

# HOW ARE YOU DOING?

A report on the findings from the  
How are you doing? survey

Children's Parliament  
November 2020



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## KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

In recent months children aged 8 to 14 have been part of a conversation with Children's Parliament about their experiences of lockdown, the impact of Coronavirus and their experience of this current phase, autumn/winter 2020, which we might think of as one concerned with recovery, which includes the return to school. From questions and worries, to learning at home, to family and peer relationships, to health and wellbeing, children have been responding in large numbers to the survey **How are you doing?**

As readers of our reporting to date already know, the survey is for children aged between 8 and 14. For the purposes of reporting we sometimes look at and compare the responses from younger children aged 8 to 11 and older children aged 12 to 14. Where it is helpful, we report on differences in responses from girls and boys. The survey is made up of 31 statements with a 5-point scale to respond – from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. There are final questions where children can identify what they are worried about and what helps them feel good.

This report compares results from the period of lockdown - combining April (4000 responses), May (3698 responses) and June (2810 responses) data to give us one data point - to new results from a fourth and final survey conducted in September/early October (1969 responses).

Comparing the experience of lockdown to the early days of recovery and the return to school, this is a summary of what we have learned, focusing on the questions: **What should concern us? Are there signs of recovery?**

## LEARNING

### What should concern us?

- The education system is committed to extending learner participation within what is called an empowered system, yet a minority of children – both during lockdown when they were learning at home, and now they are back at school - agree that they have a choice in what they learn.
- Lockdown has seen a significant shift to digital platforms to support learning and peer relationships. Post lockdown and back at school, regardless of sex or age, children report they are less likely to feel safe online.
- Now that children are back at school there is a decline in some areas which should evidence learner confidence and feature in a positive learning experience: fewer children now report that they enjoy learning new things and fewer that if they want to they can be creative. Further, fewer children report that they know there are things that they are good at.

### Are there signs of recovery?

- Post-lockdown children are reporting they have more fun things to do in their day, they feel less bored and they are more likely to say that when they do something, they try their hardest.
- There are differences in age and sex when it comes to signs of recovery, these are discussed in the full report. For example, post lockdown younger children are more likely to report they are proud of things they can do while there is a decline for children aged 12 to 14.

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

### What should concern us?

- In both periods, lockdown/post lockdown, nearly 1 in 3 children report that their parents or carers worry about having enough money for their family. In the post lockdown period younger children report this concern in increased numbers.
- Most children are safe at home but, in the context of a large survey, we should not lose sight of the minority of children who are not. Survey results would point particularly to the experience of girls in this regard.

### Are there signs of recovery?

- The vast majority of children enjoy being with their family and report that their family gets along well together. In their responses, post lockdown and with the return to school, children are now more likely to strongly agree that these are characteristics of their family experience.
- Children report positively about their friends and responses indicate a strengthening of peer relationships in the post-lockdown period which has seen children return to school.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### What should concern us?

- While there are signs of recovery in terms of mood and a sense of self-efficacy in terms of health choices, reported in full in the report, results are mixed. For example, in terms of children feeling that even if they are having a difficult time they feel they will be okay, we see a decline in positive responses for all children but particularly for 8 to 11 year olds.
- Concerns for younger children aged 8 to 11 continue when looking at what has been reported when it comes to the statement '*most of the time I have plenty of energy*'. Post lockdown we see statistically significant declines in agreement for younger boys and girls but by contrast their older 12 – 14 year old peers are now more positive about having plenty of energy.
- In recent months it is likely that children will have had worries about their health and as a result many more questions may have arisen. When responding to the statement '*If I have a question about my health I know who to speak to*' children are now less likely to agree – this is particularly so for 8 to 11 year olds.

### Are there signs of recovery?

- Post lockdown children are more likely to agree that they generally feel cheerful and in a good mood, the largest increase in positive responses come from the 12 to 14 year olds.
- There are significant improvements when it comes to children reporting that they often feel lonely. This is particularly so for the group of children who had reported highest levels of loneliness during lockdown, girls aged 12 to 14.
- A majority and consistent percentage of children indicate – in lockdown and post-lockdown – that they agree that they think they make healthy choices, with a shift post-lockdown toward a *strongly agree* response.
- Boys of all ages, and older girls aged 12 to 14, report that post lockdown having returned to school they think get enough exercise. However, reflecting concerns above for younger girls those aged 8 to 11 are now less likely to agree.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION, EXPRESSING OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCING RIGHTS

### What should concern us?

In terms of all the statements put to children - *I can look for and get information that I need, I feel free to express my ideas and opinions, I feel like my rights are respected by others* – we can see a small decline in children responding positively. It is true that we continue to see that the majority of children can access news and information but in the context of the intention to incorporate the UNCRC in to Scots law we must seek to improve on the child's experience. Of particular concern is a reduction of 10% on children responding positively to the statement – post lockdown and having returned to school - *I feel like my rights are respected by others*.

## WORRIES and WHAT MAKES US FEEL BETTER

### What should concern us?

- Post lockdown, in what we have referred to as a period of recovery, our survey points to a statistically significant increase in the numbers of children who *strongly agree* or *agree* that there are lots of things they worry about in their life. Consistently it has been girls aged 12 to 14 who report highest levels of agreement.
- Responses to the September/early October survey show that worries about the child's own health and about the health of a family member have increased post-lockdown.
- The survey explores whether children have someone in or external to their family to whom they can talk if they have a worry. While the vast majority of children do have someone to talk to 4% of children in lockdown, and now 6% of children post-lockdown, indicate that they do not.
- Worries about *the future* are an indication of how generally anxious children are; slightly more than half of children continue to express worry in this regard.
- Worries about doing school work are consistent when comparing lockdown to the return to school; 2 in 5 children remain worried.
- Although the children responding to the survey do not imminently face exams, worry about them has increased significantly since the return to school.
- Post lockdown, children are more likely to report that they worry about money problems.
- Younger children aged 8 to 11 are now more likely, post-lockdown, to report worrying about multiple areas.

### Are there signs of recovery?

- Children are now less likely to report that they are worried about how their friends or family are doing.
- Post-lockdown, children point to friends as the most likely thing to help them to feel better.

### **Finally, as you read this report....**

Children's Parliament has been reporting on children's experiences of the pandemic since April. As we publish this report in November 2020, we are more aware than ever that there is no simple path for what might be considered recovery. Having said that, we did hope that autumn time and the return to school might see some clear signs of improvement, based on what children had expressed via the three *How are you doing?* surveys completed in lockdown. In them we had seen a decline in children's mental health and wellbeing, learning at home was problematic and worrisome for many, a minority - we must not forget - told us they were unsafe online or at home, children reminded us that they are aware of the worries their parents or carers have about money. The problem was that we did not have a baseline for much of this information, lockdown became our baseline and in our optimism we thought by our September survey things would be improving. Reporting now, we find that some are and some are not. We have a strong sense that rather than identify that some things became problematic *because of* lockdown, maybe lockdown has simply exacerbated or just exposed what was already there, what was already troubling about children's lives.

So we are asking: *What if we just stopped being so reactive and instead we listened to what children have told us, and then promised to do things differently?* Of course, we will be required to do so if and when the UNCRC is incorporated into Scots Law, but it would be much more impressive if we, as a nation, decided to act to improve children's lives just because it is the right thing to do. Via the surveys, and in other aspects of Children's Parliament work on the impact of Coronavirus on the experience of family life and childhood, are clearly articulated things to stop, things to change and things to build on.

In a nation where there is a rights-based approach to recovery, all adults are duty-bearers and wherever those adults find themselves – in domestic, community or professional contexts – it is their job to make sure all children grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

**More on our programme of work on children and Coronavirus here:**

[bit.ly/Coronavirus\\_Kids](https://bit.ly/Coronavirus_Kids)

Our thanks to our colleagues in **Public Health Scotland** and **Scottish Government** for their support with this work.

# 1. LEARNING

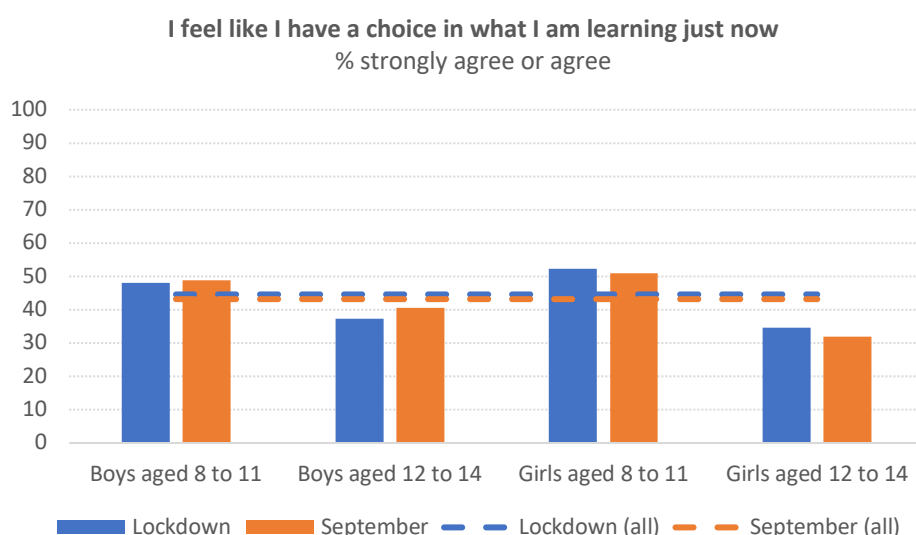
The closure of schools was a necessary response to the public health emergency presented by Coronavirus. Following the period of school closures, schools re-opened following the summer break. The *How are you doing?* surveys have provided an opportunity to find out the impact of school closures on children, on their experience of learning at home and now on the experience of learning after re-opening and with Coronavirus mitigation measures in place.

In each section of this report, the statements provided in the *How are you doing?* survey provide the structure. Our graphics focus on responses where children have indicated they *strongly agree* or *agree*, the narrative provides further reflection on responses.

## I feel like I have a choice in what I am learning just now

The education system is committed to extending learner participation within what is called an empowered system<sup>1</sup>. Throughout lockdown, responses to this statement have helped us understand how learner choice is experienced by children, with the latest survey capturing views in the context of the return to school.

There has been little change across the full sample of children responding comparing lockdown and the return to school; it is still the case that a significant minority of children - 43% currently - *strongly agree/agree* that they have a choice in what they learn. This is an important message for the system. Older children in secondary school are less likely to agree than their younger primary school counterparts. For one group there has been a statistically significant shift where we see that boys aged 12 to 14 are now more likely to agree to some extent with the statement (37% lockdown/41% post-return).

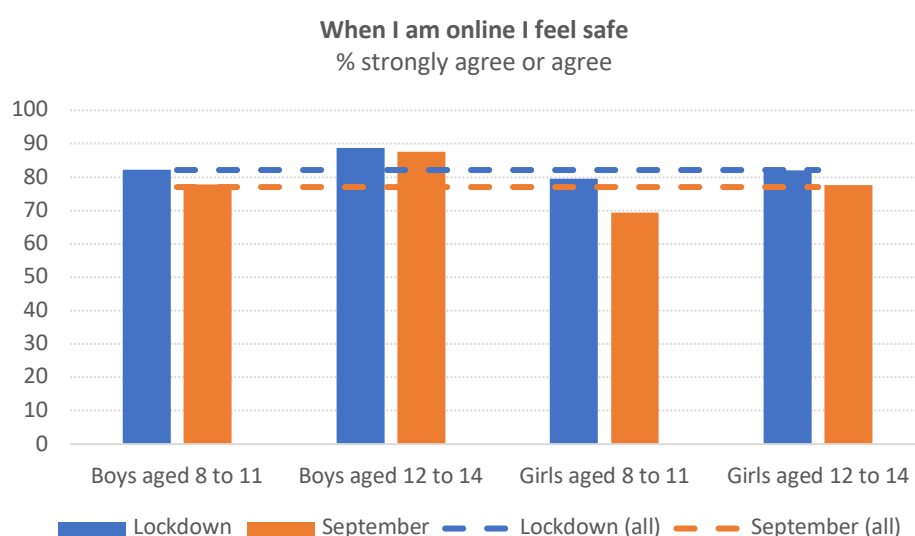


<sup>1</sup> Education Scotland <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/an-empowered-system>

### When I am online, I feel safe

Lockdown has seen a significant shift to digital platforms to support learning; children have increased levels of access to online environments not just for learning but also for fun and to socialise with friends and family.

Treating lockdown as one data point shows that 82% of children reported they *strongly agree/agree* that they feel safe online. Post lockdown and back at school in September children, regardless of sex or age, have reported they are less likely to *strongly agree/agree* that they feel safe, and more likely to report that they *disagree/strongly disagree*. We reported in June that for one sub-group there were changes over time, the percentage of girls aged 8 to 11 reporting that they *disagree/strongly disagree* with the statement rose from 3% in April, to 4% in May, to 5% in June; in September it is 8%.



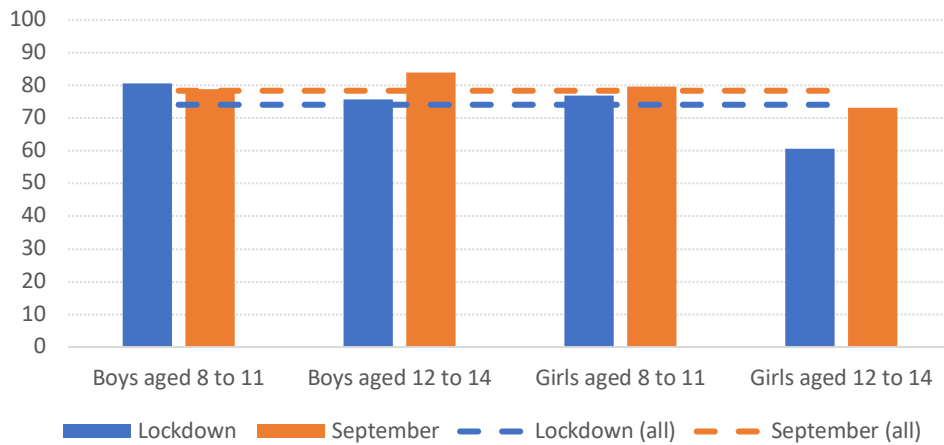
### I have fun things to do in my days

When children talk about their experience of learning and school they tell us it should be fun<sup>2</sup>. Across lockdown there was a decline in the numbers of children who reported that they *strongly agree/agree* that they have fun things to do in their day: 75% in April, 74% in May and 72% in June but there has been a statistically significant improvement in children's responses, other than for boys aged 12 to 14 who were the group already responding most positively to this statement. Comparing lockdown to post lockdown/return to school, for all children, there is an increase of children responding they agree to some extent from 74% to 78%.

<sup>2</sup> School Should be a Joyful Place <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/School-should-be-a-joyful-place-2016.pdf>



### I have fun things to do in my days % strongly agree or agree

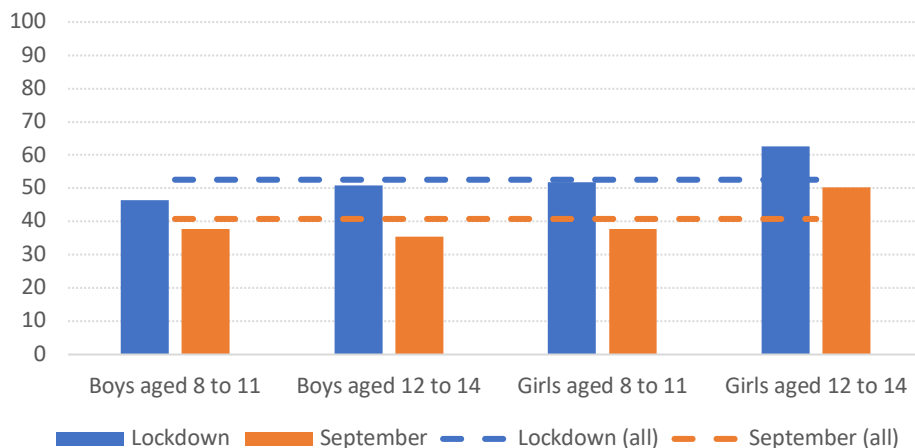


### I often feel bored

Educators and parents/carers will have different views on the meaning or significance of 'boredom' for children. It can be argued that boredom can be a motivator for children's creativity. However, in the context of lockdown we suggested this be considered differently, and that alongside other factors that tell us learning at home has had a detrimental effect on the child's wellbeing, then boredom is another negative factor.

During lockdown around half of children reported that they often feel bored; levels peaked mid-lockdown in May (54%). Looking to results now, with the return to school, there has been a statistically significant drop for all children in terms of reporting feeling bored. While 41% still *strongly agree/agree* we might identify this as a positive sign of recovery.

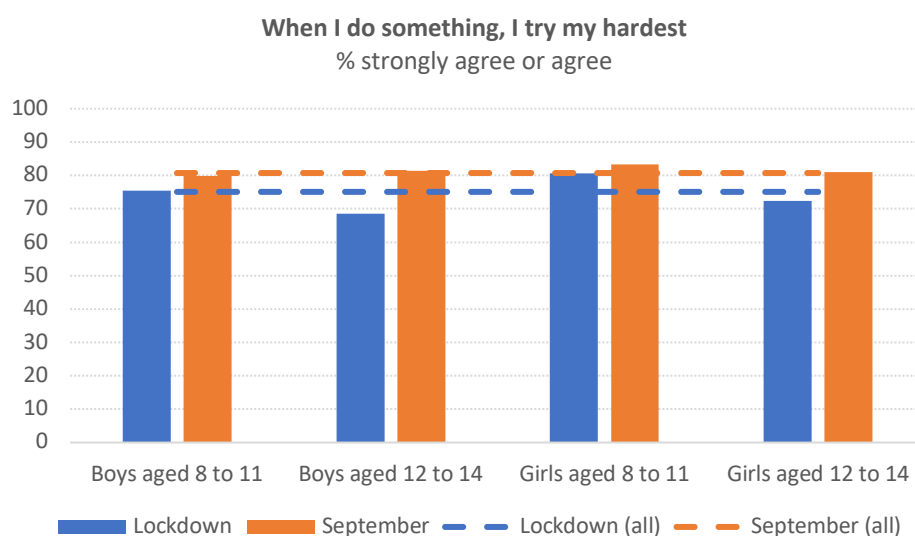
### I often feel bored % strongly agree or agree



### When I do something, I try my hardest

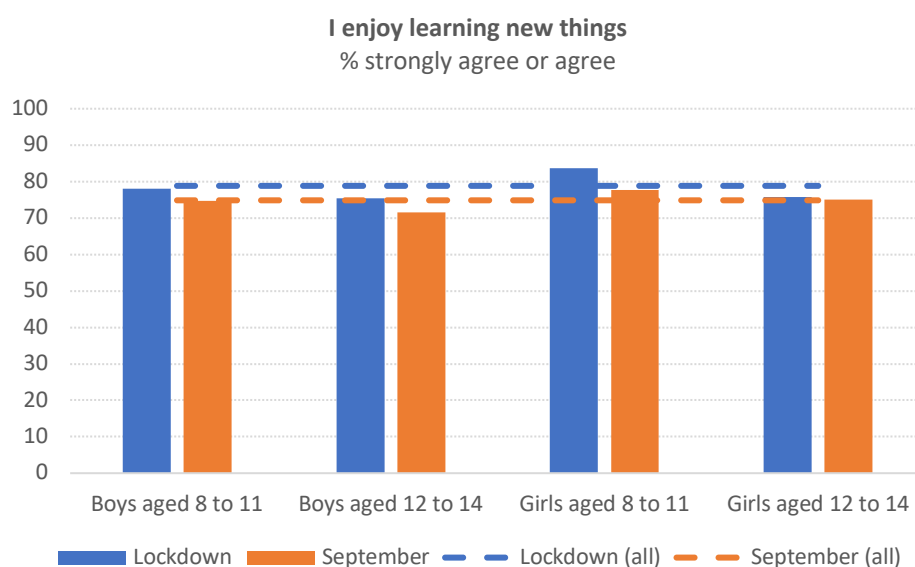
To be a successful learner requires a level of intrinsic motivation, and this statement asks children to consider whether they try their hardest. During lockdown, looking at all children, a majority of (75%) reported they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement, post-lockdown and as a sign of recovery 81% now *strongly agree/agree*. The increase has been statistically

significant across both sexes and age groups, with the greatest increase (+13%) for boys aged 12 to 14.



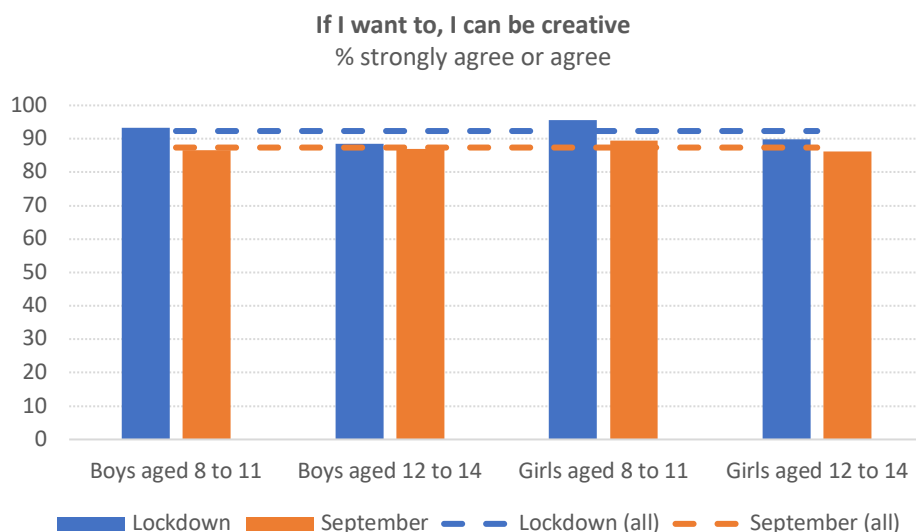
### I enjoy learning new things

We might think of this statement as an expression of optimism about learning. In lockdown 79% of all children reported they *strongly agree/agree*, post lockdown and back at school the figure for all children is now 75%. The decline is particularly evident amongst girls aged 8 to 11 with a statistically significant decline from 84% who *strongly agree/agree* to 79% - however they are still the group most likely to agree to some extent.



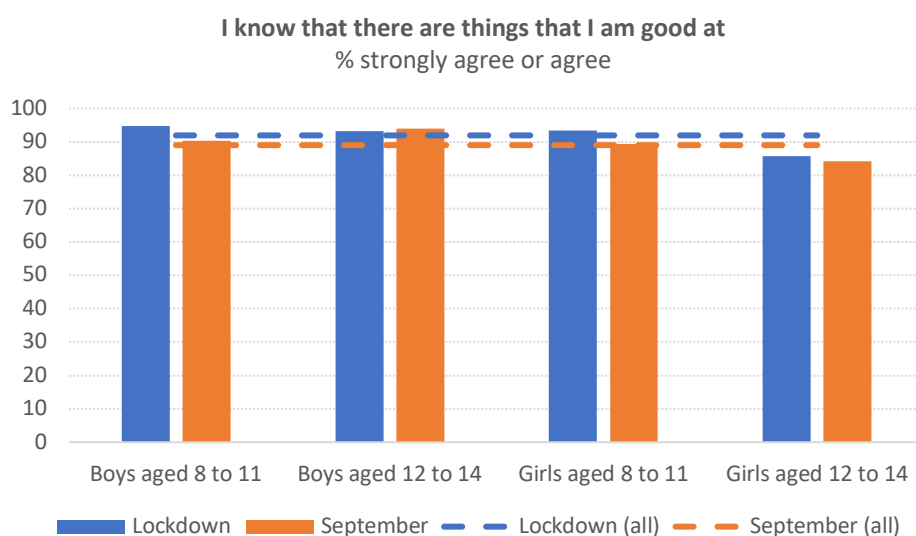
### If I want to, I can be creative

Creativity is a central feature of a positive learning experience and this statement asks children to consider this. While most children in lockdown (92%) and post-lockdown and back at school (87%) do *strongly agree/agree* with the statement the decline is statistically significant, this is particularly so for the younger children, both boys and girls aged 8 to 11.



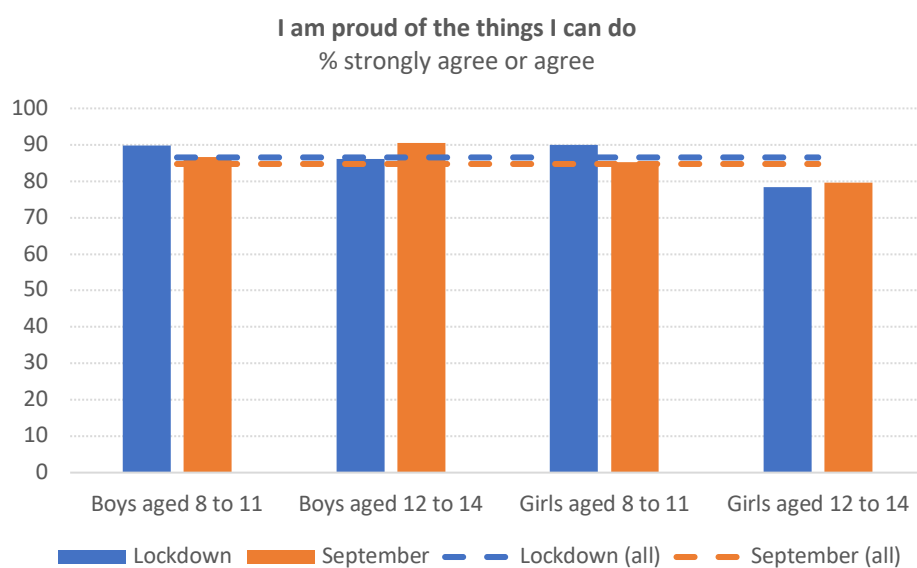
### **I know that there are things that I am good at**

This statement helps us explore learner self-perception and confidence; when it comes to learning, ability alone is not enough and how we think about ourselves matters too. Responses to this statement are consistently high, although decreasing slightly, when looking at all children: 92% *strongly agree/agree* during lockdown and 89% post lockdown having returned to school. The pattern of girls aged 12 to 14 being less likely to *strongly agree/agree* continues.



### **I am proud of the things I can do**

Having pride in one's work and achievements is a further indication of learner confidence and suggests that the child believes that their efforts will be successful and have a favourable outcome. For all children, those who *strongly agree/agree* in lockdown sits at 87% and post lockdown back at school at 85%. While older girls and boys show a small rise in agreement (for boys aged 12 to 14 this is statistically significant) there are small declines for younger children.



Children's Parliament also publishes the **Corona Times Journal**. Across all 6 editions to date Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) report on aspects of learning at home and about the return to school. The Journal can be accessed at <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/#childrensjournal>

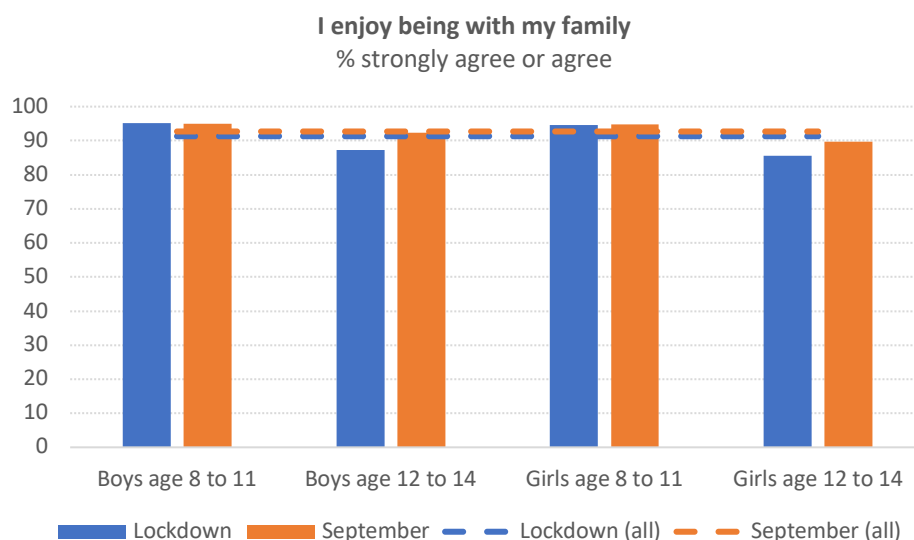
## 2. FAMILY AND FRIENDS

As social beings, children form and maintain relationships at home but also with friends at school and in other places and spaces. These social relationships are essential for positive mental health. The period of lockdown shifted the balance of children's lives. Not going to school, meeting friends, spending time with grandparents and extended family, or taking part in clubs or activities has meant that relationships at home have become even more central. Our emergence from these most stringent lockdown rules, and particularly the return to school, has changed the day-to-day lives of children.

In each section of this report, the statements provided in the *How are you doing?* survey provide the structure. Our graphics focus on responses where children have indicated they *strongly agree* or *agree*, the narrative provides further reflection on responses.

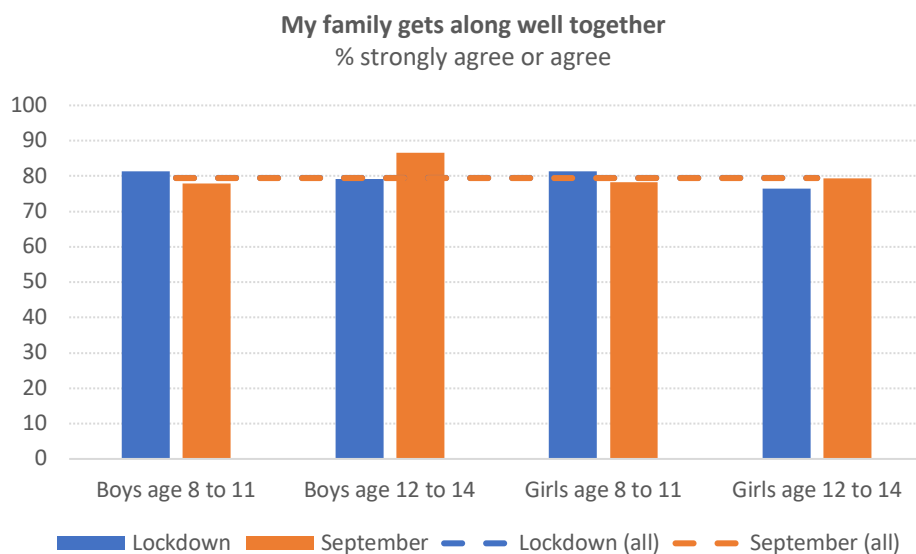
### I enjoy being with my family

The family is the child's primary social group and so the first of the statements reported on in this section asks children about enjoying being with their family. Responses from lockdown and the post lockdown period show high levels of agreement with the statement: 93% of all children now *strongly agree/agree*. The most significant increases are for the older children, both girls and boys, aged 12 to 14. While our graphic combines *strongly agree* and *agree* this does not show that there has been a statistically significant shift toward the *strongly agree* response for all children, we might identify this as a positive sign of recovery.



### My family gets along well together

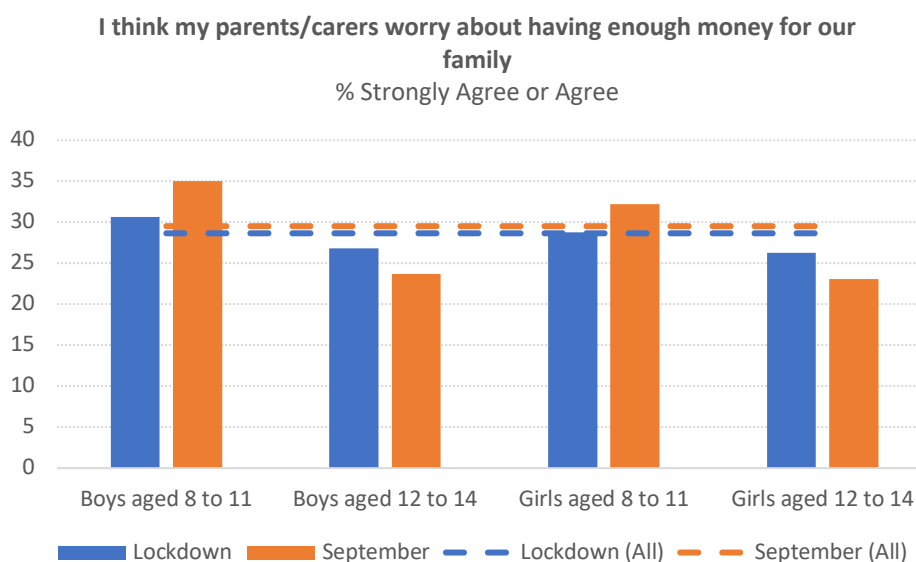
The majority of children *strongly agree/agree* that their family gets along well together. Looking to all children the response for *strongly agree/agree* is consistent from lockdown and post lockdown responses – although as with the statement above it is the case that there has been a statistically significant shift toward the *strongly agree* response for all children, we might identify this as a positive sign of recovery.



### I think my parents/carers worry about having enough money for our family

One in four of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that almost a third of Scots' incomes have reduced in lockdown, with half of affected renters worried about paying rent<sup>3</sup>. From the work done by Children's Parliament on poverty<sup>4</sup> we know that children are aware of the financial circumstances and pressures their family can face.

In both periods, in lockdown and in post lockdown with the return to school, 29% of all children report they *strongly agree/agree* with this statement. Looking at age and sex it is younger children of both sexes where we can see an increase in agreement with the statement in the post lockdown period: 35% of these younger boys now *strongly agree/agree* (+4%) and 32% of younger girls (+3%).

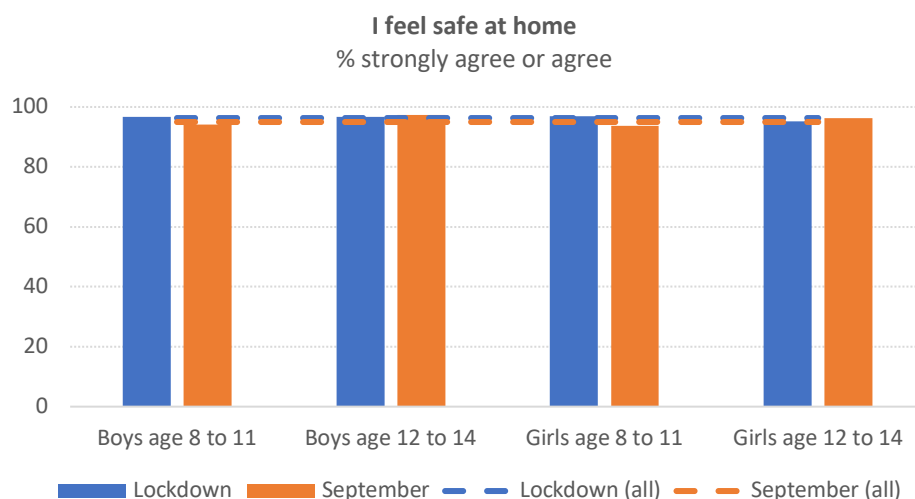


<sup>3</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/almost-third-scots%E2%80%99-incomes-have-reduced-lockdown-half-affected-renters-worried-about-paying>

<sup>4</sup> Children's Parliament <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/past-work/child-poverty/>

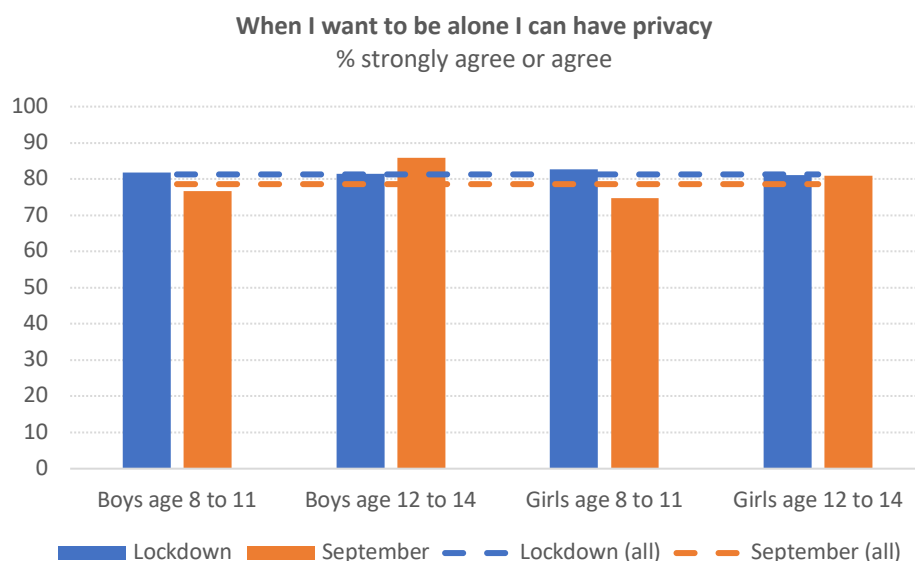
## I feel safe at home

Agencies across Scotland have reported concerns about increased levels of domestic violence and harm to children during the period of lockdown. Of course, most children are safe and happy at home, but some are not. A large-scale survey such as *How are you doing?* is not the place to identify levels of harm, rather the surveys have acknowledged the generally positive circumstances of most children, but recognise that a small and important number of children do not feel safe at home. Comparing the lockdown and post lockdown responses we see that the vast majority of children (96%/95%) *strongly agree* or *agree* with the statement. The one notable shift, although not statistically significant, is the decrease in this number for girls aged 8 to 11 from 97% to 94% agreement.



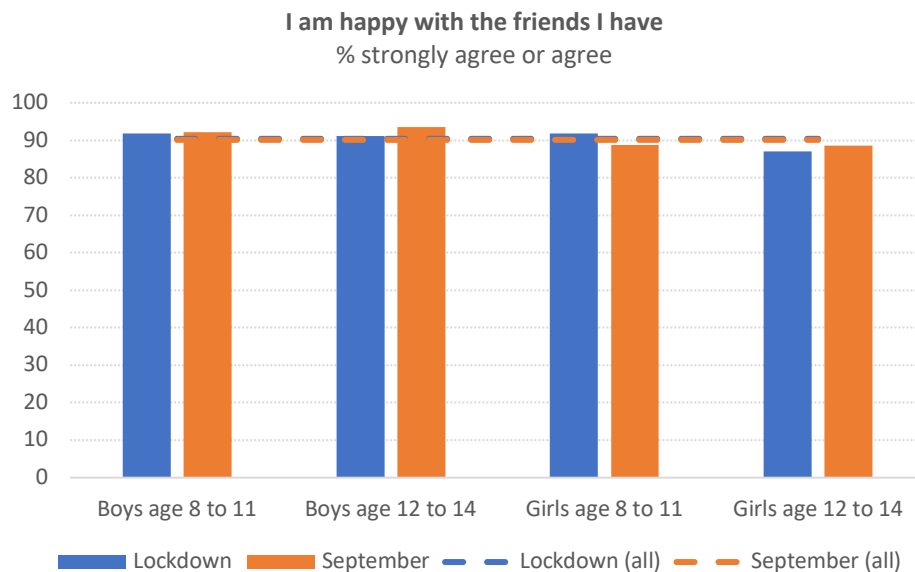
## When I want to be alone, I can have privacy

The intensity of the lockdown experience has impacted on everyone's access to private space and time; this is particularly so for families that have no immediate access to a garden and for families where children live in small flats or share bedrooms. There has been a small decline in the numbers of children who *strongly agree/agree* with this statement comparing lockdown and the post-lockdown/recovery period; with a statistically significant decline in agreement by girls aged 8 to 11 (83%/75%).



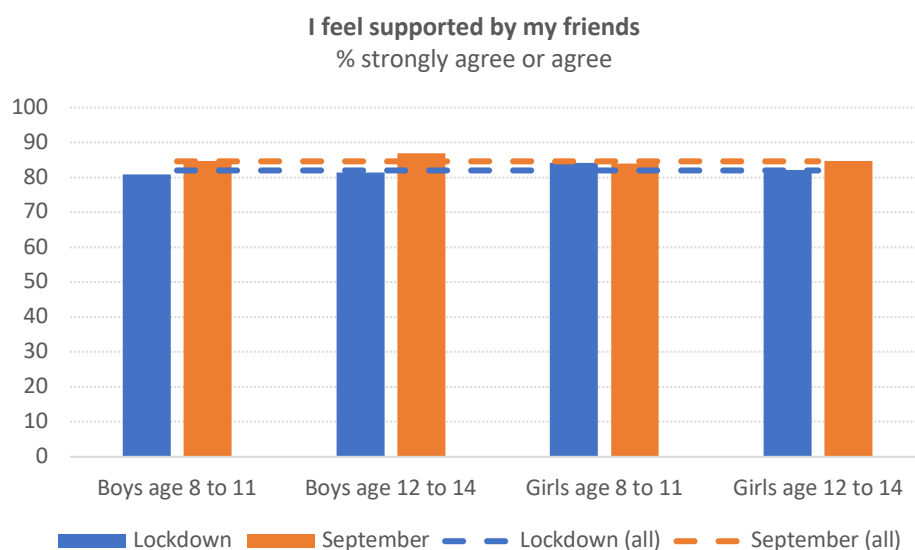
### I am happy with the friends I have

Peer relationships are important to a child's development, they provide the context for children to learn critical social skills. Positive friendships help children experience and practice kindness, empathy and build trust and of course negative experiences such as bullying and being left out are damaging to the child's confidence and feelings of safety. In lockdown children experienced a loss of day-to-day connections with friends, only some of which were made up for by connecting online. When combining *strongly agree/agree* responses these remain consistently high across the full sample of children: 90% pre and post lockdown, although girls aged 8 to 11 show a small decrease. It is worth noting however that there was a move toward the *strongly agree* response for all children, indicating a strengthening of bonds with friends.



### I feel supported by my friends

An important part of friendship is to feel that one's friend is kind, has empathy and is a person that can be trusted to provide support. Comparing responses from lockdown with the period of recovery/return to school children are more likely to *strongly agree/agree* with the statement – 82% in lockdown is now 85%. Again, there is a move toward the *strongly agree* option for children of both sexes and age groups, indicating a strengthening of connection and support from peers.





Children's Parliament also publishes the **Corona Times Journal**. Across all 6 editions, Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) report on aspects of their wellbeing including relationships: <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/#childrensjournal>

### 3. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

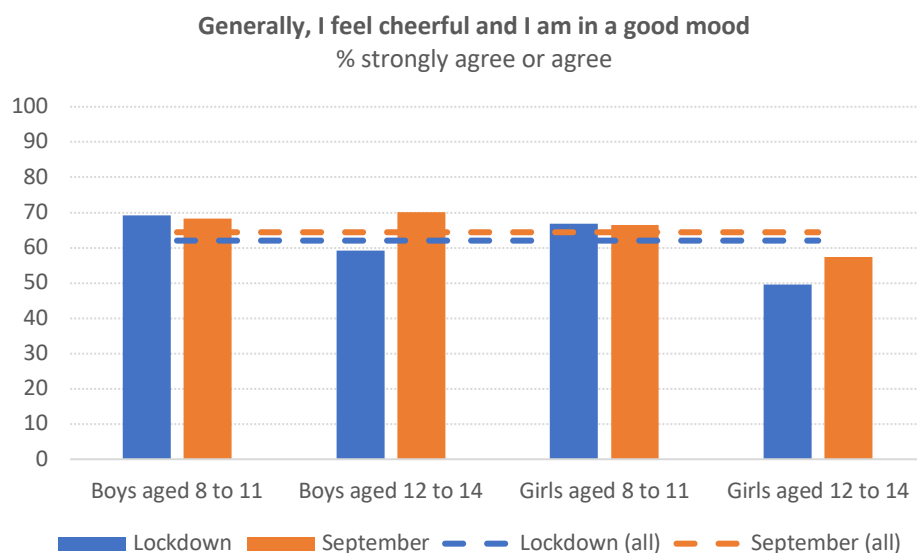
Statements about health in the *How are you doing?* survey are primarily about mental health and wellbeing; we focus on mood and a sense of self-efficacy in terms of health choices. Reporting in terms of these statements should inform considerations being given to how we mitigate any immediate concerns for children's mental health as a consequence of lockdown and should also inform the medium to longer term road out of lockdown, being discussed as a period of recovery.

In each section of this report, the statements provided in the *How are you doing?* survey provide the structure. Our graphics focus on responses where children have indicated they *strongly agree* or *agree*, the narrative provides further reflection on responses.

#### Generally, I feel cheerful and I am in a good mood

For a child, their general mood has an impact on their attitudes towards learning and ability to cope with adversity. A generally good mood would mean that a child is more likely to be coping with feelings of frustration, worry or sadness. Across the lockdown period we reported a decline in the numbers of children who reported that they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement – looking at lockdown as one data point we can see that 62% *strongly agree/agree*. This has increased for the post lockdown/return to school point in September to 64%.

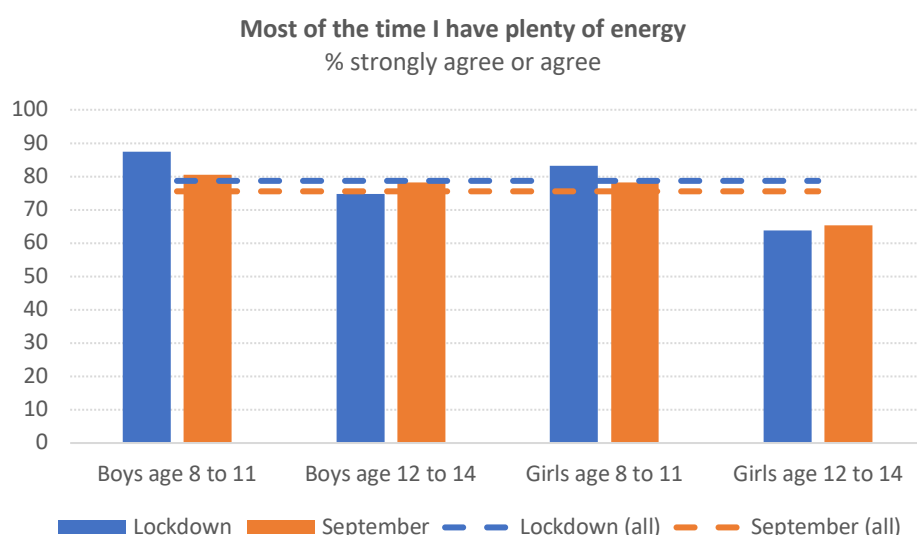
It is worth noting that while for 8 to 11 year old boys and girls the responses from lockdown and post-lockdown/the return to school are similar when combining *strongly agree/agree*, younger children are now more likely to *strongly agree*. The increase in positive responses to this statement from 12 to 14 year olds, both boys and girls, is statistically significant (Boys +11%/Girls+8%) and also sees a shift toward the *strongly agree* response. This can be interpreted as a sign of recovery for all children, particularly for the older group.



#### Most of the time I have plenty of energy

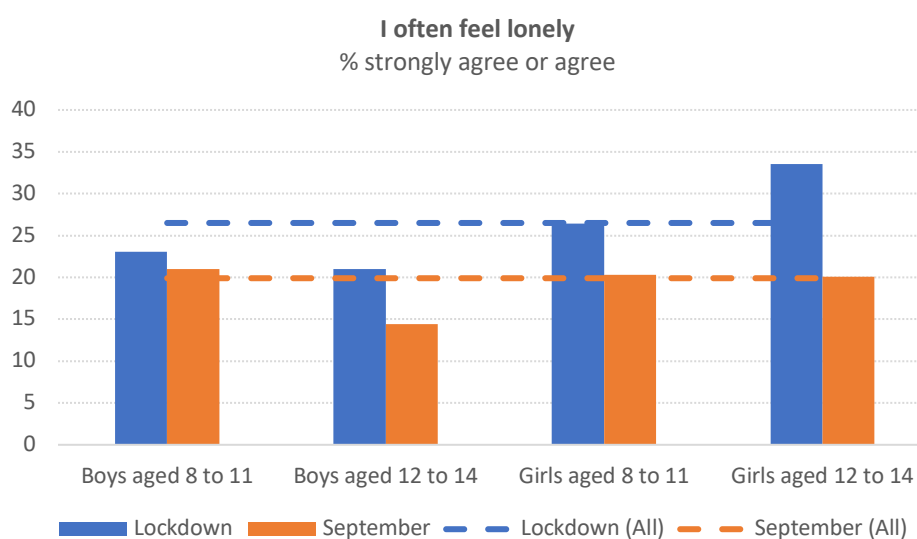
The survey statement about 'energy' acknowledges that when a person feels they have low energy, or are tired or exhausted, and when that is experienced over time, this can become a longer term problem and affect feelings of self-efficacy and social relationships with others. When a child is feeling a lack of energy, they may feel stuck or trapped in this mode

and find the changes of leaving lockdown more challenging. Responses from children indicate a difference between children based on age. For the older children – albeit starting from a lower point than their younger peers – there is a degree of recovery and an increase in children positively responding that they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement. For the younger children aged 8 to 11, both girls and boys, there is a statistically significant decrease in percentages who *strongly agree/agree*.



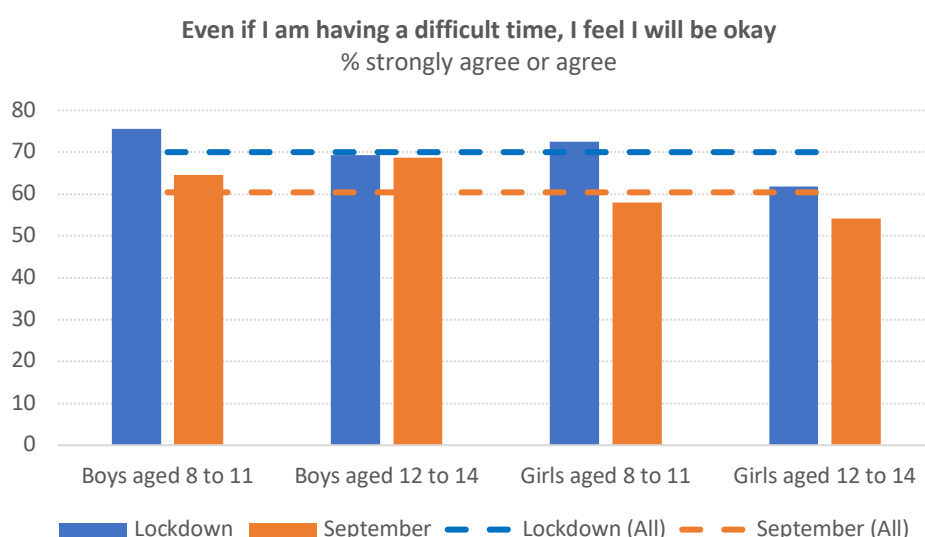
### I often feel lonely

Loneliness matters because it is associated with feelings of sadness and malaise, and emotional responses to experiences such as the lockdown, although temporary, can impact over the longer term too. Although reported rates are still of concern, looking at our post lockdown/September results we can see signs of recovery for all children in terms of this statement, particularly for girls aged 12 to 14. For all children there is a reduction in the numbers of children who *strongly agree/agree* with the statement from 26% to 20%, and for older girls a statistically significant fall from 34% to 20% who *strongly agree/agree*.



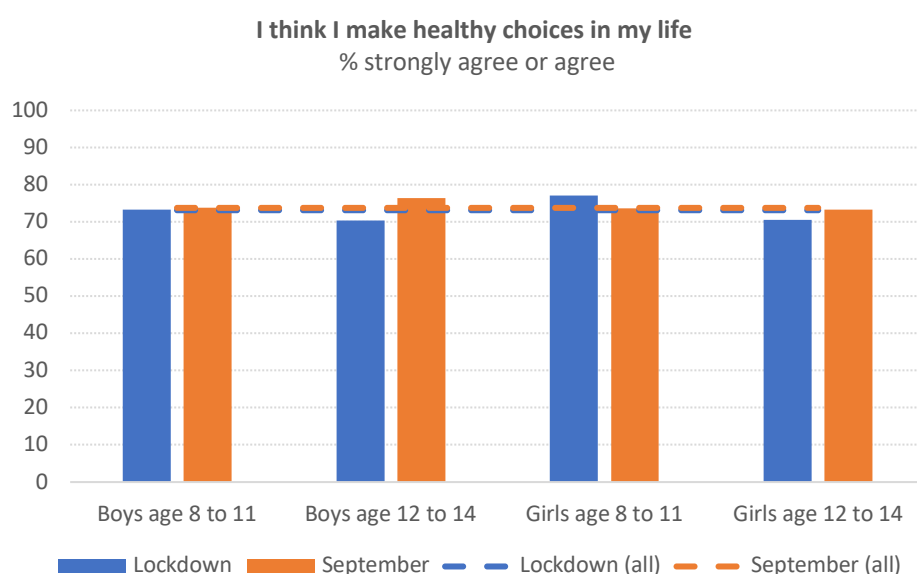
### Even if I am having a difficult time, I feel I will be okay

An aspect of resilience is a belief that even when facing adversity, one will be able to cope and bounce back. While earlier statements suggest some signs of improvement for children this statement does not; again there are differences in terms of age of the children responding. While 12 to 14 year old boys report consistently in terms of lockdown and post lockdown/the return to school, girls of the same age see a statistically significant decline in those who *strongly agree/agree*: from 62% to 54%. For younger children there are also statistically significant falls: boys 76% to 65% and for girls 72% to 58% who *strongly agree/agree*. These responses are of concern if we consider we are in a period of recovery.



### I think I make healthy choices in my life

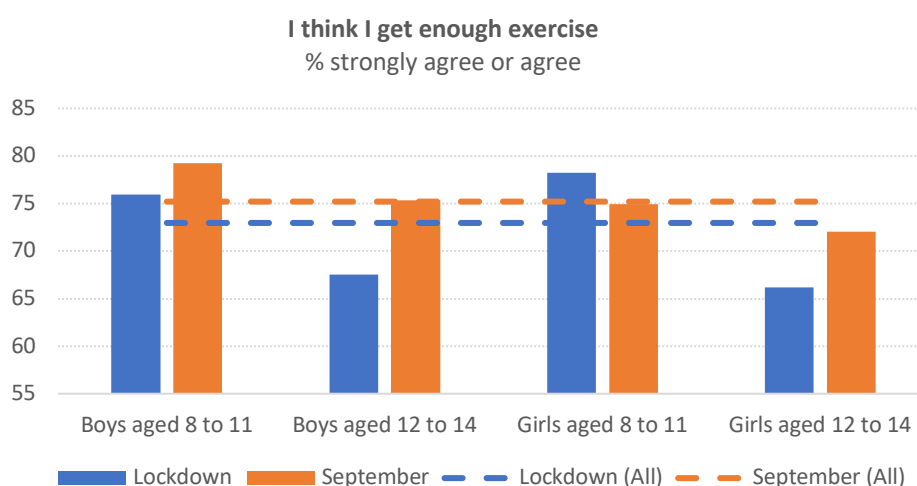
At school, children are encouraged to reflect on what might constitute a healthy lifestyle – for example thinking about physical activity, or what they eat and drink. Of course, the younger the child the less likely they are to have the opportunity to make choices and so this item comes with a caveat in that we need to understand that choices may be limited. However, the aim remains that children can acquire levels of knowledge and understanding that support healthy choices in all areas of life as they grow. A majority and consistent percentage of children in their surveys across the lockdown period (73%) and now post-lockdown with the return to school (74%) indicate that they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement. It is worth noting that while the responses remain consistent when combining the positive options there has been a shift across all children toward a *strongly agree* response. For boys aged 12 to 14 there is a statistically significant rise in those who *strongly agree/agree* (+6%)



### I think I get enough exercise

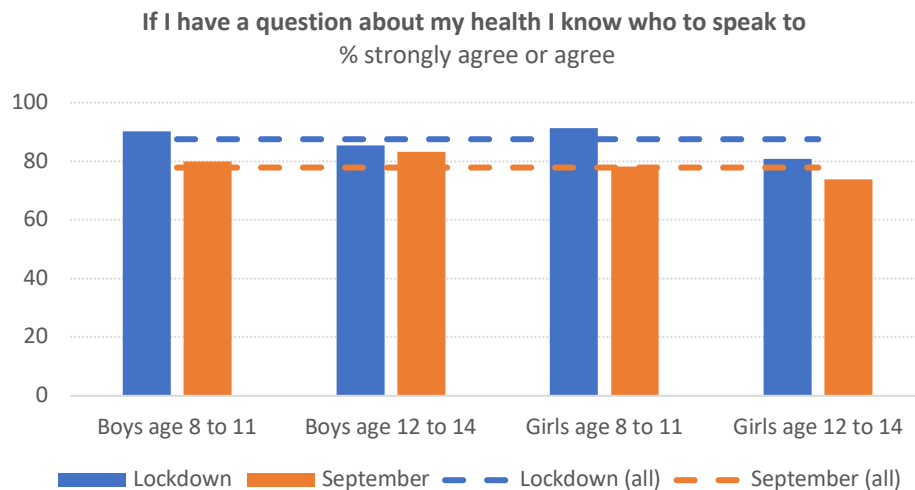
Children's ability to play outside or be part of physical activities at school or at out of school clubs were all curtailed by lockdown. In the early days of lockdown advice was that families could take one opportunity to be outside for a walk, to play or bike ride. By June children had more opportunities to be outside although this was still limited to being with their own family. As children return to school there remain school-based and local restrictions regarding public spaces, gathering and organised activities.

Looking across all children there is a reported increase in those who *agree* with this statement – from 73% of children during lockdown to 75% post-lockdown/following the return to school. The increase in positive responses is particularly so for older children, and for 12 to 14 year old girls for whom the starting point was lowest. However, girls aged 8 to 11 now report less agreement with the statement.



### If I have a question about my health, I know who to speak to

In recent months it is likely that children will have had worries about their health (see section 5) and as a result many more questions may have arisen. At school, via their Health and Wellbeing curriculum, children will have also been encouraged to develop what might be called help-seeking behaviours – one aspect of which might be knowing who to speak to with a question about their own health. Responses to this statement indicate a decrease for all children – comparing the lockdown and post lockdown/return to school period – when it comes to positive responses regarding knowing who to speak to with a question about health. It is for younger children, both boys (-11%) and girls (-14%) that there is a statistically significant reduction in those who *strongly agree/agree*.



In the **Corona Times Journal**, Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) report on aspects of their health and wellbeing throughout lockdown, and as we emerge from it:

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/#childrensjournal>

## 4. ACCESS TO INFORMATION, EXPRESSING OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCING RIGHTS

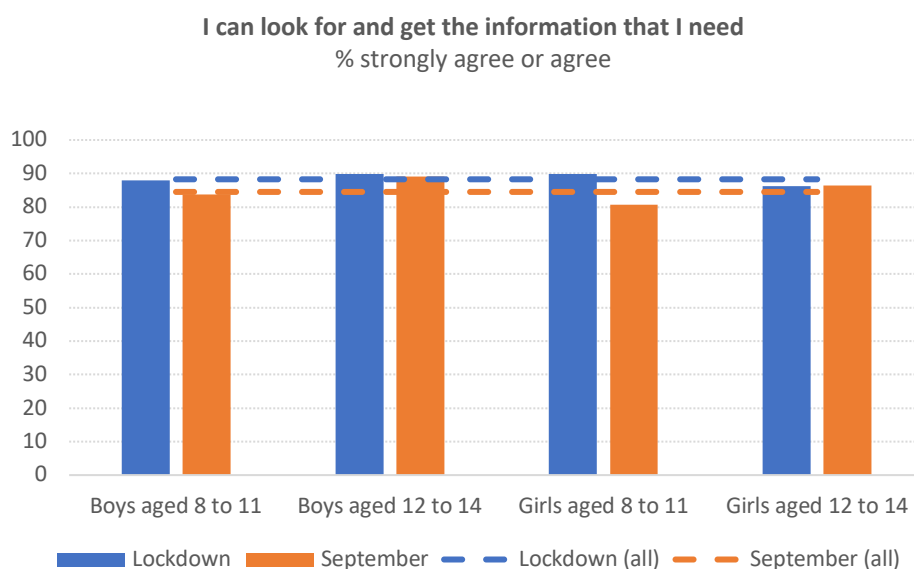
As we have navigated our way through the lockdown, and understood more about Coronavirus and its impact on us, accessing news and information has been incredibly important; in a democratic society or every citizen's right to information and to express opinions must not be compromised – whether the citizen is an adult or child.

Article 17 of the UNCRC explains the right to access information and mass media. It says: *State Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.* The importance of Article 17 for the rights and wellbeing of the child has perhaps never been clearer. The statements discussed in this section are about these issues.

In each section of this report, the statements provided in the *How are you doing?* survey provide the structure. Our graphics focus on responses where children have indicated they *strongly agree* or *agree*, the narrative provides further reflection on responses.

### I can look for and get information that I need

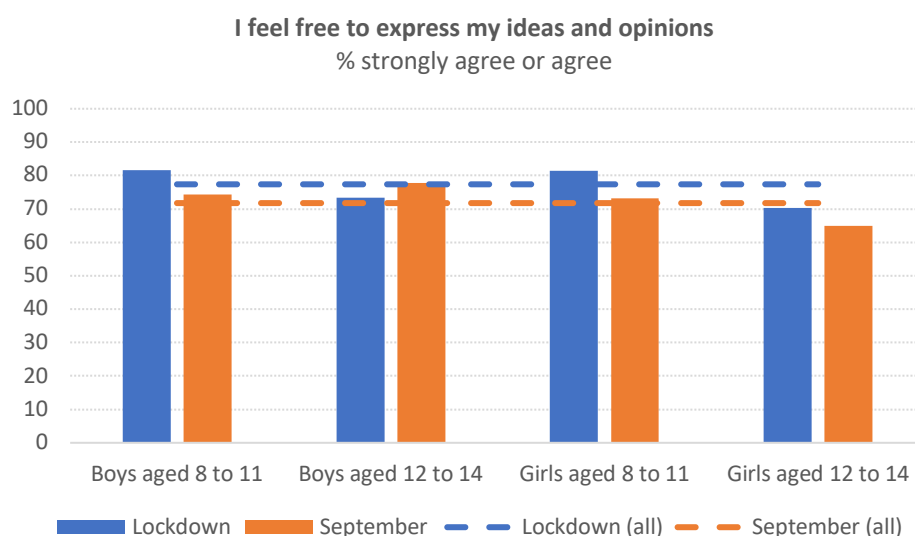
News and social media have been awash with news and information about the pandemic. But have children been able to look for and access the information they need? During the full/initial lockdown period the majority of children reported that they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement (88%) and although this dips to 85% post-lockdown after the return to school it remains high at 85%. Much of this decline in positive responses to this statement is amongst 8 to 11 year olds, particularly girls.



### I feel free to express my ideas and opinions

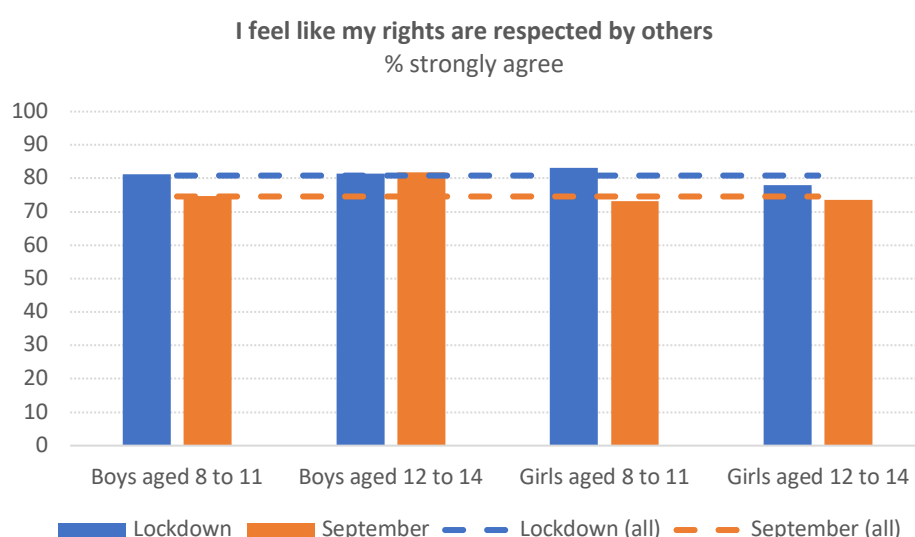
The right to freedom of opinion and expression is a complex right that includes the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds and through a range of media. Looking at all children there is a decline in those responding positively to this statement when comparing the initial lockdown period and post lockdown/return to school: from 74%

to 72%. This fall is particularly evident amongst younger children (-8% for girls/-7% for boys); only boys aged 12 to 14 show increased agreement with the statement (+4%)



### **I feel like my rights are respected by others**

An aspect of the lived experience of one's rights is to know that those rights are respected by others. At Children's Parliament we talk with children about rights-based relationships, where they learn that it is in our social interactions, face-to-face and online, that a person can express their respect for others as well as understand when their own rights are being acknowledged or infringed. While boys aged 12 to 14 report consistently when comparing lockdown and the post-lockdown period (82% *strongly agree/agree*), all other groups of children report a decline over time in their agreement with the statement; a reduction of 6% across all respondents but -10% for girls aged 8 to 11.



In Edition 5 of the **Corona Times Journal**, Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs) report on the issues discussed in this section: *Finding Out How Children Get News and Information About the Pandemic* <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-journal-5/>



## 5. WORRIES

Children's Parliament is keen to promote understanding that children are typically resilient, but it is sensible to assume that in the short, medium or even longer-term children may experience increased worry or anxiety resulting from lockdown, concerns about the Coronavirus and new measures as they are proposed or introduced. This means that we must create space for children to articulate and share their worries; the *How are you doing?* survey has provided one such opportunity.

*How are you doing?* asks children to comment on worries they may have, with a set of statements about worries and a list of things to which they can agree or disagree that they worry about. In responding to the prompts, children tell us about their worries in relation to home life, health, learning and friendships. Responses in this section of the report give us an indication of the scale and scope of what children are worrying about now in comparison to the period of lockdown from April to June 2020.

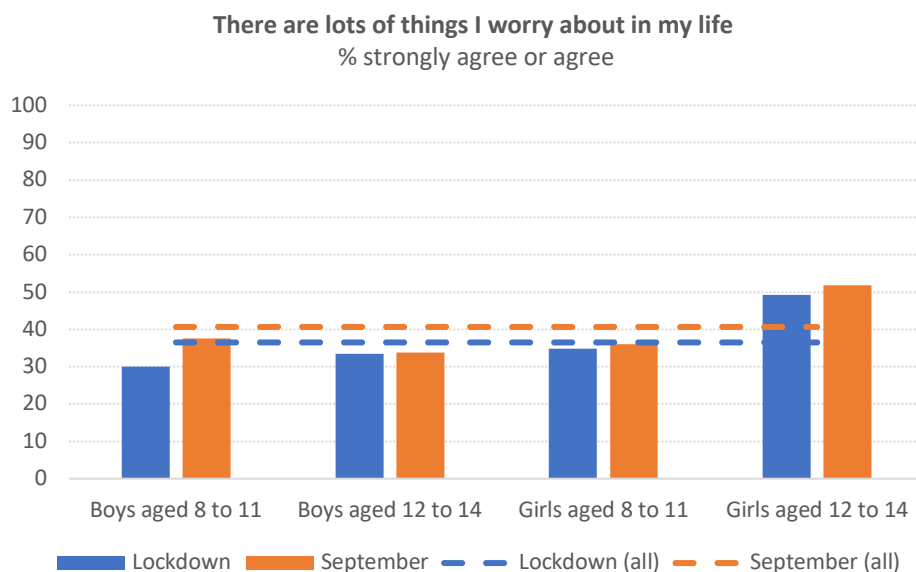
The worries children report should inform the supports available to them now, and inform parents, carers and professionals so that they better understand what they should be attending to as we move through phases of our response to Coronavirus.

In each section of this report, the statements provided in the *How are you doing?* survey provide the structure. Our graphics focus on responses where children have indicated they *strongly agree* or *agree*, the narrative provides further reflection on responses.

### **There are lots of things I worry about in my life**

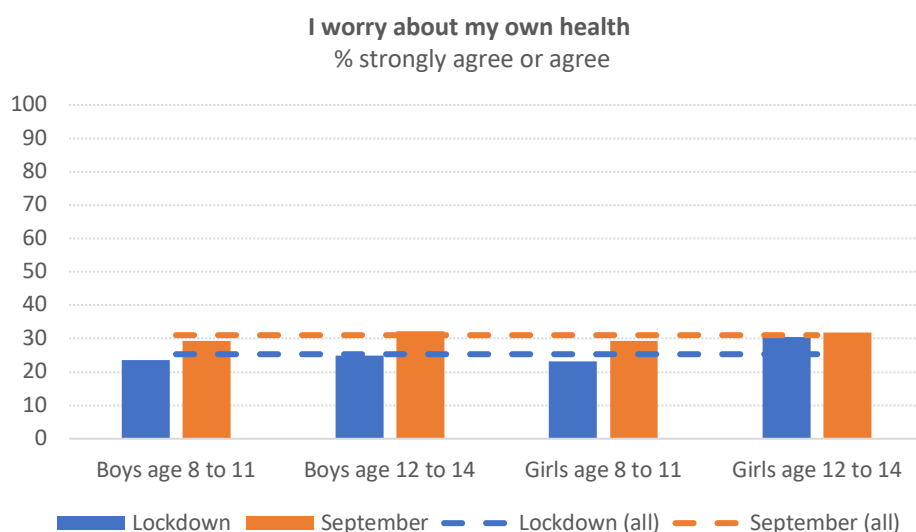
Anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems that children experience; this statement sought to ascertain a general level of worry the child might have.

There is a statistically significant increase in the numbers of children who *strongly agree/agree* with this statement when comparing the initial lockdown to the most recent survey: from 37% to 41%. During the lockdown period April to June older girls aged 12 to 14 were more likely than younger girls, or boys of all ages, to *strongly agree/agree* with this statement and this remains the case; the percentage of girls responding *strongly agree/agree* has increased from 49% to 52%. Although they started from the lowest base it is amongst boys aged 8 to 11 that we see the largest increase in children who *strongly agree/agree*: from 30% to 38%.



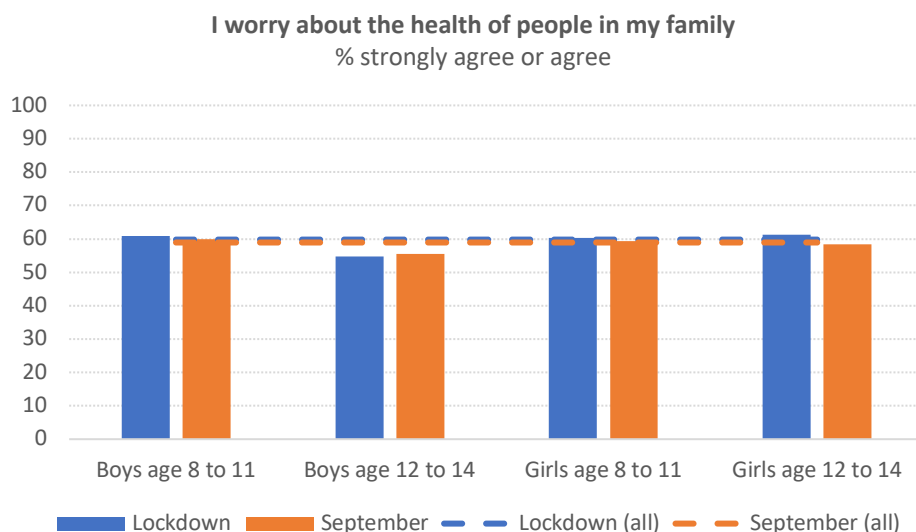
### I worry about my own health

The public health crisis resulting from Coronavirus has focused our minds on our health and the threat it poses to us personally. Considering all responses from the lockdown period compared to post lockdown and the return to school, the numbers of children *who strongly agree/agree* with the statement sees a statistically significant increased from 25% to 31%; increases in worry are true for both boys and girls and for all ages.



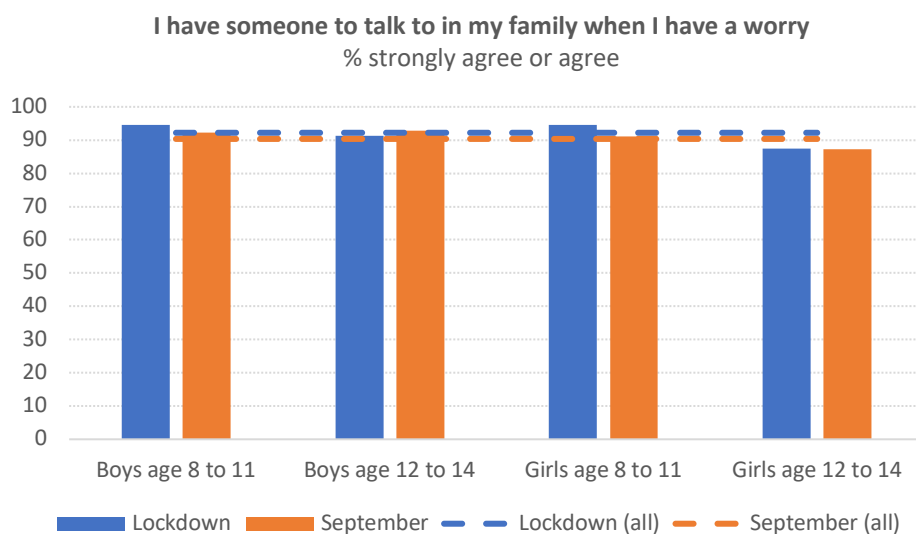
### I worry about the health of people in my family

Public health messages about Coronavirus have focused on how to protect oneself and how to protect others. In middle childhood children are aware of health conditions that may be experienced by members of their family, and of course the lockdown has had a particular impact on those living with chronic conditions. With all this in mind this statement asked children about worries they may have for others in their family. When combining *strongly agree/agree* responses there is consistency in terms of lockdown and post-lockdown responses (60%/59% for the two periods) however this disguises a shift in terms of how strongly children report agreeing with the statement, with a shift for both age groups and sexes towards a *strongly agree* response, indicating a heightened degree of worry for others.



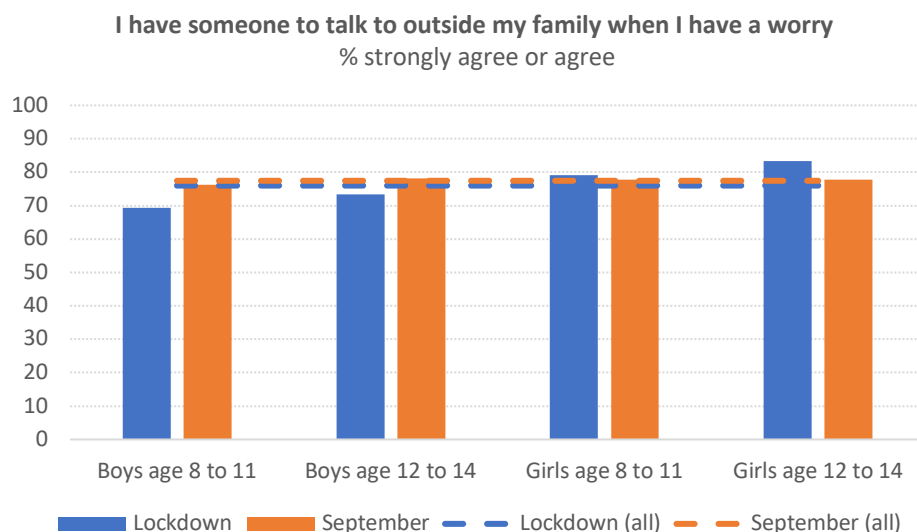
### I have someone to talk to in my family when I have a worry

This statement, and the next, explore whether children have someone they can go to when they worry. Most children report they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement (92% during lockdown/90% post-lockdown). Girls who are 12 to 14 years old are still marginally less likely to agree to some extent with the statement.



### I have someone to talk to outside my family when I have a worry

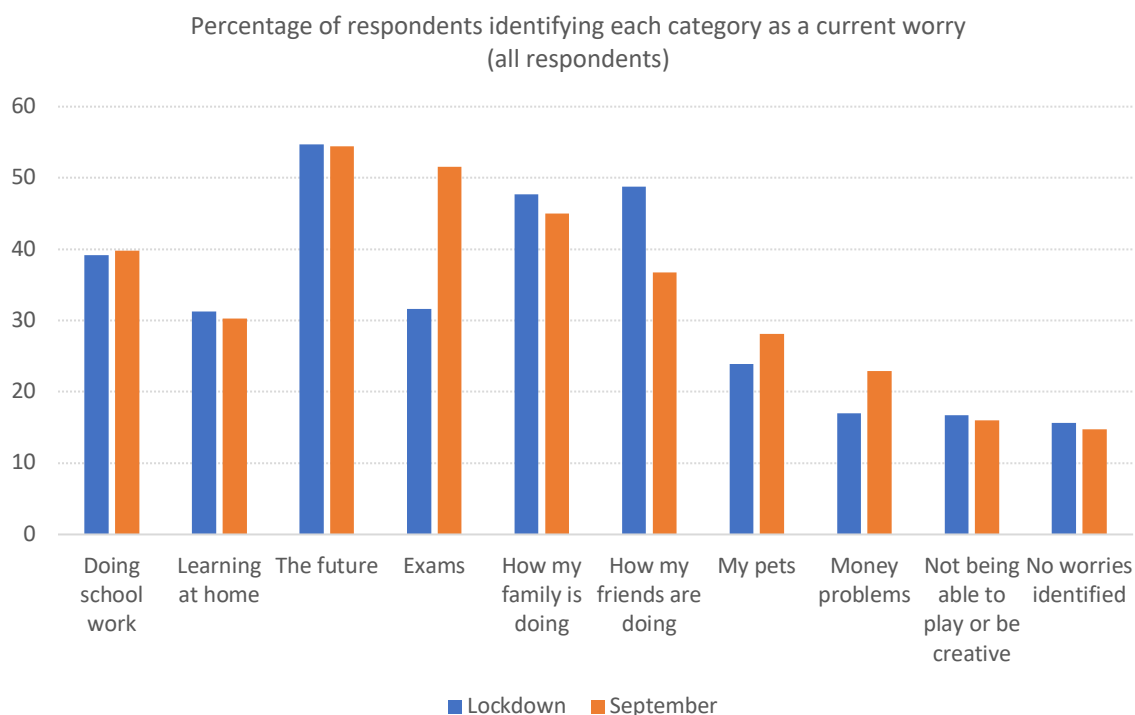
Children may also have someone outside their immediate family to whom they can go with a worry – a teacher, a coach, a neighbour, a friend's parent. While the survey does not ask who these people might be, the statement helps us understand the extent to which these supports are available to children. Comparing all children, those reporting that they *strongly agree/agree* with the statement remains consistent when comparing lockdown and post-lockdown responses: 76%/77%. There are however some differences in terms of sex with girls reporting small reductions in agreeing they have someone, and boys, especially 8 to 11 year olds (from 69% to 76%) more likely to *strongly agree/agree* that they do.



Looking to both these statements concerning 'someone to talk to' it is of concern that some children respond with the options *neither agree or disagree*, *disagree* or *strongly disagree* to both: 4% of children in lockdown with a statistically significant increase to 6% of children post-lockdown after the return to school.

### Do you worry about....?

In addition to the statements reported, the *How are you doing?* survey also provided a list of possible worry areas and asked children to respond with a simple yes/no answer. Below we report on results, comparing responses from lockdown surveys (again as one data point) to the post lockdown period which saw the return to school (September 2020).



The graphic shows areas where there are increases and decreases of numbers of children expressing a worry. In addition to the results as presented for all children it is worth noting:

### **The future**

Worries about 'the future' can help us assess the degree to which children are generally anxious. This option remains the area where the greatest proportion of children have identified they are worried, so in terms of all respondents looking at lockdown 55% and post lockdown 54%. There are differences in terms of age and gender; consistently across both periods 49% of younger boys (8 to 11 years), 51% of younger girls, 49% of older boys (12 to 14 years) but 67% of older girls express a worry about the future.

### **Doing school work**

In part 1 of this report we explored a series of statements about learning. In this section of the survey the statements ask directly whether children are worried about a particular area. While 40% of all respondents identify doing school work as a worry post-lockdown there are differences by age and sex. Younger boys age 8 to 11 remain consistent in reporting this as a worry (33%/32%) but younger girls show a statistically significant increase from 31% during lockdown to 37% after the return to school. Meanwhile older children age 12 to 14 report doing school work as less of a worry now; for boys 43% expressing a worry now sees a statistically significant drop to 34%; for 12 to 14 year old girls with their higher starting point sees a fall from 57% to 54% but still shows that more than half of our older girls worry.

### **Learning at home**

Although by the September survey children had returned to school, levels of worry about learning at home are fairly consistent when considering respondents as one group: lockdown 30%/post lockdown and back to school 31%. However this masks important differences by age where we can see that the children aged 12 to 14 who reported higher levels of worry during lockdown (boys 34%/girls 44%) now report statistically significant reductions in worry although still at 24% for boys and 36% for girls.

### **Exams**

While most children responding to the *How are you doing?* survey do not face taking exams imminently the question was posed because children who were transitioning to secondary school, or those ending S2 and making subject choices during lockdown, may well have the issue on their mind. Looking at all respondents we see a large increase in children worrying – from 32% to 52%. A closer look at sex and age shows us this increase is across all groups. The 12 to 14 year old children remain most worried, particularly girls for whom reports of worry have risen from 49% of girls to 65%.

### **How my friends are doing/How my family is doing**

There are decreases for all children in terms of expressions of worry about friends or family. In terms of friends the reduction in expression of worry across all groups is statistically significant, particularly for 12 to 14 year old girls 52% of whom had expressed worry in lockdown, reducing to 37% now. In terms of worry about families, again there is a reduction in levels of worry for all groups other than for boys aged 8 to 11 with a small increase from 45% expressing a worry to 47%. Although reducing in terms of both categories a significant minority of children remain worried about people close to them.

### **Money problems:**

In the earlier section Family and Friends children reported on the statement *I think my parents/carers worry about having enough money for our family*. There we reported that 29% of children identified that to some extent money was a worry for parents; post

lockdown younger children were increasingly likely to *strongly agree/agree*. When asked 'do you worry about money problems?' the numbers of children identifying this as a worry has increased from 17% during lockdown to 23% in the latest survey. It is in the responses of younger children we see statistically significant increases: for girls aged 8 to 11 from 16% to 23% and boys aged 8 to 11 from 14% to 25%.

### **How my pets are doing**

For children who have pets this may have been a real boon to mental health and wellbeing during lockdown, giving children animals to care for and play with. While we do not ask children to tell us if they have a pet, we know from the responses that a small but consistent number of children have been worried about their pets in the past months. Children's worry about pets has remained consistent for older children at 18%/17% for boys and 24% for girls but younger children are expressing increased worry post lockdown with the return to school: 33% of girls (compared to 27% during lockdown) and 33% of boys (compared to 23% during lockdown) worry about how their pets are doing.

### **Not being able to play or be creative**

Fun and creativity were discussed in part 1 of the report on Learning. When asked if not being able to play or be creative was a worry it was seen as such by a minority of children – 17% in lockdown and now 16% post lockdown with the return to school. While numbers are relatively small, we can see a statistically significant drop in worry about this for the older children – for boys a drop from 15% to 10% and for girls a drop from 15% to 12%.

### **Number of worries**

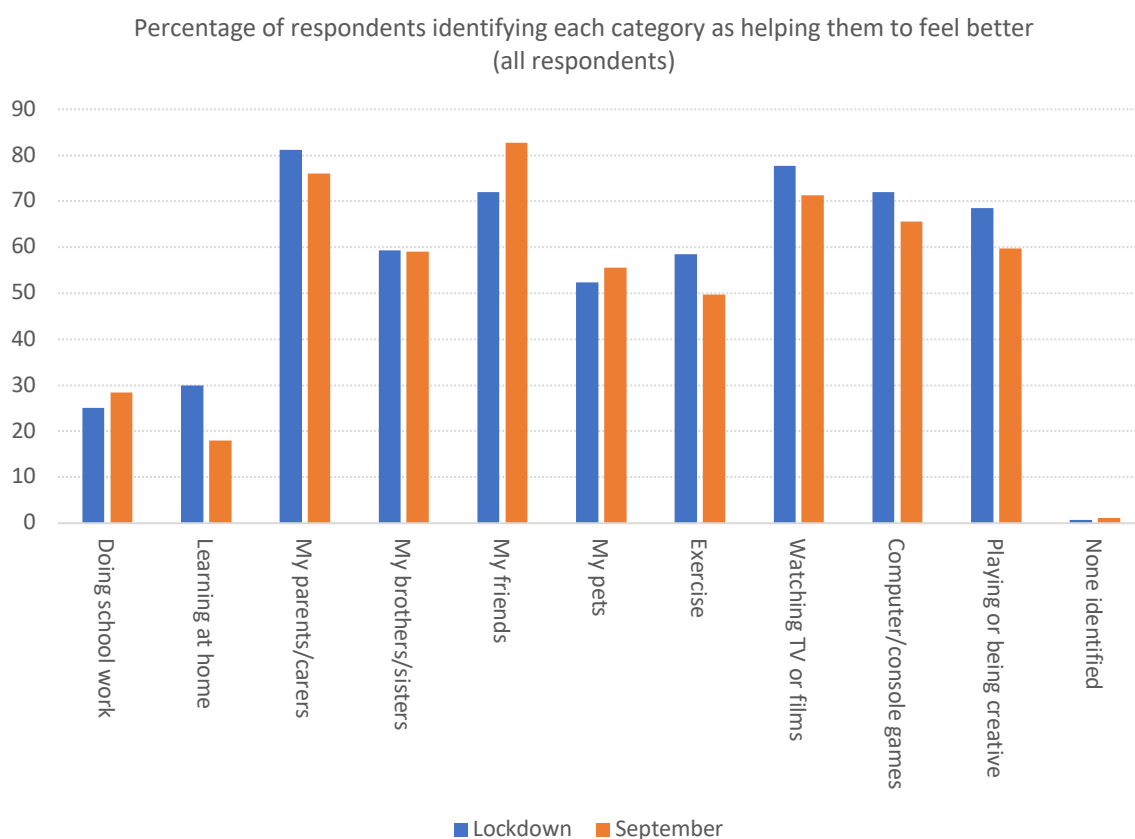
Looking at the number of worries that children report we can see that for all respondents the numbers of children reporting that they have worries about more than 5 of the areas provided has risen post lockdown to 31% of respondents - compared to 27% during lockdown. There are differences in terms of age and sex. It is younger children who report an increase in terms of having 5 or more worries - girls aged 8 to 11 +8% and boys age 8 to 11 +10% while older children a decrease, girls age 12 to 14 -3% and boys aged 12 to 14 -5%.

### **No worries identified**

During lockdown 16% of children identified as having no worries, post lockdown in the latest survey 15% do so. There is some variation by age and sex. For 8 to 11 year old girls 16% expressed no worries in lockdown, now that is 14%. For 8 to 11 year old boys it was 19% now 15%. We might conclude that the younger children are identifying as more likely to be worried. For 12 to 14 year old boys it was 17% and now 19%. For 12 to 14 year old girls it was 9% and is now 12%; indicating that the older children are less likely to be worried.

## 6. WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD AT THE MOMENT?

To provide children with the opportunity to comment on what made them feel good during their lockdown experience, and now post lockdown with the return to school, the survey provides a list of things children might do or have as a resource or support.



### Doing school work

As identified in the previous section in part 1 of this report we explored a series of statements about learning. In this section of the survey the statement asks directly whether children see doing school work as something that makes them feel better. Looking at all respondents there is a statistically significant increase from 25% during lockdown to 29% post lockdown with the return to school. While this is a minority of children, there are differences by age and sex. In lockdown 18% of 12 to 14 year old girls see doing school work as something that makes them feel better, this remains the same now. 12 to 14 year old boys are only marginally more enthusiastic but see a statistically significant increase from 15% to 24% post lockdown. The younger children are more likely to indicate school work as a positive: for boys the increase is from 26% to 32% and for girls from 34% to 38%.

### Learning at home

By the September survey children had returned to school and will now have different experiences of learning at home, some of which might be influenced by a need to be self-isolating. During lockdown there was only a minority of children that saw learning at home as having a positive impact. This was influenced particularly by age, with older children being less positive, these differences remain but for all groups those viewing learning at home as making them feel good has fallen from 30% to 18%.

### **Exercise**

Comparing their lockdown experience with more recent times, children are less likely to identify exercise as something that makes them feel good: the decline across all children responding is from 59% to 50%. The decrease is true across both age groups and sexes.

### **My parents, carers, brothers and sisters**

There is a decrease in the numbers of children viewing parents and carers as something that makes them feel good when comparing the lockdown experience to post lockdown and the return to school: looking at all children the figure drops from 81% to 76%. The drop is true for all of the sub groups we report on other than girls aged 12 to 14, where responses that indicate that a view of parents and carers as a positive have risen from 73% to 76%. Brothers and sisters have been viewed as a positive influence on wellbeing for 59% of children, this is consistent in lockdown and post-lockdown. One group in particular, however, has seen a statistically significant increase in this positive view of siblings, 64% girls aged 12 to 14 now report positively compared to 54% in lockdown.

### **My friends**

Comparing their lockdown experience with more recent times, children are more likely to identify friends as a factor that makes them feel good: the statistically significant increase across all children responding is from 72% to 83%. The increase is true across both age groups and sexes.

### **My pets**

For children who have pets they remain a positive influence on wellbeing. During lockdown 52% of children identified pets in this regard, currently 56% do so.

### **Watching TV/Films or Computer/Console games**

These activities continue to be viewed positively by children, although perhaps with the return to school it might be expected that time spent would reduce and so might viewing them as a positive in terms of wellbeing. Watching TV had been viewed positively by 78% of children during lockdown and now by 71%. Responses across age groups and sexes are very similar. Computer or console games are identified by many more boys as activities which make them feel good: for example post lockdown by 84% of 12 to 14 year old boys and by 43% of 12 to 15 year old girls.

### **Playing or being creative**

Comparing children's responses from lockdown to recent times, with the return to school, there is a reduction across all sub groups in terms of those identifying playing or being creative as something that makes them feel good. There have been differences in responses based on age throughout; 8 to 11 year old girls see the response drop from 82% to 72% and boys age 8 to 12 from 74% to 65% - both statistically significant drops. Older children have been less likely to see playing or being creative as making them feel good: for 12 to 14 year old girls this drops from 56% to 51% and for 12 to 14 year old boys from 49% to 46%.



## Other elements of our Children and Coronavirus programme



Have you read our report on the experience of parents and younger children? These are the stories of 15 families, told to Children's Parliament, to record and reflect on how families with children under the age of 8 have experienced these past tumultuous months. In our stories, we hear from parents and children about the early days of lockdown, about life and learning at home, about understanding the changes that were made to day-to-day life and about the first weeks of the journey back to some semblance of normality, what we might think of as a period of recovery.

<https://15stories.scot/>



### **Back to School: a rights-based approach to recovery**

Back to School is a resource designed to support conversations between children, and between children and adults in school, giving time and space to pause, reflect and then recover. The activities support children's recovery in terms of relationships and readiness to learn. Throughout the resource Children's Parliament shares what we have learned to help teachers prepare for the conversations that will emerge. There has never been a more important time to listen to children and to respond to what they are telling us.

**Back to School** helps schools take a rights-based approach to supporting children's recovery - <https://backtoschool.scot/>



Children's Parliament  
Summerhall  
Edinburgh EH9 1PL  
[info@childrensparliament.org.uk](mailto:info@childrensparliament.org.uk)  
<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/>  
[@Creative\\_Voices](#)

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