

# **COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Among Children and Young People in Scotland – Summary of the Evidence Base**

**Children and Families Analysis**

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## Children and Families Analysis

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## Key points

This report summarises the evidence base around COVID-19 mitigation measures for children and young people in Scotland. It focuses on children and young people and their parents' understanding of these restrictions and their attitudes to COVID-19 measures, compliance and enforcement. It also examines the evidence on the impacts of mitigation measures on children and young people.

This report is an updated version of a [working paper](#) published by the Scottish Government in January 2021, and includes information previously presented in the working paper, as well as more recent evidence where available. Evidence is drawn from a representative survey of young people (the Young People in Scotland Survey 2021), as well as a number of non-representative surveys, YouGov weekly polls and qualitative research with young people and parents. Findings presented in this report tend to focus more on young people, reflecting the greater applicability of COVID-19 mitigation measures on this age group. Children are often not discussed since they were exempt from many measures.

In terms of **understanding of restrictions**, findings showed that the majority of young people were clear about the rules, particularly around face coverings. In the Young People in Scotland Survey 2021, carried out between February and early April 2021, almost all secondary pupils understood both when, where and why they were expected to wear face coverings. In the Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey of young people aged 11 to 25, conducted between September and early November 2020, most of the respondents were clear about the rules and were confident in accessing information on COVID-19 restrictions.

However, research with parents found low levels of understanding of rules around meeting others, particularly following the easing in May 2021. In qualitative research both young people and parents stated that it was difficult to keep up to date with changing regulations and called for clearer and more accessible information and communications.

In terms of **compliance**, the TeenCovidLife 2 survey carried out between August and October 2020 found most young people reported adhering to mitigation measures. Qualitative research found that most children and young people followed the rules, but often found it difficult to adhere to physical distancing and limits around meeting others when peers did not.

In terms of **attitudes to COVID-19 mitigation measures**, qualitative research showed that the majority of young people and parents were comfortable with them, and recognised them as an appropriate balance of freedoms and restrictions, although some young people felt rules around meeting others were restrictive. Most young people required to wear face coverings in schools were happy to do so, although some found them uncomfortable when worn all day in class. YouGov polling from March 2021 showed that most parents of secondary school children were comfortable with the use of face coverings and maintaining 2 metre physical distance at school, while around a quarter to one third were not comfortable with these measures. In April 2021, most parents had authorised or will authorise their

children to use lateral flow tests in school, although slightly more than a quarter had not authorised it or were still undecided.

In terms of **impacts of COVID-19 mitigation measures**, the majority of young people in the Young People in Scotland survey 2021 did not feel anxious due to wearing face coverings and disagreed that others made them feel uncomfortable for wearing one. However, similar percentages agreed and disagreed that face coverings made it harder to connect with others, and more agreed that it was difficult to understand teachers and follow lessons when teachers were wearing face coverings than disagreed. Just under half also agreed that the rules around meeting others were having a negative impact on their relationships with family and friends and on their mental health, while a quarter of respondents disagreed.

In the **COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS) Round 2**, a survey of parents of children aged 2-7 carried out in November and December 2020, most parents/carers of small children disagreed that their child got upset when seeing others wearing a face covering, and half agreed that their child was happy to wear one. Finally, in YouGov polling from 11-12 May 2021 many parents were concerned about the longer term effect of the pandemic on their child and were seeing changes in the way their child played/behaved as a result of the pandemic.

## 1. Introduction

This report summarises evidence on the use and impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures for children and young people in Scotland. Mitigation measures to reduce transmission among children and young people and to/from adults include the use of face coverings in certain settings including schools and school transport, hand hygiene, 2 metre physical distancing when meeting others, and guidance aimed at young people. The World Health Organisation (WHO) advises that countries monitor the impact of face coverings on young people in particular, including in terms of their health, mental health and transmission of COVID-19, as well as motivators and barriers to wearing face coverings. This report is an attempt to follow that advice and, indeed, go beyond it by monitoring information from parents as well.

This report is the final version of a [working paper](#) published by the Scottish Government in January 2021. It presents updated evidence where possible, and data from the working paper of January 2021 where there has been no updates. The report covers the period of school closures during the first lockdown (March – July 2020), the re-opening of schools after the first lockdown (August – mid-December 2020), the period of the second lockdown (end December 2020 – February 2021) and the re-opening of schools after the second lockdown (gradually since February 2021 with a full return to schools after the Easter break). It includes evidence from children, young people and parents. For weekly data sources, data included in this paper are up to May 2021. Evidence is drawn from qualitative research, non-representative surveys and one representative survey with young people in Scotland.

## 2. Guidance on COVID-19 mitigation measures

A recent assessment by SAGE found that evidence from contact tracing studies suggested that pre-school and primary aged children were less susceptible to COVID-19 infection than adults<sup>1</sup>. There continues to be mixed evidence for secondary aged and older children, who may have higher levels of susceptibility to infection. However, evidence continues to confirm that children and young people are at a lower risk of severe illness than older people<sup>2</sup>.

Guidance around mitigation measures, and the use of face coverings in particular, has been regularly updated by the Scottish Government over the course of the pandemic, in light of emerging evidence. The introduction of the local authority levels system also meant different rules for young people in different areas. A timeline of key decisions relating to face coverings specifically is provided in Figure 2.1.

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<sup>1</sup> Weekly Scottish data on testing and positive COVID-19 cases among children and young people of educational age is available in the [COVID-19 Education Surveillance Report](#), published by Public Health Scotland.

<sup>2</sup>[S1102 Children s Task and Finish Group update to 17th December 2020 paper on children schools and transmission.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

**Figure 2.1 - Timeline of key events and changes in guidance related to face coverings**

6 April 2020	WHO released interim guidance which advised that there was insufficient evidence to support the use of face masks and coverings by the general public.
28 April	Scottish Government guidance to advise that members of the public were recommended to wear face coverings where physical distancing was difficult.
5 June	WHO published new advice that to prevent COVID-19 transmission effectively in areas of community transmission, governments should encourage the general public to wear face coverings in specific situations and settings.
22 June	Scottish Government guidance advised that face coverings were mandatory on public transport and strongly recommended in other settings. This included all children and young people over five.
10 July	Face coverings became mandatory in retail settings including hair dressers and shopping centres. This included all children and young people over five.
7 August	Face coverings were made mandatory in a list of other settings and face visors were removed from the regulations.
30 July	Decision taken that face coverings were not a mandatory requirement for children in schools and were only necessary for staff in certain circumstances. Guidance on preparing for re-opening schools was published.
20 August	Announcements made by First Minister that face coverings were to be worn in a larger number of settings, e.g. cafes.
21 August	WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO issued advice on the use of face coverings for children in the community in the context of COVID-19.
25 August	First Minister announced face coverings to be worn in secondary schools in communal areas and on school transport for children age 5 plus to bring them into line with public use. Updated schools guidance was published.
14 September	WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO issued updated advice on school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19.
16 October	Face coverings became mandatory in workplace canteens.
19 October	Face coverings became mandatory in communal areas in workplaces.
29 October	Exemption card launched.
30 October	Scottish Government guidance on reducing risks in schools updated to reflect that in level 3 and 4 areas all staff and pupils should wear a face covering in classrooms during lessons in the senior phase.
6 April 2021	The First Minister announced that all adults and secondary-school pupils were required to wear a face covering indoors in classrooms and in communal areas, when schools returned to full-time in person learning after Easter break. Children aged 5 and over should continue to wear a face covering on school transport in line with the guidelines for public transport.

Since August 2020, there was a requirement for physical distancing between young people where practicable in secondary schools. There was no such requirement for children in primary schools. In both primary and secondary schools, there was a requirement for a 2 metre physical distancing between adults and between children and adults whenever possible. This has been the guideline since August 2020. However, when secondary schools initiated a phased/part-time return to face-to-face learning in Spring 2021, there was a period in which young people were asked to maintain a 2 metre physical distancing between themselves. Once the return to full-time in-person learning was completed, and in recognition that most secondary schools could only support a full-time return to school when there was no requirement for physical distancing, young people were encouraged to maintain physical distancing wherever practicable.

In such a fluid context, data collection on understanding of, adherence to and experience of mitigation measures is challenging. Any research with young people has a substantial lead-in time, during which relevant guidance and/or the level of any given local authority area can change. This means that research questions have to be limited to self-assessed understanding of guidance, rather than objective assessments of knowledge of rules at a given time and in a given area.

There are few representative surveys of young people, due to a lack of sampling frames for this population group outwith a school setting, and very limited opportunities to carry out surveys within school time. With the exception of the representative Young People in Scotland Survey, the majority of evidence presented in this report is based on open sample online surveys which cannot be treated as representative of the population of young people in Scotland, or on qualitative research, which highlights the range of views held and issues faced, but not their prevalence. While these sources of evidence individually do not provide the highest level of robustness, in combination they provide an overall indication of young people's experiences of COVID-19 mitigation measures, and supplement the representative findings. Children are often not included in relevant research as they were exempted from many of the COVID-19 mitigation measures.

### **3. Understanding of COVID-19 mitigation measures**

#### **3.1 Evidence from children and young people**

Robust quantitative data from young people are available from the **Young People in Scotland Survey 2021**. The online omnibus survey of secondary school pupils was carried out by Ipsos MORI between 8 February and 2 April 2021, during the second lockdown and immediately after. The survey was completed by a representative sample of 1,361 state-sector secondary school pupils in Scotland, aged 12-18 years old<sup>3</sup>. The majority of the surveys (75%) were completed at home, while 25% were completed at school.

The Scottish Government commissioned the following questions on understanding of face coverings guidance (4 point scale very unclear – very clear):

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<sup>3</sup> The data were weighted by gender, year group, urban-rural classification, and SIMD classification.

- How clear or unclear are you about when and where you are expected to wear face coverings?
- And how clear or unclear are you about the reasons why you have to wear face coverings in some situations?

The rules on face coverings were clear to pupils. More than 9 out of 10 secondary pupils (94%) were very/fairly clear about when and where they were expected to wear face coverings and about the reasons why they had to wear them in some situations.

The **Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey**<sup>4</sup> was an online survey which ran between 28 September and 2 November 2020 when schools had re-opened and received 6,043 responses from young people aged 11-25 across Scotland. The survey asked respondents to rate their knowledge of current COVID-19 restrictions, such as how many households can meet, physical distancing rules and requirements to wear face coverings. As this was an open survey, it is not representative of young people in Scotland. In particular, most survey respondents were aged under 18 and around six in ten were female. The survey ran alongside focus groups with particular groups of vulnerable young people, which are introduced in Section 4.1.

54% of young people responding said that they knew what the rules were in general, but were not sure on all the details; 43% said they knew what all the current rules were; and only 3% said they did not know what the rules were.

The Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey also asked young people if they knew how to access information about various topics related to COVID-19. The topics that young people felt most confident in accessing information about were information and updates about COVID-19 restrictions (87%) and advice about COVID-19 restrictions (83%). The topic that young people felt least confident accessing information about was financial support that may be available to them (34%).

The survey also provided young people with an opportunity to make any comments around access to information on COVID-19. Just over 1,000 open text responses were received. The majority of respondents did not have any comments about accessing information. Of those that did have comments on this, the most commonly raised issue (by just over 10% (110) of responses) was that information on COVID-19 and related restrictions was confusing. In addition to the need for clearer information, there were also some ideas about how to make information more accessible (48 responses). An identified issue was poor internet connection and lack of access to computers (43 responses). A small number of young people (24 responses) felt that information relating to the pandemic was clear and easy to find.

The **TeenCovidLife 2 survey** is an online survey of 12-18 year olds on the impacts of COVID-19 on their lives run by the University of Edinburgh. It is based on an open sample and is not representative of young people in Scotland. The survey ran between August and October 2020 with a sample of 2,232 young people<sup>5</sup> and the

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<sup>4</sup> [Lockdown Lowdown: A survey of young people in Scotland about their 'new normal' lives as lockdown restrictions change](#)

<sup>5</sup> Female participants were slightly overrepresented (61%).

results were published in February 2021<sup>6</sup>. It was designed to assess how young people were coping after the first lockdown as measures began to ease and schools re-opened after the summer break. The survey included questions on understanding of the COVID-19 guidance and trust in information.

According to the findings, 6 out of 10 of the respondents found the Scottish Government guidance on COVID-19 somewhat or extremely easy to understand, compared with around a third (34%) who found the UK Government guidance somewhat or extremely easy to understand.

To assess their confidence in medical guidance, participants were asked how much they trusted medical and health advice from the Scottish Government, the UK Government and from medical workers, such as doctors and nurses. Young people reported higher levels of trust in medical advice when it came from medical workers (65% of the sample trusted them a lot) compared with medical advice from the Scottish Government and the UK Government (32% and 18% respectively of the sample trusted them a lot).

Qualitative research with young people aged 11 to 25 was carried out by the **Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP)**<sup>7</sup>. The study explored young people's perceptions of the UK government's decision-making and messaging in response to COVID-19 during the UK-wide lockdown in March 2020, as well as recommendations for effective messaging. This was a collaborative study combining data from the University of Southampton, University of Edinburgh and University College London. Thirty-six online focus group discussions were conducted with 150 young people from across the UK<sup>8</sup>, including Edinburgh and the Lothians, Glasgow and Fife.

The study (to be published) found that:

- Clearer and more consistent messaging was needed. Even though messaging on physical distancing during the early stages of the pandemic was clear, young people felt that messaging around the impact of COVID-19 on aspects of their lives, such as education, was unclear.
- Positive messaging was preferred, including ideas for activities to do during lockdown.
- Messaging should be aimed at young people. Often government information was not relevant to them, which made them feel overlooked in political decision making.
- Many young people lost their trust in the decision making of the UK Government in the early stages of the pandemic, which was primarily related to the belief that lockdown measures were introduced too late.
- Many of the young people participating felt that other age groups were not adhering to the restrictions, and that their age group was being unfairly judged by the media.

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<sup>6</sup> [TeenCovidLife: Survey 2 Results | The University of Edinburgh](#)

<sup>7</sup> [CAHSS funds nine innovative COVID-19 knowledge-exchange projects](#)

<sup>8</sup> Including Southampton, Winchester, Manchester, Brighton, Birmingham, Greater London, Edinburgh and the Lothians, Glasgow, and Fife.

- Young people felt responsible for protecting others from the virus by adhering to the rules.
- Young people demonstrated a strong sense of social responsibility and believed they could play a larger role in addressing the pandemic such as helping to educate older generations about safety and the impact of COVID-19. However, young people felt excluded from opportunities to help or volunteer, which caused frustration and left many feeling side-lined during a time of national crisis.

**Qualitative research with vulnerable children, young people, and parents** was conducted by nine third sector stakeholders<sup>9</sup> with an interest in specific vulnerable groups, to assess their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This involved focus groups and individual interviews with 247 participants between 25 January and 20 April 2021 in different Scottish regions<sup>10</sup>. A previously developed topic guide supported stakeholders throughout the interviews and focus groups.

Vulnerable groups covered were:

- Children and young people with additional support needs and their parents, with one or more factors requiring significant or co-ordinated support
- Children, young people, and mothers with domestic abuse experiences
- Children, young people, and parents who were asylum seeking and/or from minority ethnic backgrounds
- Young and single parents
- Parents in the perinatal period.

Overall, most children and young people understood COVID-19 mitigation measures and why they were important. However, participants perceived an ongoing change in measures which they found confusing, with many finding it difficult to stay up to date. There was a general agreement that distinct rules for different age groups of children and young people made understanding and adherence difficult, particularly around socialising. Many young people felt that the different rules for children and young people of different ages were unfair and that the reasons for the difference were not explained sufficiently. There was a lack of understanding among some children and young people why restaurants and pubs had been opened up before schools, baby and toddler's groups and nurseries during the easing of the first lockdown.

Children and young people received information on COVID-19 from different sources, including friends and family, social media, the BBC, TV news and government websites. Participants felt that there was a need for information to be adapted to the abilities of different vulnerable groups (e.g. simple language and autistic-friendly information) and in community languages.

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<sup>9</sup> Enable, Partners in Advocacy, Scottish Woman's Aid, Shakti Woman's Aid, Scottish Refugee Council, Article 12, Lickety Spit, Parent Network Scotland, Home Start.

<sup>10</sup> Data collection took place in different Scottish regions, including Angus, Dundee, East Lothian, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh Area and City, Fife, Glasgow Area and City, Highland, Shetland, and Wigtownshire.

### 3.2 Evidence from parents

Weekly **YouGov polling** conducted by the Scottish Government contains a number of questions asked of a small sample of around 200 parents of children aged 18 years old or under, as part of a wider online poll of around 1,000 adults aged 18+ across Scotland<sup>11</sup>. While no quota controls were set on parents within the sample, given that the overall sample is designed to be representative of adults 18+ across Scotland we would expect the sub-sample of parents to fall out as broadly representative. However, with the relatively small sample sizes, especially when results are based on sub-samples such as age of child, findings should be interpreted with caution and as providing an indication of the prevalence of views and behaviours only.

In terms of understanding of COVID-19 measures, YouGov polling from 23-24 February 2021, 23-24 March 2021 and 25-26 May 2021 asked parents of children under 18 years old to identify the correct restrictions for their children when meeting with others. Note that for each poll discussed below, the questions were asked in a different way.

For parents of children under 12 years old, over half were able to correctly identify the rules in place in February<sup>12</sup> and March<sup>13</sup> (59% on 23-24 February and 57% on 23-24 March)<sup>14</sup>. On 25-26 May<sup>15</sup>, when some indoor contact was allowed again, percentages correctly identifying rules<sup>16</sup> were similar for outdoor contact (50% identified the correct rule), but substantially lower for indoor contact (18% identified the correct rule for meeting indoors in private households, and 16% identified the correct rule for meeting indoors in public spaces). The May findings need to be interpreted in the context of the recent change to a more mixed set of rules for different environments, and the overall poor knowledge of restrictions among adults. Just over one in three (35%) were correctly aware of their level restriction for meeting in-home, and knowledge in other environments was lower as emerged from the 25-26 May polling.

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<sup>11</sup> The survey is conducted online via YouGov, interviewing c.1,000 adults 18+ across Scotland each week. Fieldwork dates are as shown, although a small number of interviews usually take place on the morning of the following day. YouGov apply weighting to the data to match the population profile to adjust for any over/under representations and to maximise consistency from wave to wave.

<sup>12</sup> Correct rules in 23-24 February 2021 for under 12: Those who have returned to school or nursery need to follow the same rules as those who have not returned; Those who have returned to school or nursery can meet with any number of other children outdoors as long as any adults follow the rules; When meeting up with someone from another household children under 12 do not count towards the numbers; Under 12s who have not returned to school can meet with any number of other children to play outdoors as long as the adults follow the rules.

<sup>13</sup> Correct rules in 23-24 March 2021 for under 12: Under 12s can still meet with any number of other children to play outdoors as long as the adults follow the rules; When meeting up with anyone from another household children under 12 do not count towards the numbers.

<sup>14</sup> Sample sizes: 23-24 February 2021 145 parents with children under 12 years old; 23-24 February 2021 81 parents with children 12-17 years old. 23-24 March 2021 115 parents with children under 12 years old; 23-24 March 2021 57 parents with children 12-17 years old.

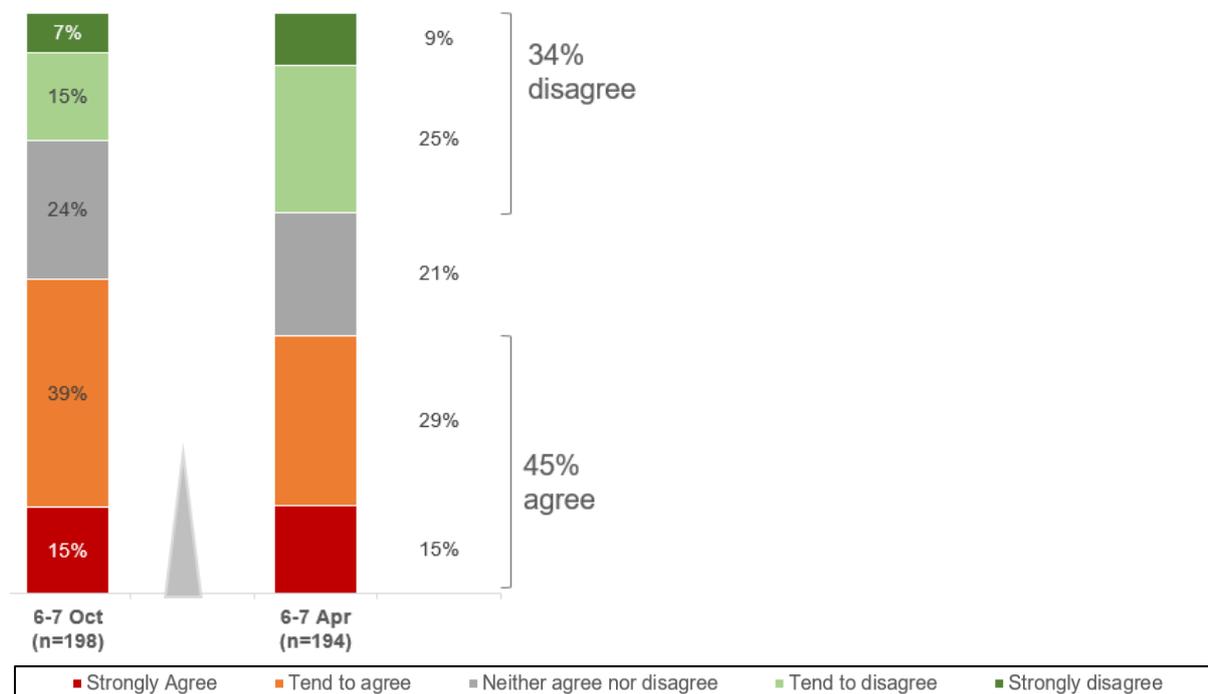
<sup>15</sup> Sample sizes: 25-26 May 2021 147 parents with children under 12 years old; 25-26 May 2021 107 parents with children 12-17 years old.

<sup>16</sup> Correct rules in 25-26 May 2021 for under 12: Children under 12 count towards the number of households, but not the number of people when meeting indoors; Children under 12 don't count towards the number of people, or the number of households – they can meet in unrestricted numbers when meeting outdoors.

For parents with children aged 12-17 years old, there was a decrease in the understanding of the rules, from 54% of parents identifying the correct rule in February<sup>17</sup> to 34% in March<sup>18</sup> 2021. On 25-26 May, 34% identified the correct rule for meeting indoors in private households, 36% identified the correct rule for meeting indoors in public spaces and 26% identified the correct rule for meeting outdoors<sup>19</sup>. Again as stated above, May findings need to be interpreted in the context of relatively low knowledge of adult restrictions at that time.

In the 6-7 April 2021 YouGov polling, parents were asked to what extent they found the restrictions for children confusing. 45% of all the parents in the sample<sup>20</sup> agreed that restrictions for children were confusing, a decrease from October 2020 (54% of parents agreed), while 34% disagreed. See Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement “I find the restrictions for children confusing at the moment”**



Source: YouGov polling; Sample sizes: 6-7 October 2020 198; 6-7 April 2021 194. ‘Not applicable’ option excluded.

<sup>17</sup> Correct rules in 23-24 February 2021 for 12-17 years old: Those who have returned to school or nursery need to follow the same rules as those who have not returned; 12-17 year olds can meet with one other 12-17 year old at a time outdoors.

<sup>18</sup> Correct rules in 23-24 March 2021 for 12-17 years old: 12-17 year olds can meet in a group up to four 12-17 year olds from up to four households outdoors.

<sup>19</sup> Correct rules in 25-26 May for 12-17 years old: 12-17 year olds must follow the same restrictions in number of people and households as those aged 18 years or over when meeting indoors and outdoors.

<sup>20</sup> Sample sizes: 6-7 October 198 parents; 6-7 April 194 parents.

## 4. Attitudes to COVID-19 mitigation measures and safety

### 4.1 Evidence from children and young people

The **qualitative research with vulnerable groups** found that most children and young people agreed that it was important to implement COVID-19 mitigation measures. Many participants also said that there had been a good balance between freedom and restrictions. At the same time, many struggled with the long duration of restrictions and were upset about being unable to see their friends – some felt that rules were too restrictive in this regard.

In terms of face coverings, most children and young people had no problems with wearing face coverings where they were required. They were happy that they protected them and others. However, some children and young people found face coverings uncomfortable. They said it was hard to breathe while wearing one and gave them sore heads. Some young people were also unhappy with having to wear a face covering all day in school upon returning to in-person teaching. They did not understand the need for this and would have preferred wearing face coverings only in communal areas or to be given breaks to take the mask off.

Many children and young people felt unsafe whenever others did not wear face coverings or did not adhere to physical distancing. In these cases, they called for a stricter enforcement of measures – for example, in shops and public transport.

The non-representative **Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey** (28 September to 2 November 2020) asked young people who had returned to in person learning whether they felt that their educational establishment had re-opened in a safe way. Almost two thirds (63%) of respondents agreed that this was the case, while 17% disagreed.

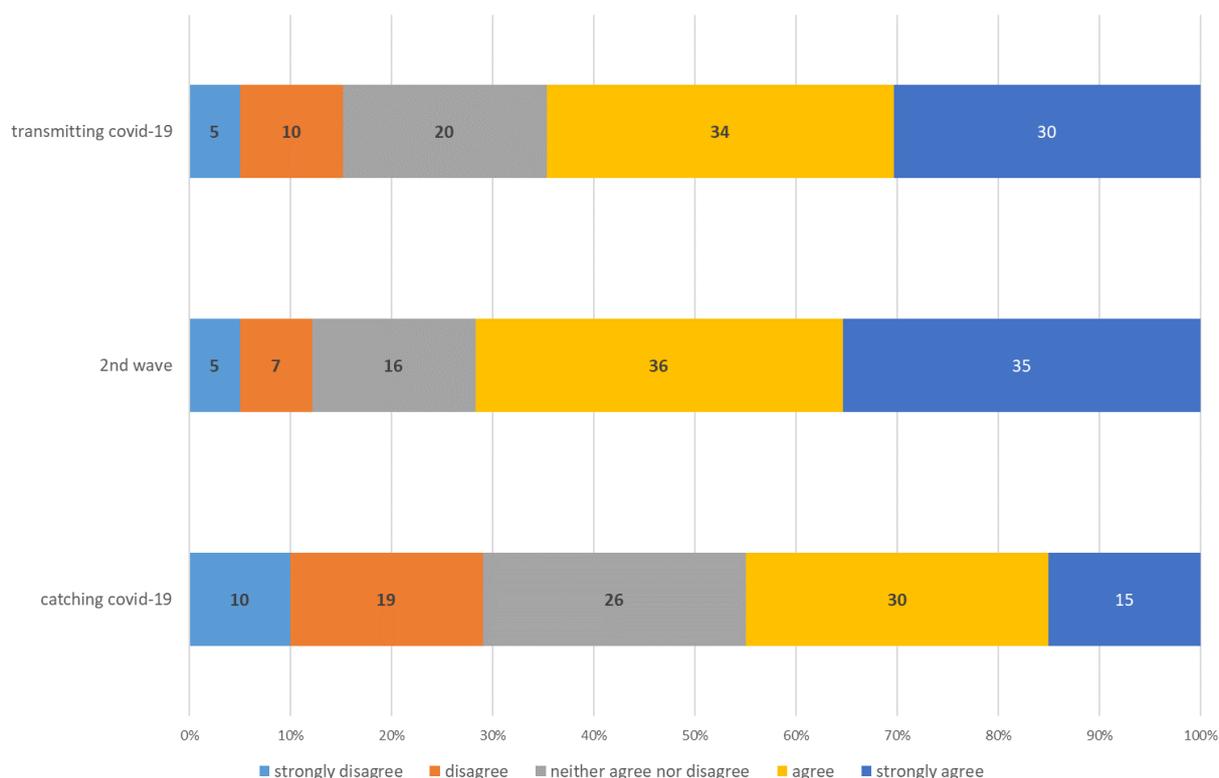
The survey provided an opportunity for young people to highlight anything they would like changed about the current arrangements for their educational course. There were 2,543 freely typed responses to this question. Just under half of those young people did not want anything changed (1,140 responses).

A common theme emerged in the open text responses was that safety measures within their school needed to be enforced or increased. These measures included the use of face coverings, physical distancing and sanitisation practises:

"I think there should be more social distancing measures and stricter mask and hand sanitiser rules."

The Lockdown Lowdown 2 survey also asked young people how concerned they were about COVID-19. Around seven in ten were concerned about a second wave and just under two thirds were concerned about transmitting COVID-19 to others. Just under half were concerned about catching COVID-19 themselves. See Figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1 - Concerns around COVID-19**



Source: Lockdown Lowdown 2 Survey

When asked if they had any further thoughts on these issues, around two fifths of the respondents (684 in 1,632 free typed responses) had no further comments. Common themes emerged from those who had further thoughts were fears around transmitting COVID-19 to others, decline of their mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak and worries about vulnerable family members.

In addition to the survey, the Lockdown Lowdown 2 project included five **focus groups** with a total of 37 groups of vulnerable young people aged 14 to 24<sup>21</sup>. The focus groups took place between 8 and 29 October 2020 and the following vulnerable groups were covered:

- Young carers
- Black Minority Ethnic young people
- Disabled young people
- Young people with experience of custody and/or the criminal justice system
- Care experienced young people.

The topic guides for the focus groups covered prompts on COVID-19 mitigation measures, with some additional detail in the disabled group. It should be noted that the focus groups took place in October 2020, prior to the new restrictions which made the wearing of face coverings mandatory in class for senior phase pupils. It should also be noted that the focus groups covered a wide range of topics, both specific to the lived experience of the particular vulnerable groups, and more widely

<sup>21</sup> [Lockdown Lowdown: the Voices of Seldom Heard groups](#)

on young people's experience of COVID-19, and were not specifically focused on COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Young people in the focus groups were appreciative of mitigation measures taken in educational establishments. Participants also agreed with physical distancing, although some found it difficult to do in schools and when socialising with friends in public. Some reported their friendship groups not adhering to physical distancing. However, for others physical distancing was less of an issue during the summer period when meeting friends outdoors.

One place where many young people felt that mitigation measures and physical distancing were not adequately enforced was public transport.

The majority of participants agreed that face coverings should be worn in public and no participants expressed problems with wearing them in school. Some explicitly stated that they had no negative impact on them.

The only concern around face coverings raised was from a young carer, who felt that others were not wearing face coverings when required or not wearing them correctly, making them feel unsafe due to the impact that this might have on their family.

Young people that had an exemption from face coverings found that this was managed well through lanyards in both school and shops, although one participant had witnessed an incident where an individual with an exemption lanyard was stigmatised by another passenger on public transport.

The **TeenCovidLife Survey 2** included some questions on how participants felt about returning to school after the first lockdown measures eased and schools re-opened and on wider safety concerns around COVID-19 in schools. Almost half of the participants (48% of the sample) claimed it was 'pretty much' or 'very' true that they were looking forward to going back to school and the majority (81% of the sample) said it was 'pretty much' or 'very' true that they missed friends from school.

Participants (1,958 in total) were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "It is safe for me and other pupils to return to school full-time". Young people were divided over whether or not it was safe for them to return to school following the first lockdown. Around a third (34%) agreed it was safe, while a similar percentage (36%) did not think it was safe. 30% neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked "How do you feel about returning to school after the summer holidays?" (1,921 respondents), 42% said they were at least moderately worried, with a higher prevalence among female participants (48% compared with 30% of male participants). Young people were then asked "To what extent are the following statements true for you ... I worry that returning to school will increase the risk of me getting COVID-19. I worry that returning to school will increase my family's risk of getting COVID-19". 6 out of 10 participants reported that it was 'pretty much' or 'very' true that they were worried that returning to school would increase the risk for their families, while 48% of the participants were worried for their own risk of contracting COVID-19.

## 4.2 Evidence from parents

Public Health Scotland ran the **COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS) Round 2**, an online survey for parents of children aged 2–7, in November-December 2020<sup>22</sup>. This asked questions on the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions on young people and their families eight months into the pandemic. It was an open sample<sup>23</sup> survey and cannot be treated as representative of parents of children of this age. It was completed by 5,684 respondents. The second round of the survey started when COVID-19 cases declined and restrictions started to ease and schools/nurseries were open.

The vast majority of parents/carers (89% of the sample) agreed that they were confident that schools and childcare providers were doing what was needed to reduce the risk of infection and almost all the parents/carers (90% of the sample) agreed that their child was happy to return to school/childcare. 38% of respondents agreed that they were concerned about their child becoming ill with COVID-19, while 36% disagreed. Almost half of the parents/carers in the sample (47%) agreed that they were concerned that their child would pass the virus on to someone else, while 28% disagreed.

**YouGov weekly polling** from 20-21 April 2021 showed that most parents of children aged under 18 (73%) agreed that their child's school/nursery had kept them well informed about safety measures in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and over half of the parents (57%) were confident that schools and nurseries had the right measures in place to limit the risk of infection amongst returning pupils. Almost a quarter of the parents (24%) were not confident that schools and nurseries had the right measures in place. The percentage of parents who were not confident that the right measures were in place increased over time, from 16% in the polling from 23-24 February 2021 to 20% in 9-10 March 2021 and 24% in 20-21 April 2021<sup>24</sup>. See Figure 4.2 below.

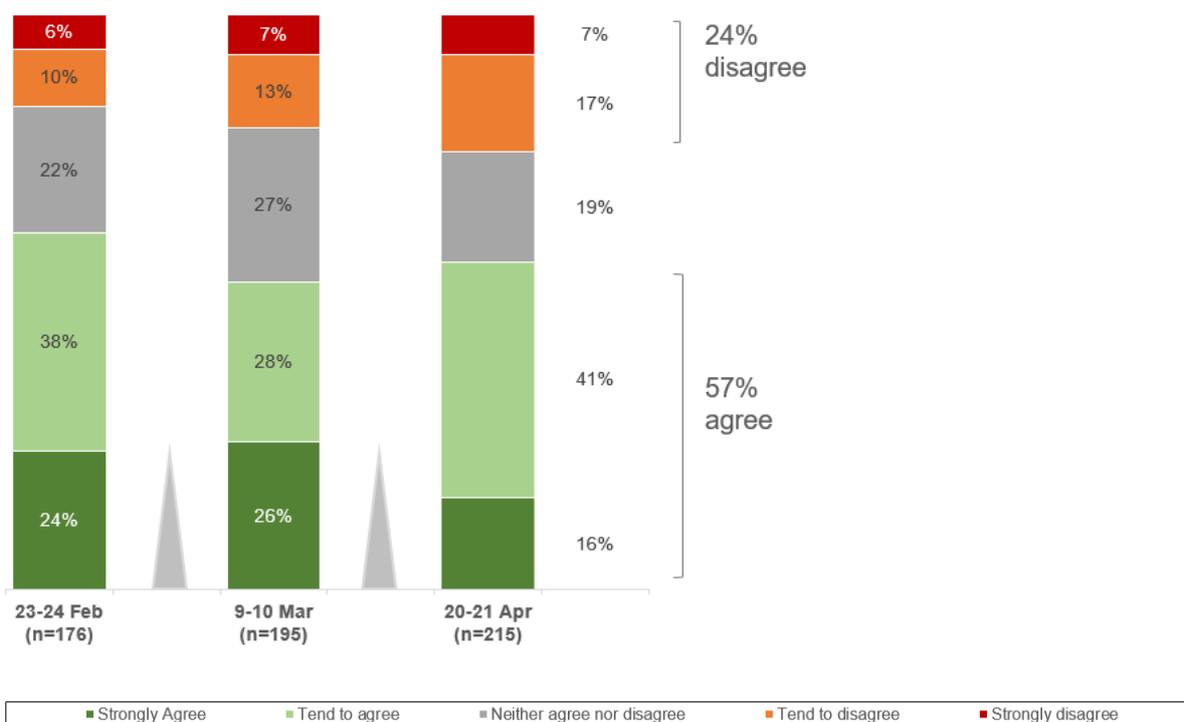
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<sup>22</sup> [COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey \(CEYRIS\) \(publichealthscotland.scot\)](https://publichealthscotland.scot)

<sup>23</sup> The sample included slightly fewer 2 and 7-year old children and slightly more 3 and 4- year olds than the national benchmarking.

<sup>24</sup> Sample sizes: 23-24 February 2021 176 parents; 9-10 March 2021 195 parents; 20-21 April 2021 215 parents.

**Figure 4.2 – Thinking in general about your children at this time, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement “I am confident that schools and nurseries have in place the right measures to limit the risk of infection (amongst returning pupils)?**



Source: YouGov polling. Sample sizes: 23-24 February 2021 176; 9-10 March 2021 195; 20-21 April 2021 215. ‘Not applicable’ option excluded.

Around two fifths (42%) of parents of children under 18 agreed that they were worried about their children picking up or passing on COVID-19 at school or nursery, while 29% disagreed and 29% neither agreed nor disagreed. The percentages remained relatively stable between February and April 2021<sup>25</sup>.

In terms of parents’ attitudes towards their children (11-18 years old) using lateral flow tests, the YouGov polling from 20-21 April 2021 showed that 73% of parents claimed they had authorised or will authorise their children to use the tests, an increase since 17-18 March 2021 (58%)<sup>26</sup>. However, 28% had not authorised their children to use the tests or were still undecided in April 2021.

YouGov polling from 17-18 March 2021 showed that:

- 65% of parents<sup>27</sup> of secondary school children were comfortable with their children wearing face coverings in the classroom
- 74% of parents<sup>28</sup> of secondary school children were comfortable with their children wearing face coverings whilst moving around the school

<sup>25</sup> 43% of parents in the polling from 9-10 February 2021 (n=153); 46% from 2-3 March 2021 (n=160); 40% from 17-18 March 2021 (n=162); 42% from 20-21 April 2021 (n=206).

<sup>26</sup> Sample sizes: 17-18 March 2021 141 parents; 20-21 April 2021 106 parents.

<sup>27</sup> Sample size 118 parents.

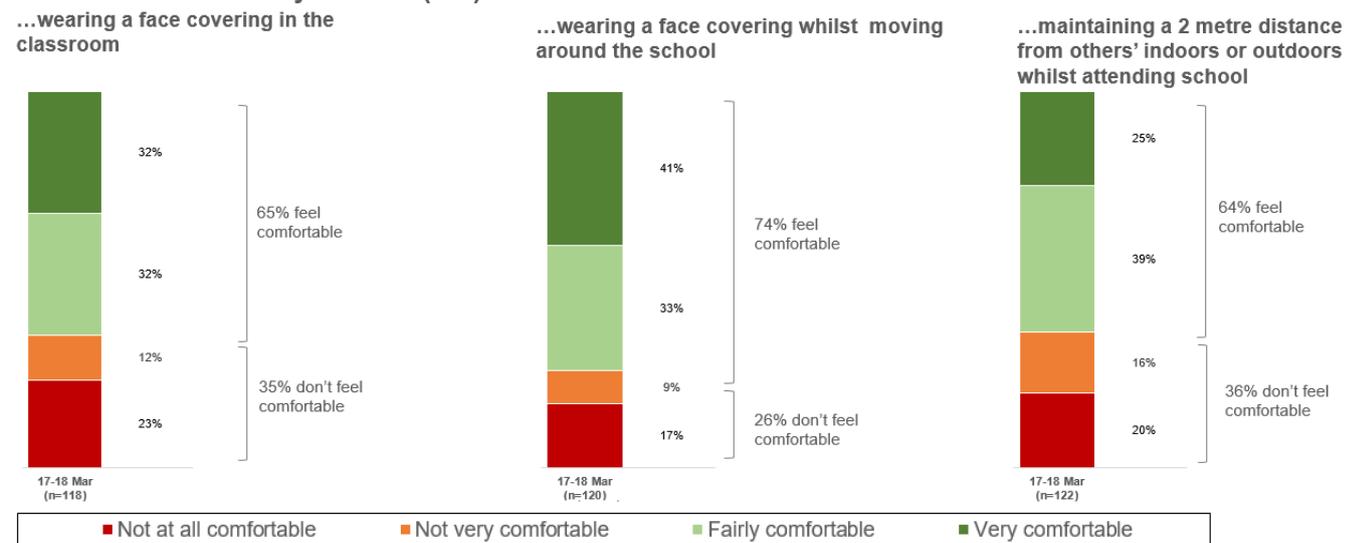
<sup>28</sup> Sample size 120 parents.

- 64% of parents<sup>29</sup> of secondary school children were comfortable with their children maintaining a 2 metre distance from others indoors or outdoors whilst attending school.

Overall while most parents of secondary school children were comfortable with the use of face coverings and maintaining a 2 metre physical distance at school, around a quarter to one third were not comfortable with these measures. See Figure 4.3 below.

**Figure 4.3 – Level of comfort with children wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distance at schools**

Level of comfort with your child(ren)....



Source: YouGov polling 17-18 March 2021. 'Not applicable' option excluded.

A very small open sample, non-representative, poll carried out in February 2021 by **Disability Equality Scotland** on its website<sup>30</sup>, among other open questions, asked respondents (84 respondents in total) if they had any concerns about the phased return to school for pupils across Scotland. Findings are to be interpreted with caution as the number of participants was very small. Respondents underlined the importance for parents/carers to comply with COVID-19 guidance. The following quotes provide examples of the issues covered:

“The big issue might come from parents dropping and picking up the pupils. They could easily mix with other parents and try to do their usual routine of chatting. They need to be strict and only drop off and then leave school. No mixing and no car sharing.”

“I am very concerned that physical distancing on school buses is impossible because my local council says they have no funding available to provide additional school buses. I will not be sending children to school because the school buses are badly overcrowded with standing room only.”

<sup>29</sup> Sample size 122 parents.

<sup>30</sup> [Weekly Poll – Reopening of Schools \(Week Beginning 22 February 2021\) | Have Your Say... \(yoursayondisability.scot\)](https://www.yoursayondisability.scot/weekly-poll-reopening-of-schools-week-beginning-22-february-2021)

From a similar, again very small and non-representative, poll by Disability Equality Scotland conducted in March 2021<sup>31</sup> respondents (69 in total) were worried that pupils who had been exempt from wearing a face covering could be bullied and they based their worries on the abuse that adults who were exempted from wearing a face covering suffered in public places:

“I have an exemption card and you still get abuse and I am an adult and find it difficult so how will a child cope as school bullying is bad enough.”

Some parents were worried about the impact of face coverings on pupils with hearing impairments:

“It will have a huge, negative impact on our deaf children and others with sensory and communication barriers. Exemptions need to be better & clearer for them and adults in the general world!”

Finally, some respondents argued that the guidance on face coverings should be extended to all pupils, including those in primary schools, and that face coverings should be worn also when socialising outside of schools.

Disabled people (334 individuals) who participated in a similar poll in August 2020<sup>32</sup> also supported the use of face coverings in schools and on school transport. Similar concerns highlighted in the poll of March 2021 were also expressed in August 2020:

- stigma for those exempt from the regulations
- the impact of face coverings on pupils with hearing impairments and others who relied on lip reading and facial expressions for communications
- affordability and availability of face coverings
- the lack of use or enforcement of face coverings on school transport, particularly when school transport was shared with the general public.

In the **qualitative research with vulnerable groups** conducted by third sector organisations in 2021, parents/carers mentioned that physical distancing can be difficult for children without spatial awareness.

Parents with exemptions for themselves or their children noted ongoing stigmatisation and discrimination of people without face coverings. They said that exemptions had been misused and taken advantage of, and had lost their meaning. Therefore, some children, young people, and parents wore face coverings despite exemptions – both to avoid stigmatisation or because they did not want to wear a visible lanyard stating their disability.

“I am exempt, and it’s awful. When I am out in public, I have people watching, I hear whispering. I wear the lanyard but I still have people telling me to put one on. I have started wearing one sometimes now as its saves the whispering. I see Facebook posts saying people are lying to get out of masks and making up problems, like

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<sup>31</sup> [Weekly Poll – Face Covering Guidance in Schools \(Week Beginning 8 March 2021\) | Have Your Say... \(yoursayondisability.scot\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Weekly Poll – COVID-19: Face Coverings in Schools \(Week Beginning 31 August\)](#)

shaming you for being exempt, and they feel there are people faking it. In my college, there are posters to raise awareness that some people can't wear them, but I still get questioned about it, from students and teachers even with the lanyard.”  
(Parent with physical/mental illness)

## 5. Compliance and Enforcement

### 5.1 Evidence from children and young people

The **TeenCovidLife 2 survey** asked young people the following questions on COVID-19 mitigation behaviours, including hand hygiene, physical distancing and use of face coverings:

- ‘Compared to before the COVID-19 lockdown, are you washing your hands more now?’ The majority of respondents (84%) responded that they were washing their hands either much or a little more now than before the first lockdown, with young girls in the sample washing their hands slightly more than young boys in the sample.
- ‘Are you trying to keep your distance from other people who don't live with you when leaving your home?’ 65% of the sample said that they kept their distance from others most or all of the time.
- ‘How often do you wear face coverings on public transport and in shops?’ Almost everyone in the sample (94%) responded that they were wearing a face covering most or all of the time in public transport and in shops.
- ‘How much do you agree or disagree that people should wear a face covering when entering enclosed spaces (e.g. on public transport or in shops)?’ The vast majority of the sample (89%) agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. Older participants, and in particular young girls aged 15-18 years old, reported higher percentages of agreement with the statement.
- ‘People who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 are told to stay at home (self-isolate) for up to 14 days. They must stay at home even if they feel well. If you are asked to stay at home because you have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, how likely are you to stay at home, even if you feel well?’ Almost everyone in the sample (93%) responded that they would be quite or very likely to self-isolate if they had been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, with young girls in the sample being slightly more likely to self-isolate if needed.

The **qualitative research with vulnerable groups** found that most participants adhered to mitigation measures, partly because many were afraid of going out and catching COVID-19. At the same time, it was difficult for most children and young people to stay inside all the time. All participants found it hard to adhere to mitigation measures whenever (they had the impression that) other people did not do so. They expressed annoyance and frustration about other people not sticking to measures and perceived this as unfair. A common example was the impression that others were having big parties, while participants could not even meet with their extended family.

## 5.2 Evidence from parents

The **first round of the CEYRIS**<sup>33</sup> of parents of children aged 2–7 ran between 22 June and 6 July 2020 (during the first lockdown) and included questions on physical distancing. This was an open sample survey and cannot be treated as representative of parents of children of this age. It was completed by 11,228 respondents.

This survey was conducted when households were permitted to meet outside with one other household under physical distancing conditions. However, the physical distancing requirement for under 12 year olds outside was removed towards the end of the fieldwork period for this survey.

Parents whose children had met up with other households were asked a series of questions about keeping their child 2 metres apart from other households.

Just over half of the parents and carers (52%) disagreed when asked whether their child did not understand the need to maintain physical distancing, while 36% agreed. 44% of parents and carers disagreed when they were asked whether they had decided not to keep their child 2 metres apart from people when they met other households, while 34% agreed.

Some findings highlighted the difficulty of physical distancing for this young age group. Specifically, the survey found:

- 76% of the parents and carers agreed that they had found it difficult or stressful to enforce physical distancing measures with their children
- The parents and carers of half of the children (50%) agreed that while they had tried to ensure physical distancing was maintained by their child, they had not been able to
- The parents and carers of just over half of the children (52%) agreed that their child had found physical distancing difficult or upsetting
- The parents and carers of 60% of the children agreed that although their child tried to maintain physical distancing, they easily forgot.

In the **YouGov weekly polling** from 27-28 April 2021 respondents were presented with a list of behaviours and asked which their child had done in the past week. Any which were non-compliant at that time were grouped together to provide a figure for non-compliance.

The majority of parents reported that their children had not done anything non-compliant in the last week. The poll showed that just under a quarter (23%) of parents of children under 12 years old reported that their children had met up with other children in the previous week in a way that was not within the restrictions in place. This was similar to findings from polling on 30-31 March 2021 (24%), but higher than 2-3 March 2021 and 16-17 February 2021 (8-9%), when lockdown restrictions were still in place<sup>34</sup>. The most common non-compliant activity in the 27-

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<sup>33</sup> [COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey \(CEYRIS\) Report 2 Play and learning, outdoors and social interactions](#)

<sup>34</sup> Changes in the questionnaires regarding the options included in this question should be noted when making comparisons across time. Also codes marked as compliant in one week/month may not have been complaint previously.

28 April 2021 polling among children under 12 years old was meeting with children from another household in someone's home for any reason other than childcare (14% of parents with children under 12).

In the YouGov polling from 27-28 April 2021, a third (34%) of parents of children aged 12-17 years old indicated that their child met other children in a non-compliant way, an increase since previous months (23% in 30-31 March 2021, 21% in 2-3 March 2021, 9-10% in 16-17 February 2021 and 19-20 January 2021<sup>35</sup>). The most common activity outside the restrictions in the 27-28 April 2021 polling reported by parents of children 12-17 years old was their children meeting outdoors with someone from another household aged 12 years old or older and not maintaining the 2 metre physical distancing required (19% of parents with children aged 12-17), followed by meeting with someone aged 12+ indoors for any reason other than childcare (12%) and meeting up to 6 people aged 12+ from more than two households indoors in a public space (10%).

In the 6-7 April 2021 YouGov polling, 1 out of 2 parents with children aged 17 and under in the sample (49%) disagreed that they were willing to bend the rules to allow their children to spend more time with friends and family during the Easter break, while 32% agreed. In the 17-18 March 2021 polling, 54% of parents agreed that they could see no reason why their children should not meet their friends indoors if some children were going back to school and nursery, an increase from 9-10 February 2021 (36%). In the 6-7 April 2021 polling, 42% of parents disagreed that children meeting friends from school or nursery could meet them indoors during the Easter break, while 39% agreed. See Figure 5.1 below.

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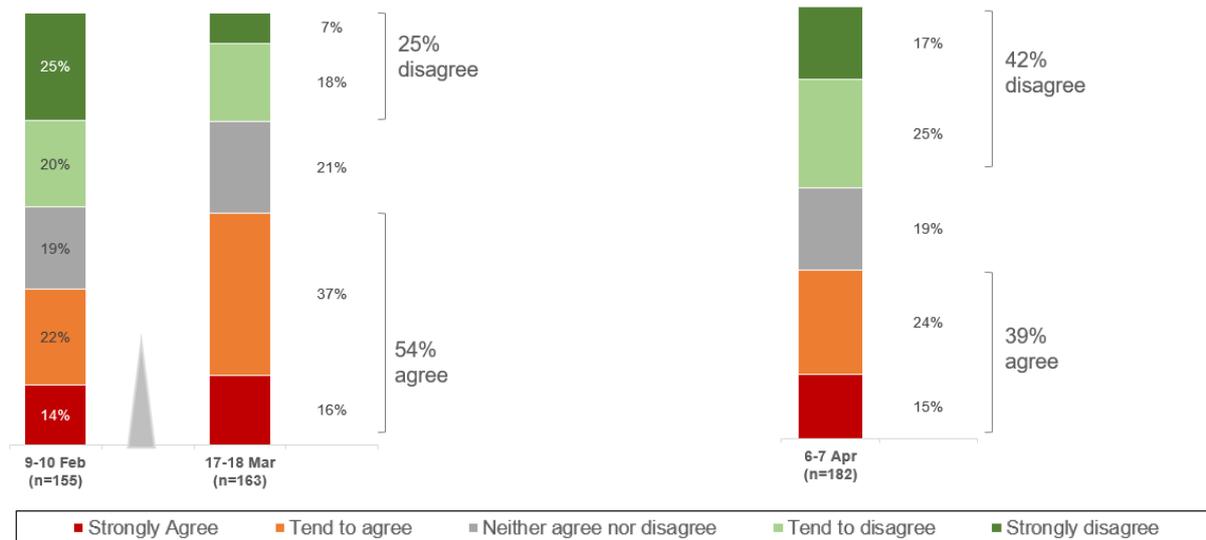
Sample sizes: 16-17 February 2021 144 parents; 2-3 March 2021 156 parents; 30-31 March 2021 156 parents; 27-28 April 2021 115 parents.

<sup>35</sup> Sample sizes: 19-20 January 2021 100 parents; 17-18 February 2021 114 parents; 2-3 March 2021 103 parents; 30-31 March 2021 78 parents; 27-28 April 2021 88 parents.

**Figure 5.1 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement “If some children are going back to school and nursery, I see no reason why my children shouldn’t meet their friends inside” (9-10 Feb and 17-18 Mar) and “If my child is meeting with friends from school or nursery I see no reason why they can’t meet indoors during the Easter break” (6-7 Apr).**

**ASKED PREVIOUSLY: If some children are going back to school and nursery, I see no reason why my children shouldn’t meet their friends inside**

**If my child is meeting with friends from school or nursery I see no reason why they can’t meet indoors during the Easter break**



Source: YouGov polling. Sample sizes: 9-10 February 2021 155; 17-18 March 2021 163; 6-7 April 2021 182. ‘Not applicable’ option excluded.

In the **qualitative research with vulnerable groups** conducted by third sector organisations in 2021, some parents/carers mentioned that it was difficult for children to adhere to the same restrictions as adults. It was also difficult when their children’s peers did not adhere to the rules.

“I don’t know what I can say to make people take it more seriously. It’s not fair when I have things I want and need to do, but other people are still doing what they want.”  
 (Parent with physical/mental illness)

Families who had been shielding described this as very difficult. Parents worried about the negative consequences of their children staying inside all the time and others not adhering to physical distancing measures. Public transport restrictions had a negative impact on one family without access to a car.

## 6. Impacts of COVID-19 mitigation measures

### 6.1 Evidence from children and young people

Questions asking whether young people agree or disagree with the following statements were included in the representative **Young People in Scotland Survey 2021** in February and early April 2021 (5 point strongly agree – strongly disagree):

- Wearing face coverings makes me feel anxious
- Other people have made me feel uncomfortable for wearing a face covering

- It's harder to connect with other people when one or both of us is wearing a face covering
- I find it difficult to understand teachers when they are wearing a face covering
- I find it more difficult to follow lessons when teachers are wearing face coverings.

6 out of 10 secondary pupils (61%) disagreed<sup>36</sup> that wearing face coverings made them feel anxious, while 18% agreed. 7 out of 10 secondary pupils (70%) disagreed that other people have made them feel uncomfortable for wearing a face covering, while 11% agreed.

Girls in the sample were more likely to agree that they felt anxious because of face coverings than boys (24% compared with 11%), as were those with a physical or mental health condition (28% compared with 12% of those with no health condition)<sup>37</sup>. Girls and respondents with a health condition were also more likely to agree that other people made them feel uncomfortable for wearing a face covering than boys (14% compared with 8%) and those with no health condition (17% compared with 8%).

Figure 6.1 shows that those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland<sup>38</sup> (SIMD 1 and 2) were more likely to agree that wearing a face covering made them feel anxious (22% and 23% respectively) than those living in less deprived areas (SIMD 4 – 13%). The percentage that disagreed that face coverings made them feel anxious increased as the area of deprivation decreased, from 51% in SIMD 1 to 69% in SIMD 4 and 5.

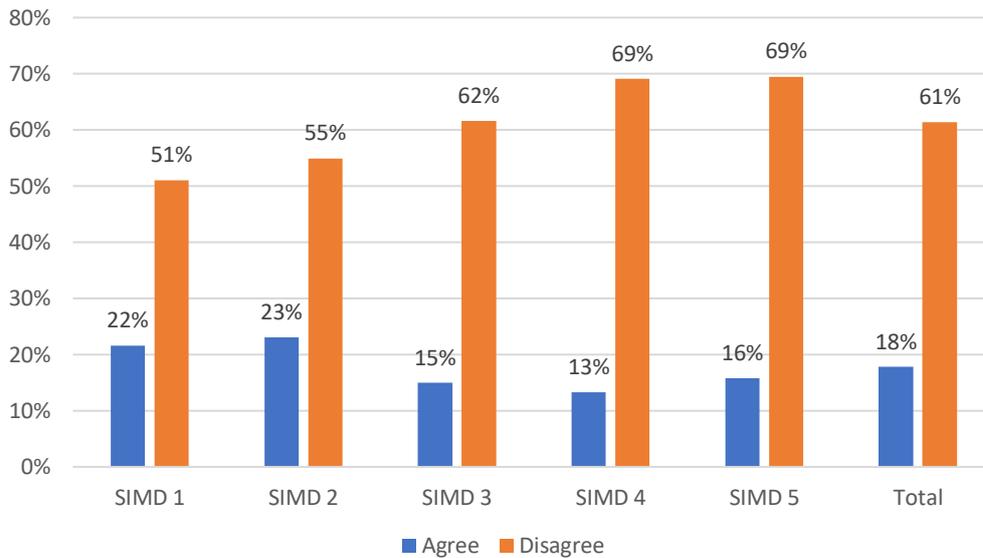
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<sup>36</sup> The questions were in the form of a 5 –point Likert scale for agreement including the following answers: Strongly agree, Tend to agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to disagree, Strongly disagree. For this report, where we say 'disagree' we mean tend to/strongly disagree and where we say 'agree' we mean tend to/strongly agree.

<sup>37</sup> We only report relationships between variables that are statistically significant at 5% significance level.

<sup>38</sup> The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD) ranks data zones from most deprived (ranked 1) to least deprived (rank 5).

**Figure 6.1 - Agreement with the statement ‘Wearing face coverings makes me feel anxious’, by area deprivation**



Source: Young People in Scotland 2021, Sample size: 1,361

More mixed results were reported on trying to connect with others while wearing face coverings. 4 out of 10 secondary pupils (44%) agreed that it was harder to connect with other people when one or both of them was wearing a face covering, while 37% disagreed. Girls were more likely to agree that it was harder to connect due to face coverings than boys (50% compared with 39%).

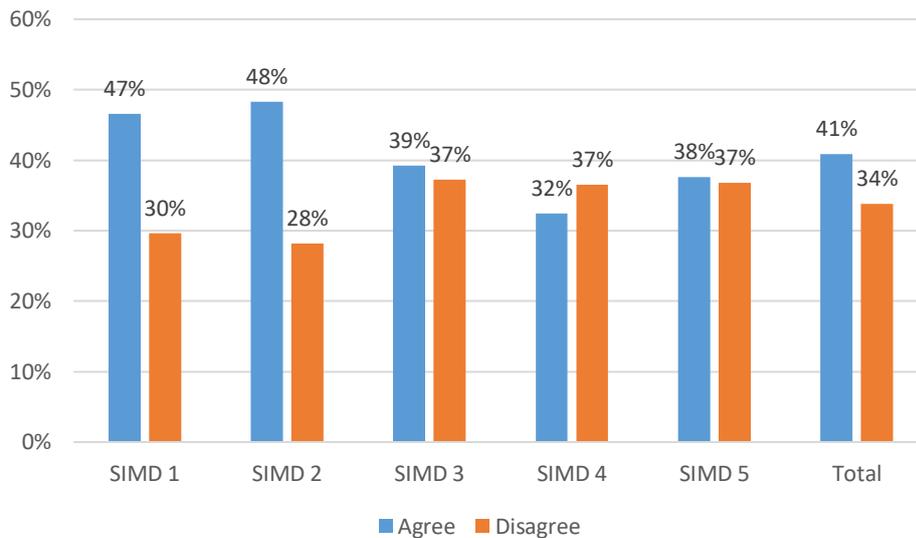
The questions on the impact of face coverings on the education of young pupils revealed that 41% of the pupils agreed that it was difficult to understand teachers when they were wearing a face covering (34% disagreed) and 32% agreed that it was more difficult to follow lessons when teachers were wearing face coverings (though 40% disagreed).

Girls were more likely to agree that it was difficult to understand teachers because of face coverings (47% compared with 35% of boys), as were non-white pupils<sup>39</sup> (53% compare with 40% of white pupils) and pupils living in an urban area (43% compared with 32% of those living in rural areas). Girls were also more likely to agree that it was difficult to follow lessons when teachers were wearing face coverings (35% compared with 29% of boys), as were pupils with a health condition (40% compared with 30% of pupils with no health condition) and pupils living in an urban area (33% compared with 26% of those living in a rural area).

As Figure 6.2 shows, those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland (SIMD 1 and 2) were more likely to agree that it was difficult to understand teachers because of face coverings (47% and 48% respectively) compared with those living in less deprived areas (32% in SIMD 4).

<sup>39</sup> This finding should be read with caution as the sample size for white pupils is 1,235 and for non-white pupils 75.

**Figure 6.2 - Agreement with the statement 'I find it difficult to understand teachers when they are wearing a face covering', by area deprivation**



Source: Young People in Scotland 2021, Sample size: 1,361

The survey also included two agree/disagree statements around the rules for meeting others (5 point, strongly agree – strongly disagree):

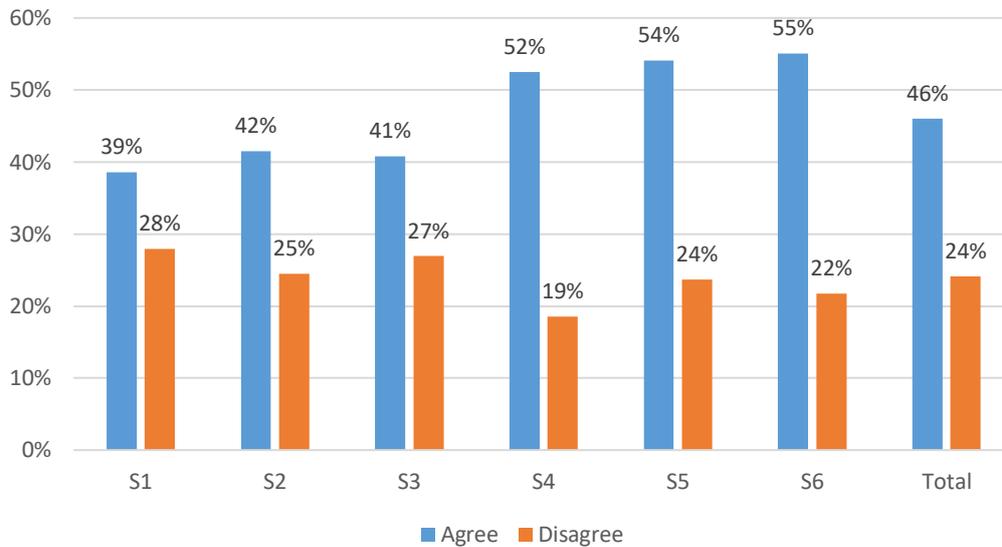
- The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my relationships with my friends and family
- The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my mental health.

Almost half of the secondary pupils in the survey agreed that the rules around meeting others were having a negative impact on their relationships with family and friends (46%) and a negative impact on their mental health (48%), while a quarter of the respondents disagreed and the rest neither agreed nor disagreed.

Agreement that the rules around meeting others had a negative impact on their relationships with family and friends and on their mental health was higher among girls (52% compared with 42% of boys), respondents with a physical or mental health condition (54% compared with 43% of pupils with no health condition) and white pupils (49% compared with 29% of non-white pupils).

As Figure 6.3 shows, the percentage of those who agreed that the rules negatively affected their relationships increased with school year. In S1-S3, 39-42% of the pupils surveyed agreed with the statement compared with 52-55% in S4-S6.

**Figure 6.3 - Agreement with the statement ‘The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my relationships with my friends and family’, by school year**

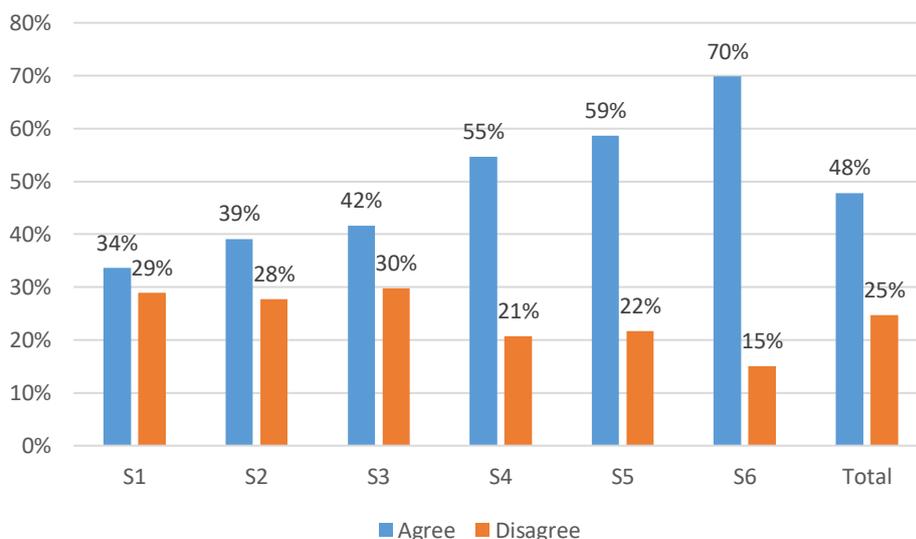


Source: Young People in Scotland 2021, Sample size: 1,361

The negative impact of the rules around meeting others on respondents’ mental health was particularly pronounced among girls (60% agreed compared with 36% of boys), white pupils (51% compared with 25% of non-white pupils) and those with a health condition (60% agreed compared with 40% of those with no health condition).

The percentage of those who agreed that the rules were negatively affecting their mental health increased with the school year. In S1-S3, 34-42% of the sample agreed with the statement, compared with 55% and 59% respectively in S4 and S5 and 70% in S6. See Figure 6.4 below.

**Figure 6.4 - Agreement with the statement ‘The rules around meeting others are having a negative impact on my mental health’, by school year**



Source: Young People in Scotland 2021, Sample size: 1,361

As noted above, the **Lockdown Lowdown 2 focus groups** found that most participants agreed with physical distancing, face coverings and appreciated the safety measures taken by educational establishments.

With regards to physical distancing, disabled participants that were hard of hearing or partially sighted found that the 2 metre physical distancing requirement made it hard for them to hear/see others.

However, a participant with autism found the increased personal space beneficial. A question was raised by one participant about their sports team not being allowed to play, and felt that this negatively impacted their mental health in a way that outweighed COVID-19 safety concerns.

There were no concerns raised about face coverings other than the lack of compliance and enforcement discussed in section 4.1 above. One disabled participant had experience of a further education teacher using see through face coverings, and found this a positive experience.

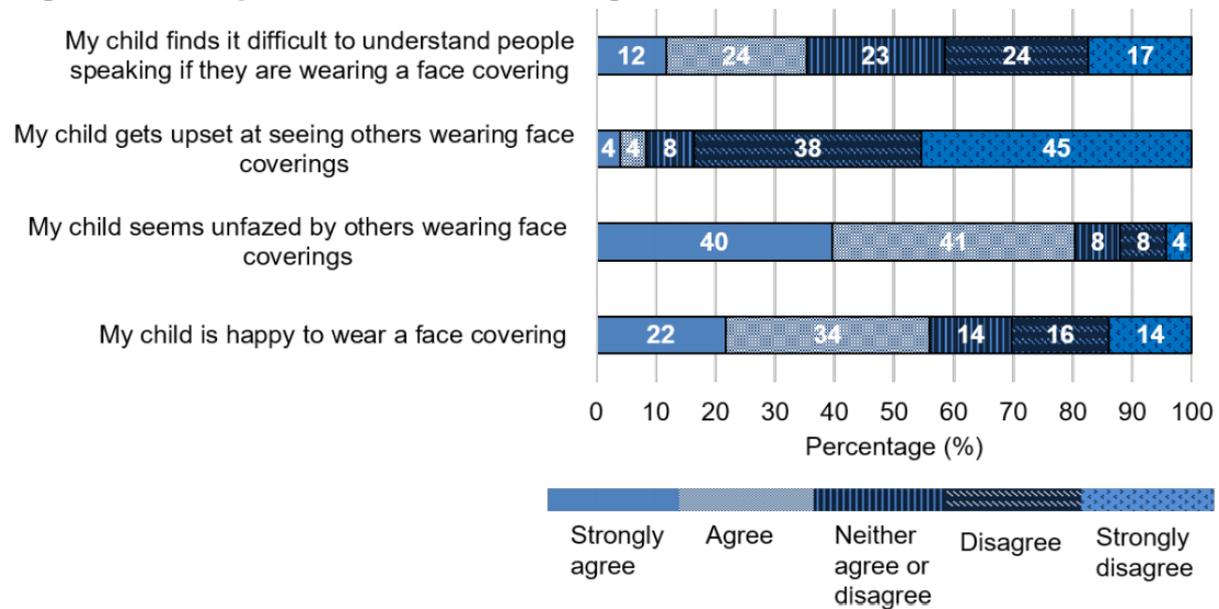
## 6.2 Evidence from parents

The **CEYRIS Round 2** in November-December 2020 included the following questions on face coverings (5 point strongly agree – strongly disagree):

- My child is happy to wear a face covering
- My child seems unfazed by others wearing face coverings
- My child gets upset at seeing others wearing face coverings
- My child finds it difficult to understand people speaking if they are wearing a face covering.

The majority of parents/carers in the survey disagreed that their child got upset when seeing others wearing face coverings (83%) and agreed that their child seemed unfazed by others wearing face coverings (81%). 41% of the parents/carers in the sample disagreed that their child found it difficult to understand people speaking if they were wearing a face covering, while 36% agreed. 56% of the sample agreed that their child was happy to wear a face covering, while 30% disagreed. See Figure 6.5 below. Agreement that their child was happy to wear a face covering was higher among parents of 5-7 year olds (65%) than of 2-4 year olds (42%).

**Figure 6.5 – Experience of face coverings**



Source: CEYRIS Round 2. Excludes refused (prefer not to say) and missing answers. Excludes 'Not Applicable' responses.

**YouGov weekly polling** carried out for Scottish Government from 11-12 May 2021 showed that 58% of the parents in the sample agreed that they were concerned about the longer term effect of the pandemic on their child (21% disagreed) and 47% agreed that they were seeing changes in the way their child played/behaved as a result of the pandemic (33% disagreed). 40% disagreed that they were worried about their child’s mental health, while 39% agreed that they were worried. Parents of children aged 12-17 years old were more likely to worry about their child’s mental health (49% compared with 35% of parents with children aged 0-11) and the longer effect of the pandemic compared with parents with younger children (66% and 54% respectively). Women were more likely than men to agree that they could see changes in the way their child behaved and played as a result of the pandemic (54% and 40% respectively)<sup>40</sup>. See Figure 6.6 below.

There was a decrease in parents worrying about the impact of the pandemic on their child’s mental health: 71% of parents with children aged 17 and under were worried in the polling from 23-24 March 2021, compared with 39% of parents with children aged 4-18 years old in 11-12 May 2021. To be noted that in March the question was asked in a different way, using the statement ‘I have worried about the impact of the coronavirus situation on my child/children’s mental health’.

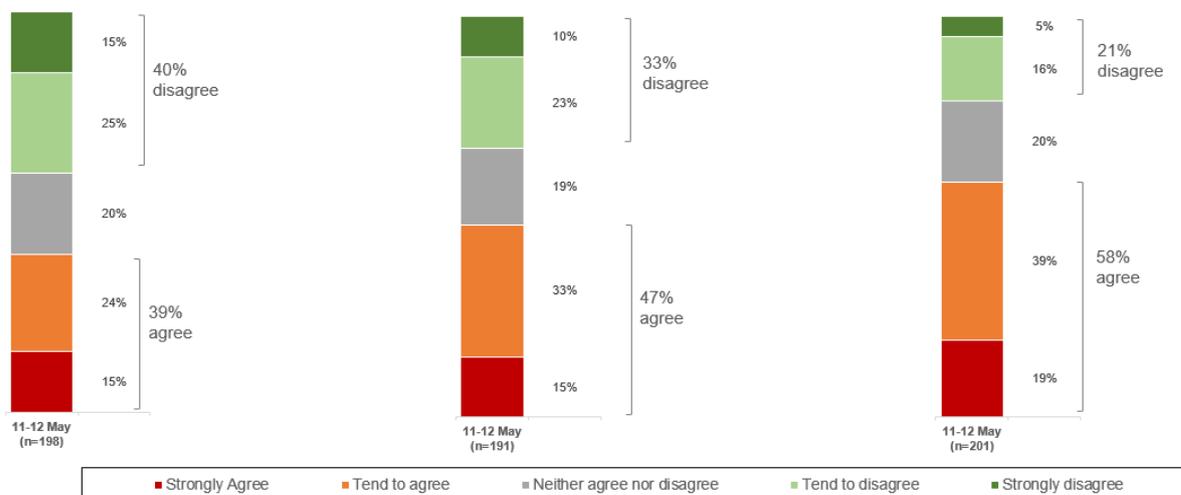
<sup>40</sup> Sample sizes: 11-12 May 2021 209 parents overall with children under 18, 105 with children between 12-17 years old.

**Figure 6.6 - Agreement with the following statements**

I am worried about my child's mental health at the moment

I can see changes in the way my child plays/behaves now, as a result of the pandemic

I am concerned about the longer term effect of the pandemic on my child



Source: YouGov polling 11-12 May 2021; 'Not applicable' option excluded.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed evidence on COVID-19 mitigation measures aimed at children and young people from a range of available sources. Both quantitative and qualitative research was carried out with young people and parents. There is limited evidence on children, primarily because those aged under 12 were exempt from most COVID-19 restrictions.

In terms of understanding of restrictions, findings showed that the majority of young people were clear about the rules, particularly around face coverings. However, research with parents found low levels of understanding of rules around meeting others, particularly following the easing in May 2021. In qualitative research both young people and parents stated that it was difficult to keep up to date with changing regulations and called for clearer and more accessible information and communications.

In terms of compliance, most young people reported adhering to restrictions, although recognised the difficulty of doing so in social situations.

In terms of attitudes to COVID-19 mitigation measures, the research showed that the majority of young people and parents understood the importance of measures and were comfortable with them. According to the evidence presented, young people and parents found some aspects of the restrictions challenging, particularly physical distancing and restrictions on meeting others.

In terms of impacts, the majority of young people did not feel anxious due to wearing face coverings, although a significant minority did say that they made it harder to connect with others, to understand teachers and to follow lessons. Just under half also agreed that the rules around meeting others were having a negative impact on their relationships with family and friends and on their mental health.



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