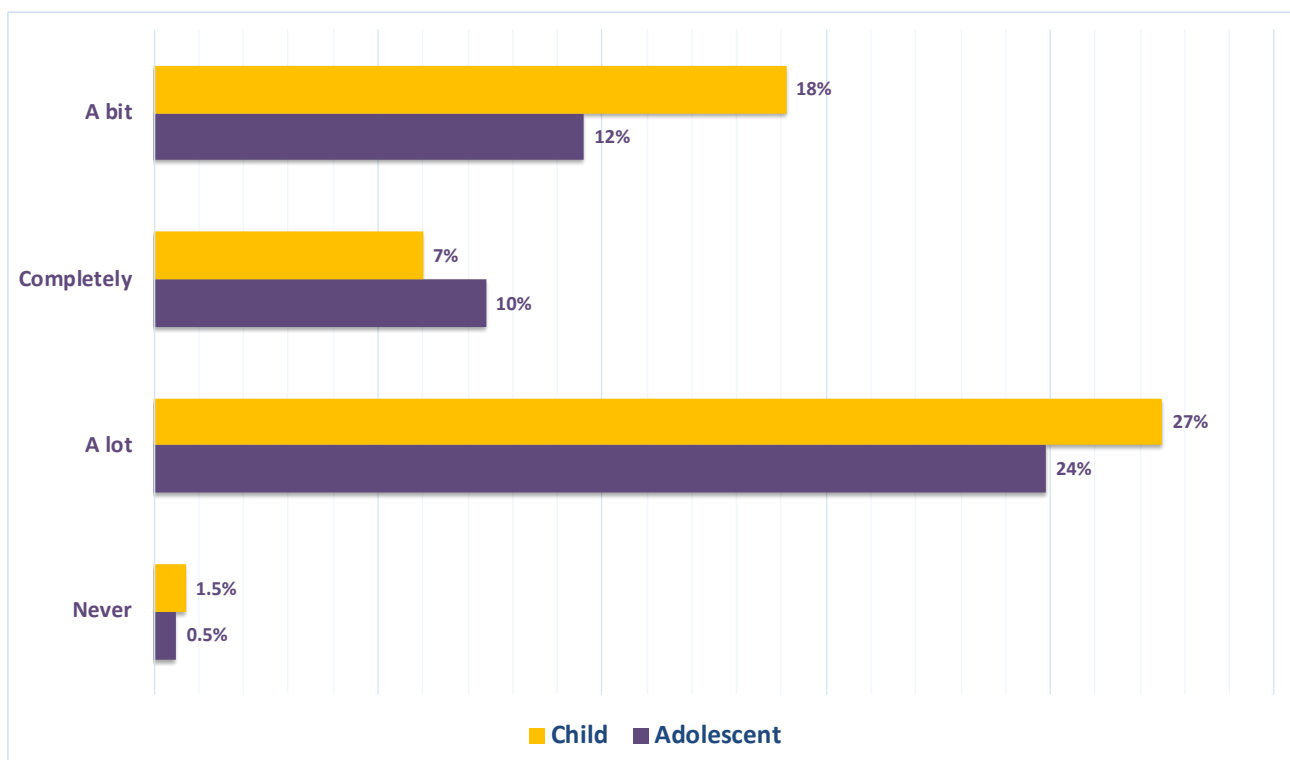
(a) Work

Around 93% of parents in the survey were working in different forms. Of these, 9% were working part-time, 4.1% were students, 2.9% college students and 21.8% were working full-time. 53% were working from home and 6% were working out of the home. 7% were unemployed or seeking work.

(b) Combining Work and Child's Needs

30.7% reported that they were either 'not' or only 'a bit' currently able to meet the needs of both their work and their child, compared to 69.3% who reported that they were meeting the needs of both 'a lot' or 'completely'.

Figure 1. Parents/carers' needs of their work and child



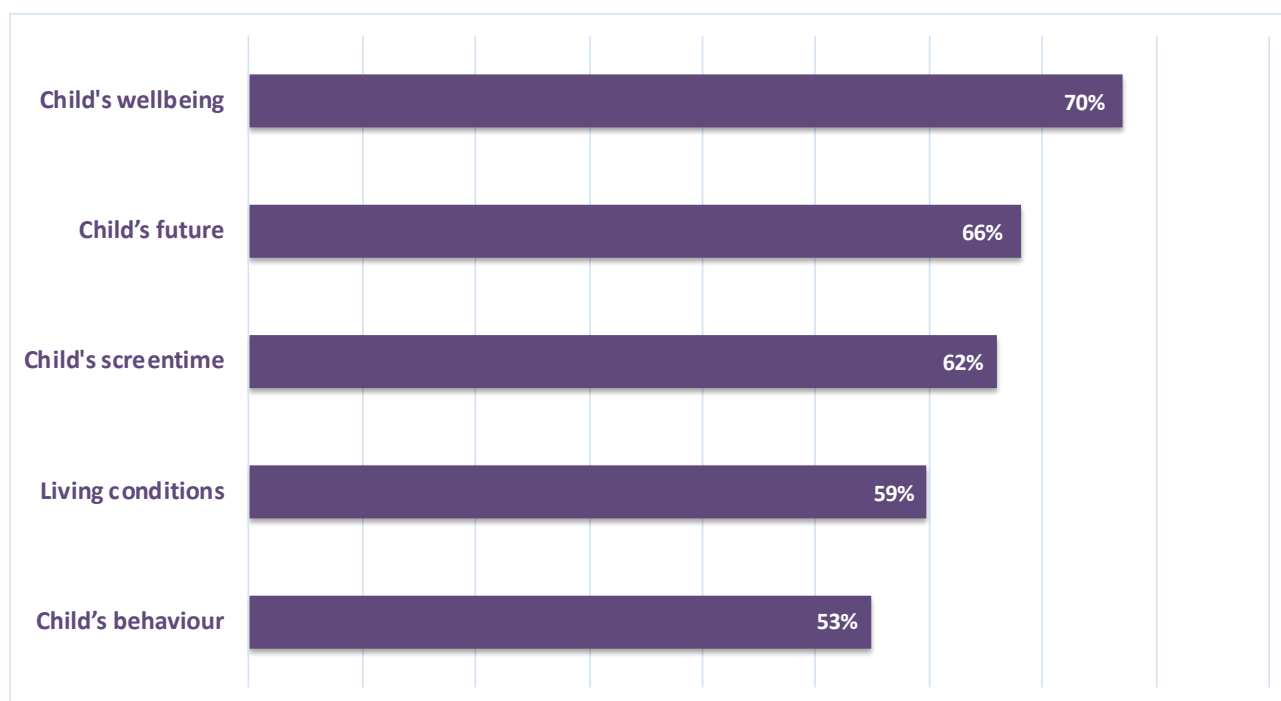
(c) Main causes of stress

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

Participants were asked about how stressed they had felt over the past week regarding a number of potential stressors, from 'not at all', 'a little', 'quite a lot' to 'a great deal'. Figures in this section present the nine most highly rated stressors for each group and show the percentage of parents/carers who indicated that the stressor had caused them significant stress (i.e., they had responded 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal').

Main causes for parent's stressors were child's wellbeing, child's future, child's screen-time, living conditions, child's behaviour, child's education, friends/family living in their household, romantic relationship, and work.

Figure 2. Parents/carers' main sources of stress



Within the total sample in Iran, the child's wellbeing was the main stressor (70%) for parents, followed by their child's future (66%), child's screen-time (62%), living conditions (59%) and the child's behaviour (53%).

2. How Children and Young People Spent Their Time

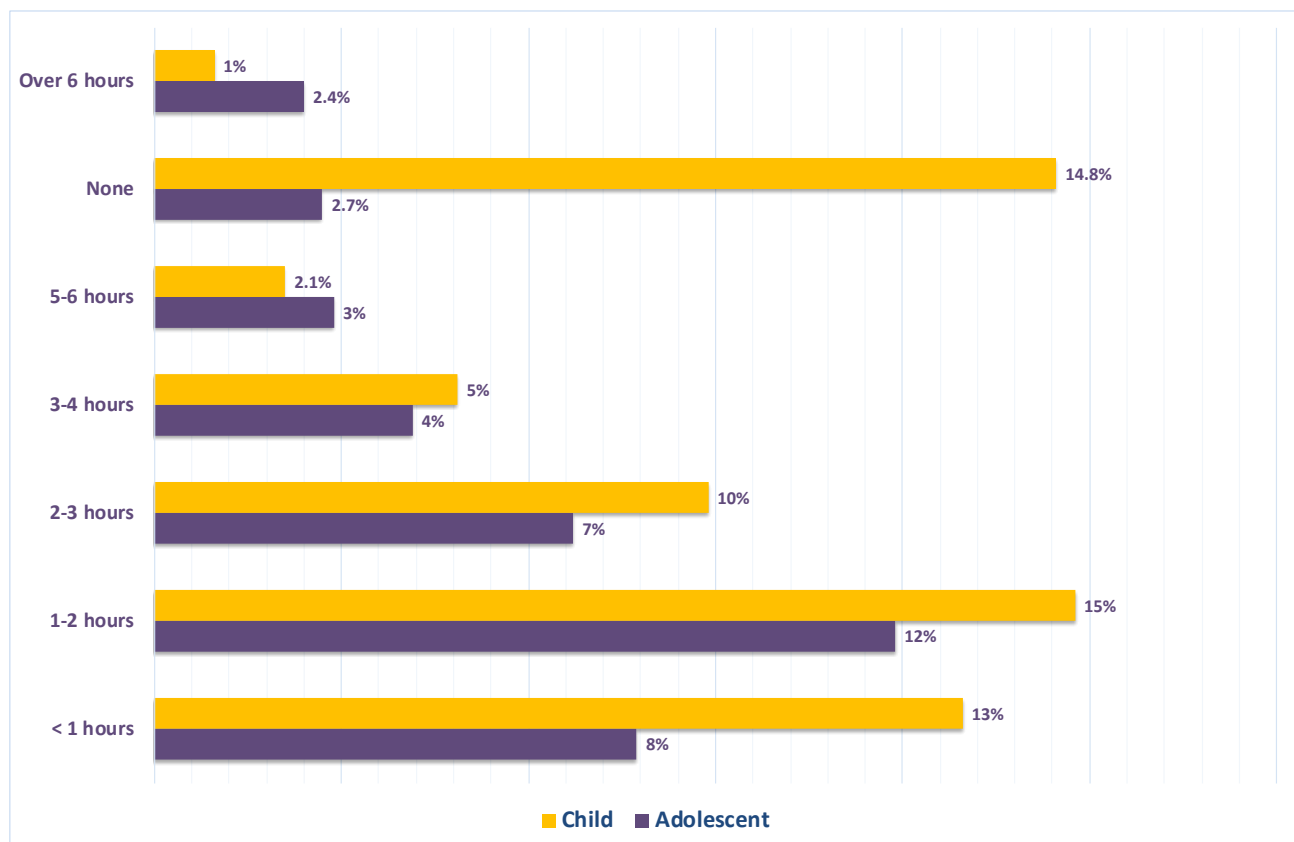
(a) Schoolwork

Parents reported that around 17% of their children were completing "no" schoolwork (14.8% of children and 2.7% of adolescents) each day.

On average, 35% of the children and young people were completing more than 2 hours of schoolwork per day. Broken down by age, 17% of the adolescents and around 18% of the children were reported to be completing more than 2 hours of schoolwork per day.

Around two thirds (62.2%) of parents of children and just less than half (47%) of parents of adolescents reported that they were able to support their children around schoolwork.

Figure 3. Time spent doing schoolwork



(b) Communicating with Friends

Around three quarters of children and adolescents (48%) were reported have "not" spent any time communicating with friends using video chat, phoning, social media and WhatsApp/text messaging (35% of children and 13% of adolescents). More than one quarter of adolescents were using a range of different means to communicate with friends over the last week (social media 25%; messaging 20%), with the most popular being phoning (27.8%). Less than half the children were using other means to communicate with friends (WhatsApp/text messaging 20.4%; phone 19% and social media 14%).

Figure 4. Communicating via phoning

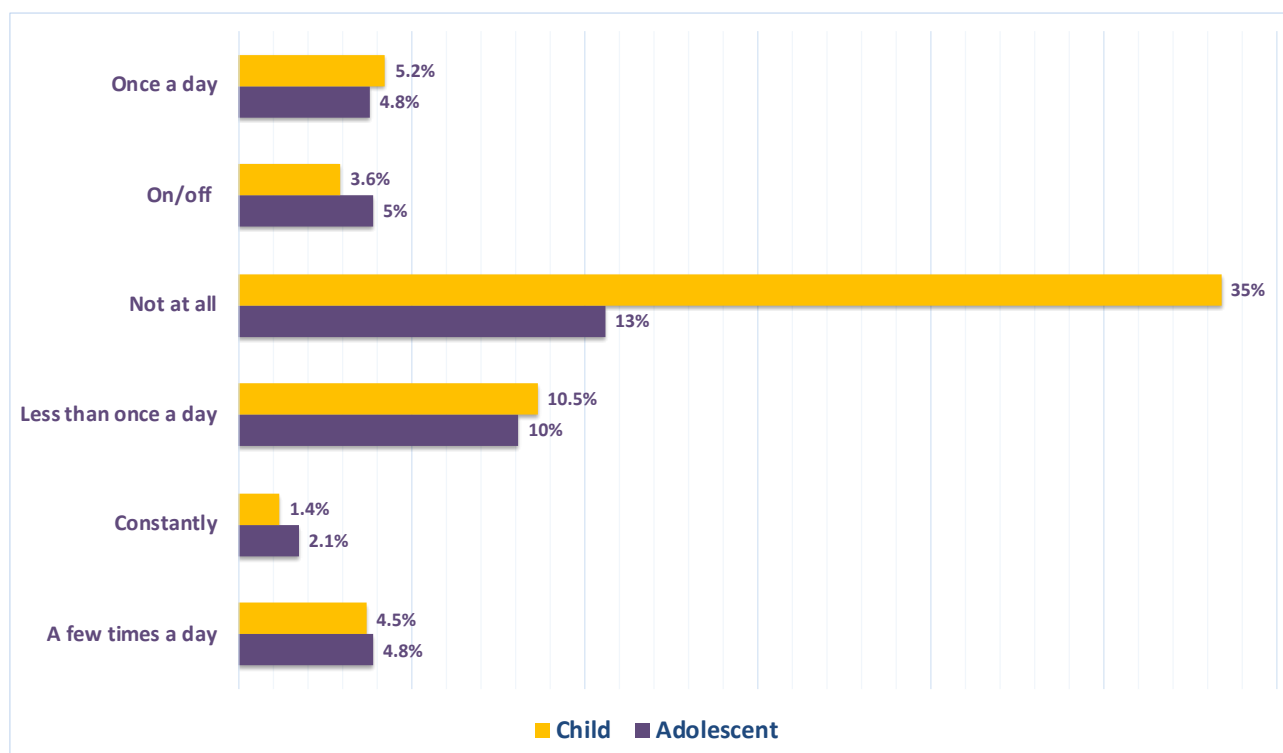


Figure 5. Communicating via video talking

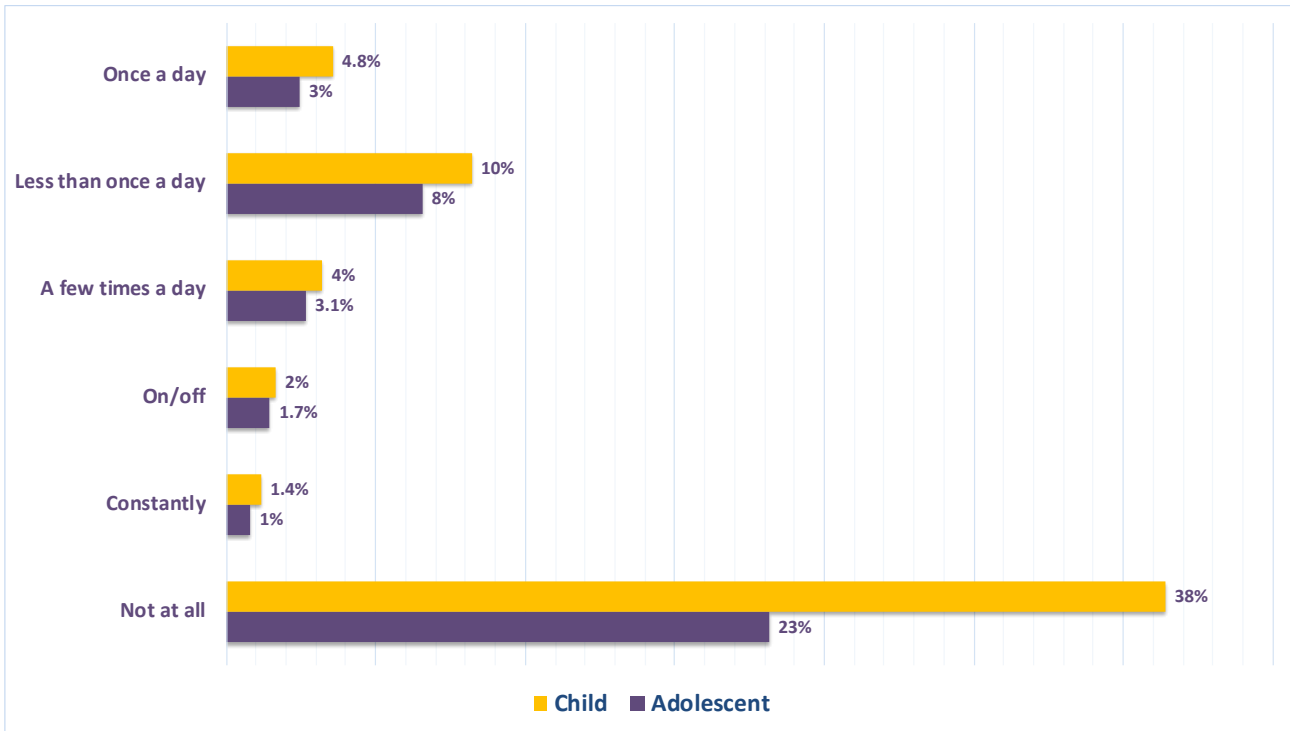


Figure 6. Communicating via WhatsApp/text messaging

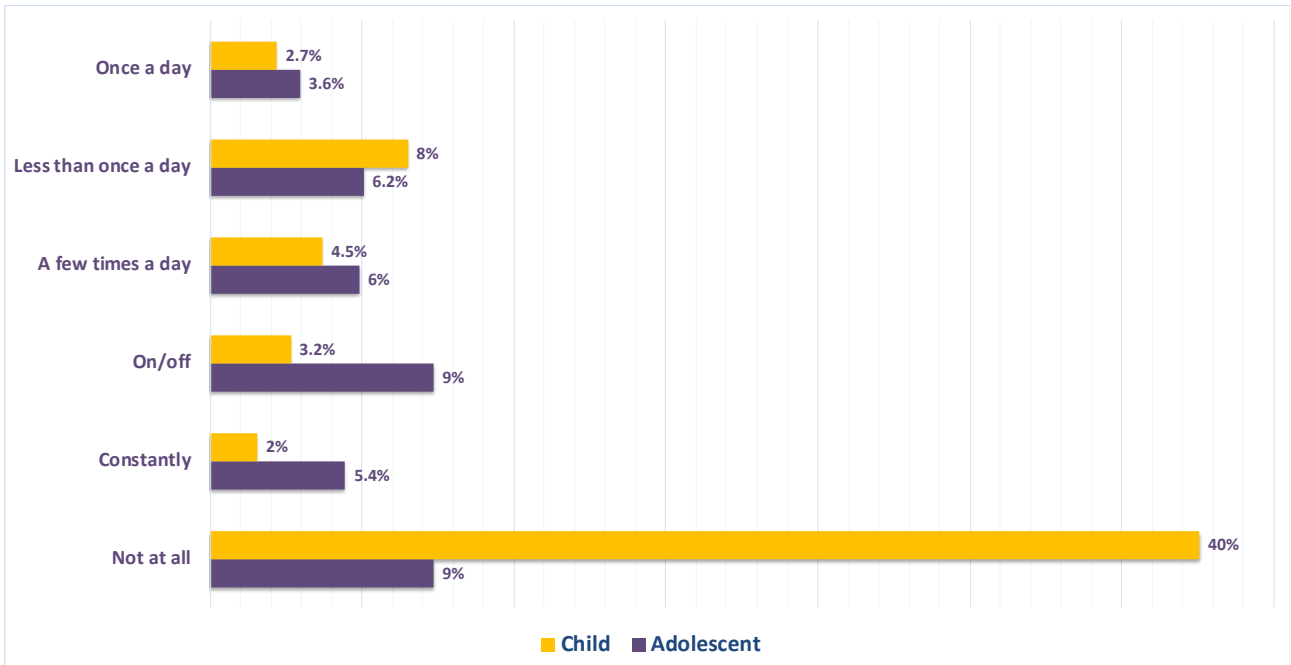
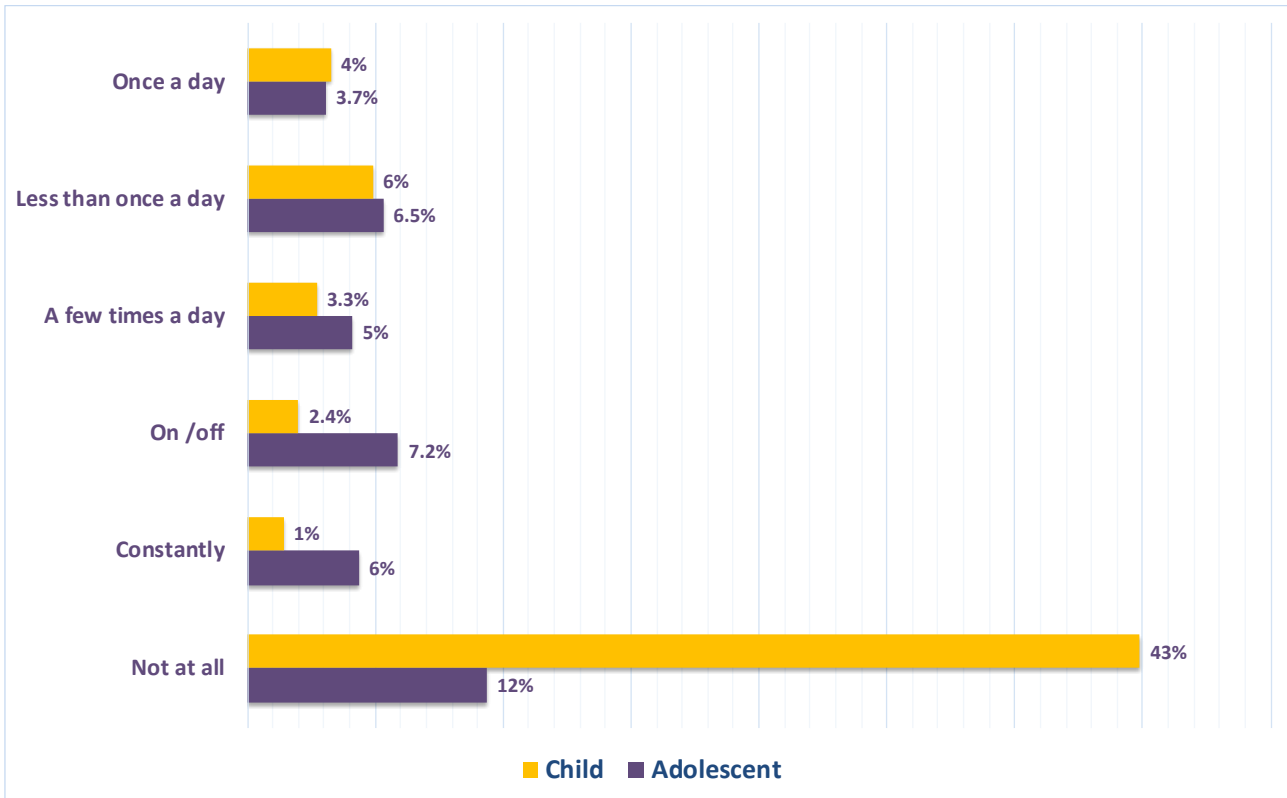


Figure 7. Communicating via social media



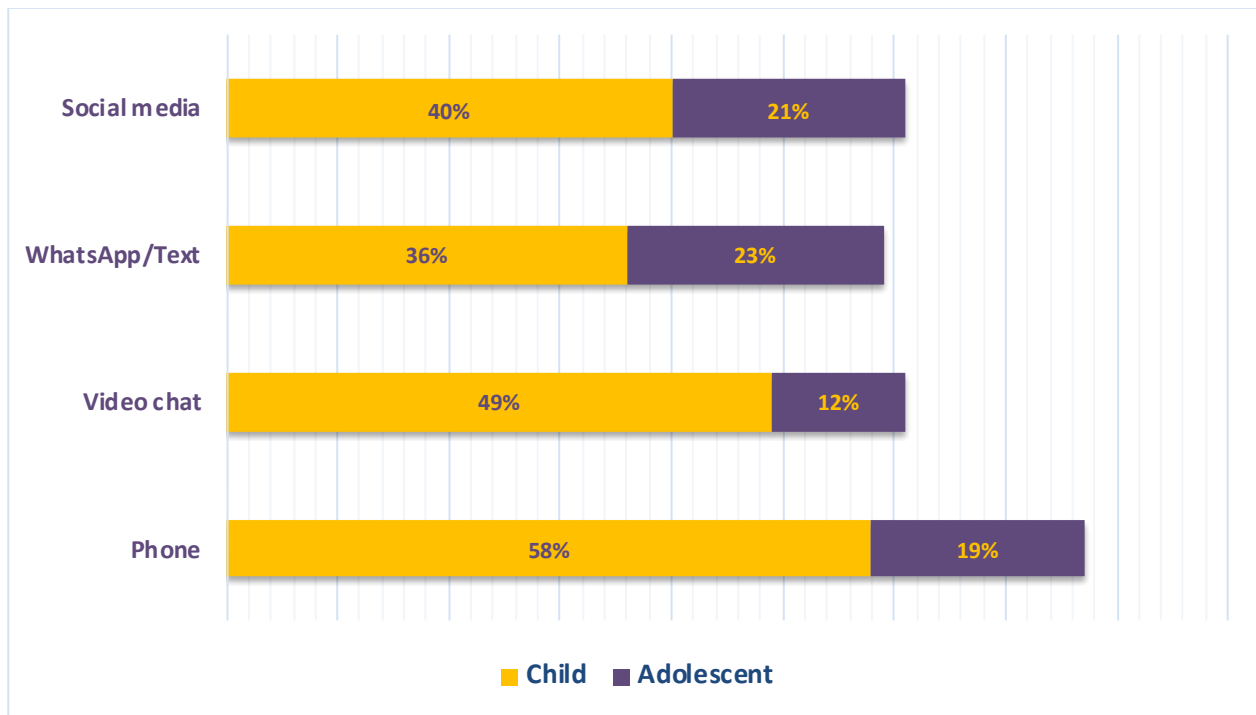
(c) Contact with family living outside the household

For children, nearly half the children (49%) were regularly communicating with family members outside the household via video chat and over two thirds (58%) by phone. WhatsApp/text messaging (36%) and social media (40%) were less regularly used by children.

For adolescents, around one third were regularly communicating with family members outside the household using WhatsApp/text messaging (23%), social media (21%) or the phone (19%), with video chat less regularly used (12%).

In total, most of children and adolescents regularly communicating with family members outside the household through phoning (78%).

Figure 8. Communicating with family outside household



(d) Physical activity/being outside

34% of parents reported that, on average, their children took part in at least 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day, inside or outside the house. Broken down by age, 21% of children and 13% of adolescents were reported to take part in more than 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day.

28% of parents reported that, on average, their children were spending more than 30 minutes a day outside. Broken down by age, 18% of children and 10% of adolescents were reported to be spending more than 30 minutes outside per day.

Figure 9. Being outside and physical activity

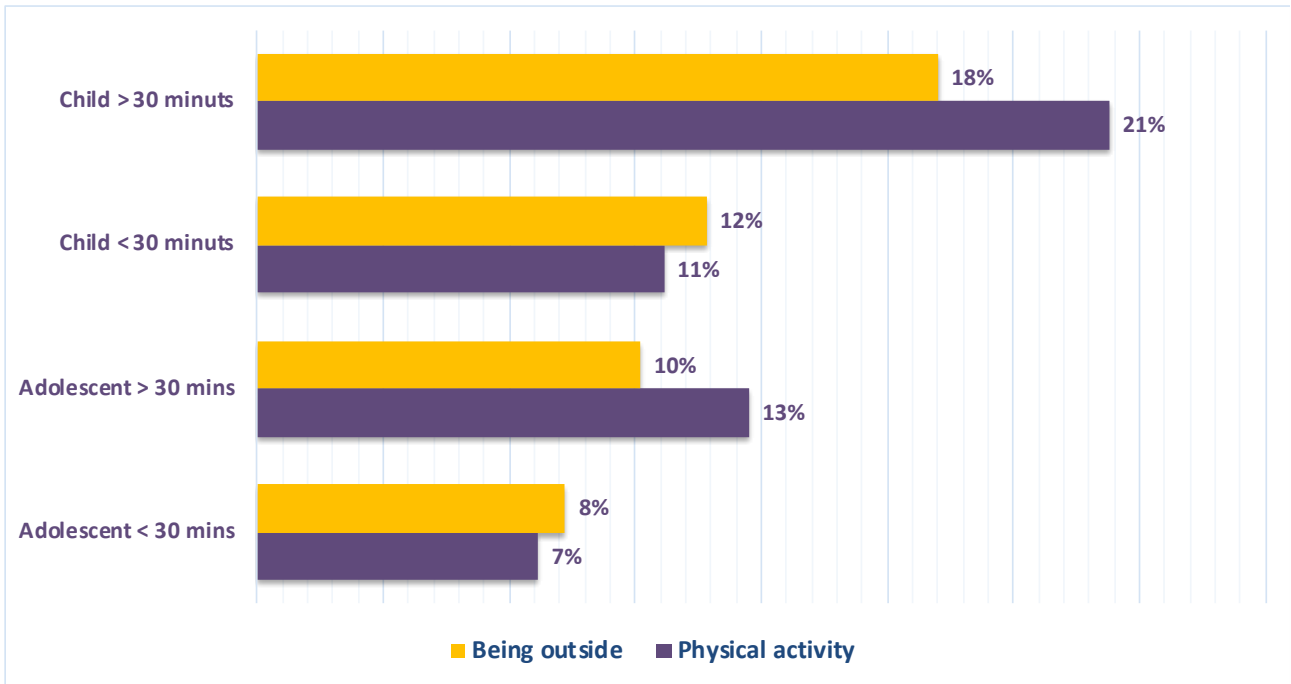
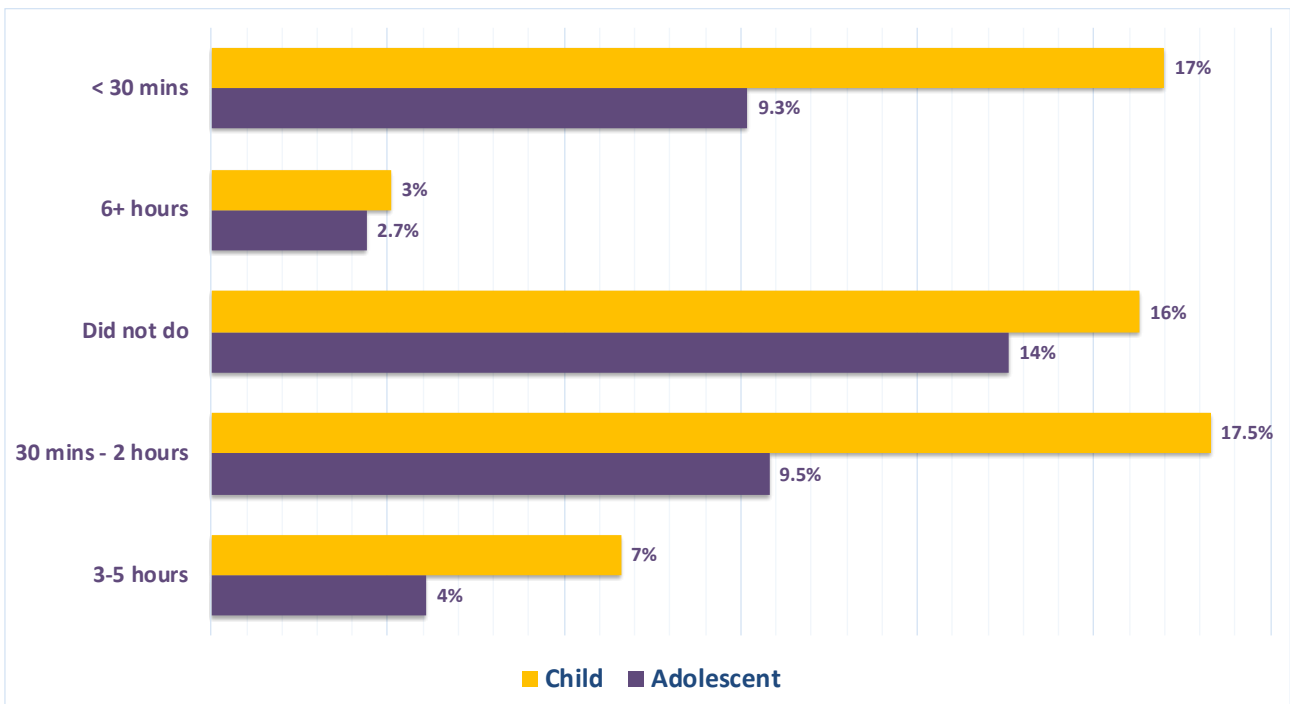
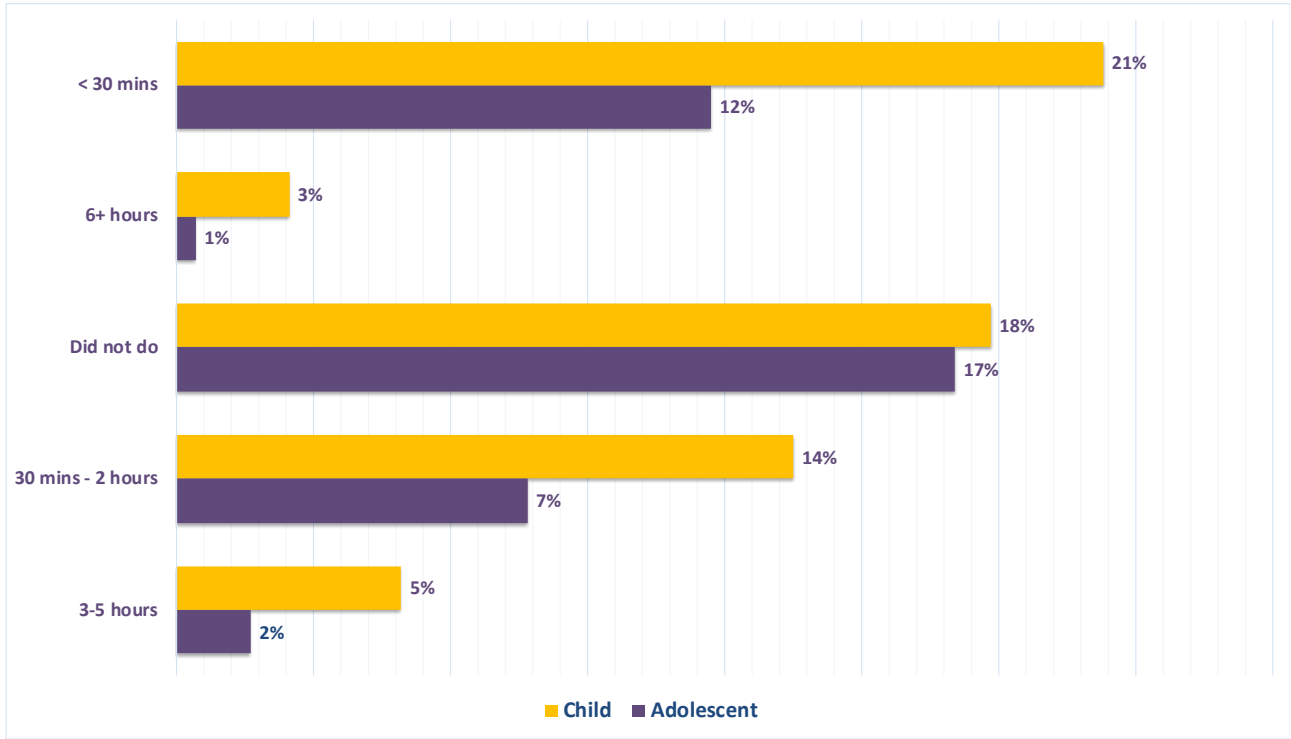


Figure 10. Being outside



26% of parents reported that, on average, their children were spending more than 30 minutes a day outside. Broken down by age, 26% of children and 6% of adolescents were reported to be spending more than 30 minutes outside per day. 56% of parents reported that, on average, their children were spending "nothing" or less than 30 minutes a day outside.

Figure 11. Physical activity



35% of parents reported that, on average, their children took part in at least 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day, inside or outside the house. Broken down by age, 22% of children and 10% of adolescents were reported to take part in more than 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day. 68% of parents reported that, on average, their children were spending "nothing" or less than 30 minutes of energetic physical activity per day, inside or outside the house.

Appendix A

Participants' demographics

		n	%
Parent/cares	Parents	1567	98
	Cares	33	2
Gender	Female	1217	76
	Male	383	24
	Other	0	0
Work Status	Full-time employed	498	31
	Part-time employed	148	9
	Home-maker/full-time parent	847	53
	Not working	107	7
Annual Household Income	Very low	254	16
	Low	477	30
	Moderate	605	38
	High	150	9
	Very high	32	2
	Prefer not to say	82	5
Child Age	Child (aged 4-10 years)	734	62
	Adolescent (aged 11-18 years)	596	38
Child Gender	Female	786	51
	Male	824	49
	Other	0	0