

What next for the COVID generation? The wellbeing challenge ahead



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The impact of COVID restrictions on CYP



- Changing Landscape
- Over 60 sources
 - Government, academic research, interviews & charities
 - New research amongst children, teachers and parents
- Consistent themes emerging
- References in main paper



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Context

Closure of schools and loss of associated support services:

- Education
- Safeguarding
- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Free school meals
- SEND support
- Physical activity – direct & indirect
- Social interaction, playtime
- Milestones, trips, celebrations & rights of passage



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Context

- Introduction of home learning
- Severely restricted movement: forced to stay at home (sometimes in difficult living situations)
 - Reduced social interaction – no F2F time with friends
 - Restrictions on physical activity, sports and clubs
- ...Risk of catching COVID

Children feel the impact more acutely



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The impact on children's mental health

Increase in mental health issues

Lonelier (41%) 

More worried (38%) 

Sadder (37%) 

More stressed (34%) 

Increase in anxiety, trauma & related symptoms.

Some groups disproportionately affected:

- Pre-existing mental health conditions
- BAME children
- SEND
- Lower socio-demographic
- Children of key workers

The future?

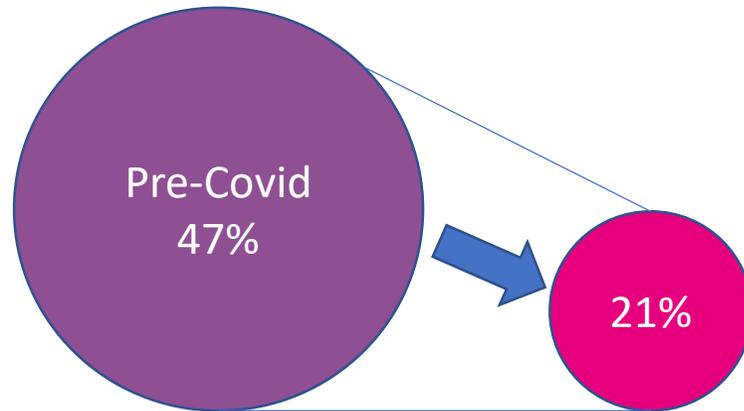
- Transient anxiety and levels of trauma have been high but \neq long-term negative effects for all
 - **For some : potential to inspire and build greater resilience** if we “give structures to help children come through it in a stronger way” (Liat Levita)
 - **Most affected (approx. 4M children), need targeted help & support:**
 - Young Minds calling for ring-fenced support, transition periods into school and increased NHS support
- **Schools have role to play in helping children return to the ‘new normal’**



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Physical activity levels decreasing

- 91% have done something to stay active (9% not)
- The amount of activity has fallen (and continues to fall even after easing).



meeting 60 minutes a day CMO target
(14% at lowest point)

- Inequality gaps remain; the less affluent, BAME and secondary age children more likely to be doing no activity

Some opportunities?

- Girls>boys and BAME>white children
 - more likely to say that they have increased their activity during lockdown
 - more likely to say that they are enjoying being active more than usual:

Non-competitive? Different? Informal? Less judgemental?

- Children are more likely to say that they are exercising for the benefits it brings (69%) vs. negative reasons (52%)
- Exercise and activity has shown benefits (Youth Sport Trust YouGov)
 - 37% of children see it as more important to their lives than before
 - 27% said it made them feel better
 - 51% plan to do more in the future

How can we continue the progress made with previously disengaged groups?



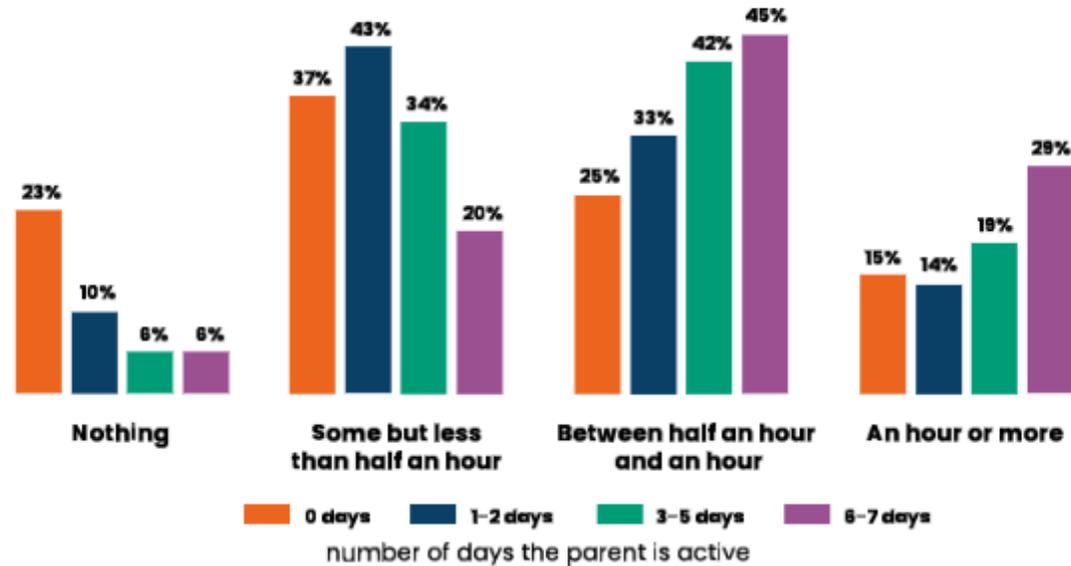
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Parent as role models (and advocates?)

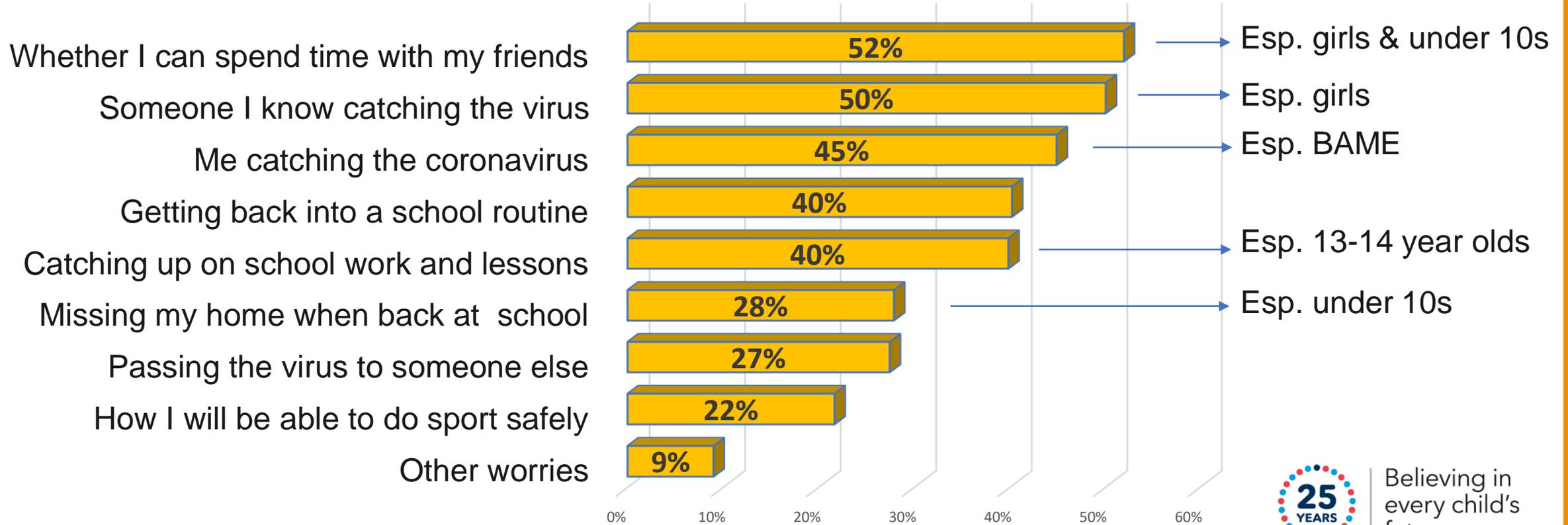
Child activity level on a typical day
by the number of days the parent is active



- 71% of children have been active with their parents
- The more active a parent is the more active their children are
- **Will activity & exercise have an increased role for children/families after helping them in lockdown?**
 - **Both have seen benefits.**
 - **Government has prioritised.**

Returning to School : Children

- 4 in 5 children are “worried” as they come out of lockdown



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Returning to School: Parents

- Reluctance to send children back to school remains (safety concerns)
 - “Highly variable” levels of attendance for reception, Years 1 & 6 in June
 - Reluctance higher among less affluent families
 - Up to a quarter not intending to send children back in September (July 2020 data)
- Parents are worried & need reassurance:
 - schools will be safe
 - provision of emotional and mental health support
 - emphasis on playtime
 - extra help with learning and no pressure to “catch up” straight away
 - Wellbeing rated more important than academic achievement



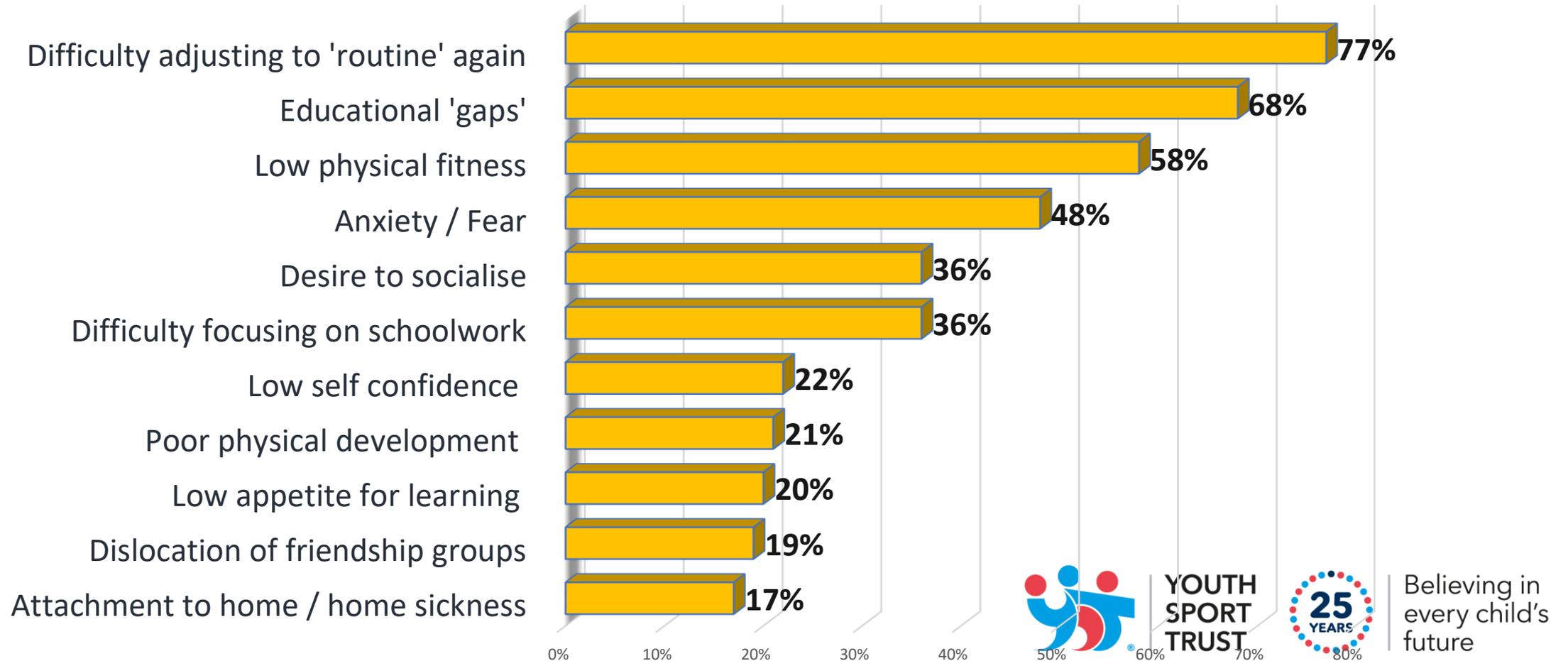
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Returning to School: Teachers

- What issues are teachers are expecting children to display on return?



Returning to School : PE



- The UK government is “*encouraging schools to prioritise physical activity as they welcome more children back to school*” as “*there are well established links between physical activity, improved mental wellbeing and educational attainment*”. (Vicky Ford, Education Minister)
- 57% of school leaders say that the focus of PE will change as a result of COVID towards a greater focus on wellbeing, enjoyment and increasing physical fitness.



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PE presents delivery challenges

- 47% of schools expect to be able to offer full PE entitlement immediately on return
 - Delivery barriers are around logistics; social distancing and equipment
- 75% believe there will be less provision of after school clubs and activities in the short term.
- Schools are looking for clarity on how teaching, learning and PE will be delivered in 20/21
 - Need advice on how to adapt and deliver activities and lessons within government guidance (social distancing, use of shared equipment, changing, hygiene etc.) and how to use PE to address wellbeing issues.



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What next?



Targeted support for children

- Mental health, physical health and building social skills, confidence and resilience

Support for schools & Education

- Balancing “catching up” and closing inequality gaps vs. children’s wellbeing: how to do both
- Practical delivery issues in a restricted world
- How to use PE to address wellbeing issues

A chance NOT to go back to normal?

- Greater parental engagement with children, education and wellbeing
- Increase in community connectiveness
- Less academic pressure and more emphasis on importance of social, mental and physical health and wellbeing



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