

Metrics and causes of family distress during the COVID-19 pandemic

Parker T. Robbins¹, Yi Ting Huang², Pablo Martín Lucio Paredes Aulestia³, Kathleen Oppenheimer², María Daniela Velasco Molina³, and Joshua K. Hartshorne¹

¹Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, Boston College

²Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences, University of Maryland

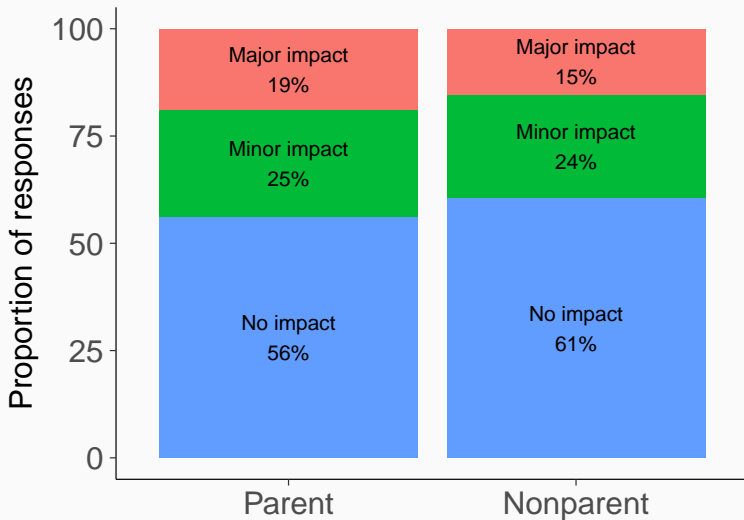
³Reelgood

Friday, 30 October, 2020

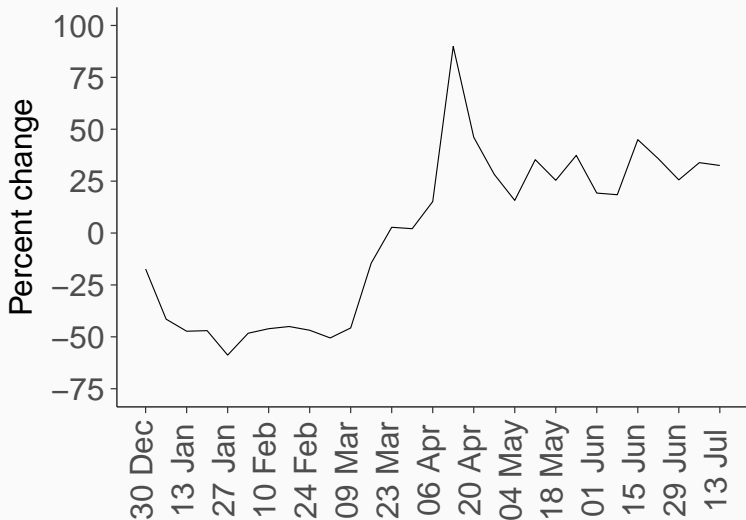
The COVID-19 pandemic and child development

- Media, parents, and researchers are concerned about children's development.
- Early reports indicate:
 - Increased parental stress.
 - Increased screen time for children.
- Parent stress and screen time *correlated with* negative outcomes.

Impact of COVID on mental health: Parents vs. nonparents



Percentage change in streaming averaged across states



Understanding changes in parental stress and child screen time

- To address possible negative outcomes, we need to understand why these changes happened.
- COVID-19: A natural experiment for screen time.
 - Much public policy assumes that *parental preference* drives screen time.
 - Parents' preferences probably didn't suddenly change in mid-March.

Possible causes of increased parent stress and child screen time

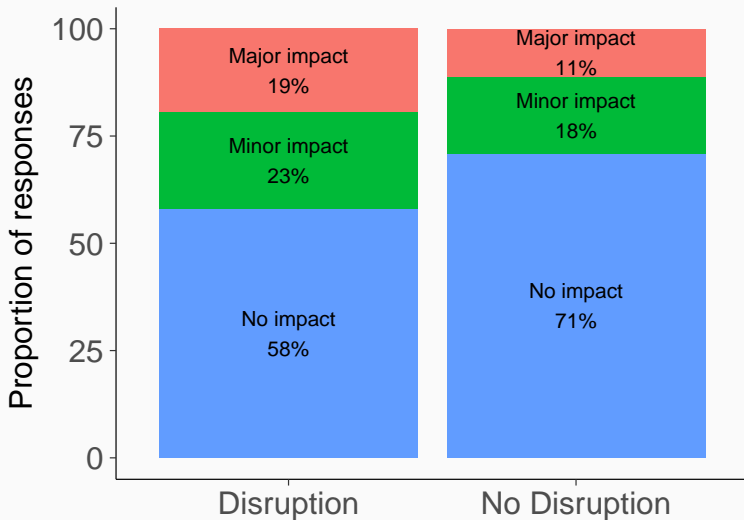
- Why have parent stress and child screen time increased?
 - Concern over rising case numbers?
 - Job loss or cut hours?
- COVID rates and job loss can't explain the changes
 - Increased stress and screen time reported in March—before COVID spikes.
 - Most parents were not losing jobs or job hours (AP-NORC, COVIDImpact Survey).

Considering an alternative explanation: Loss of child care

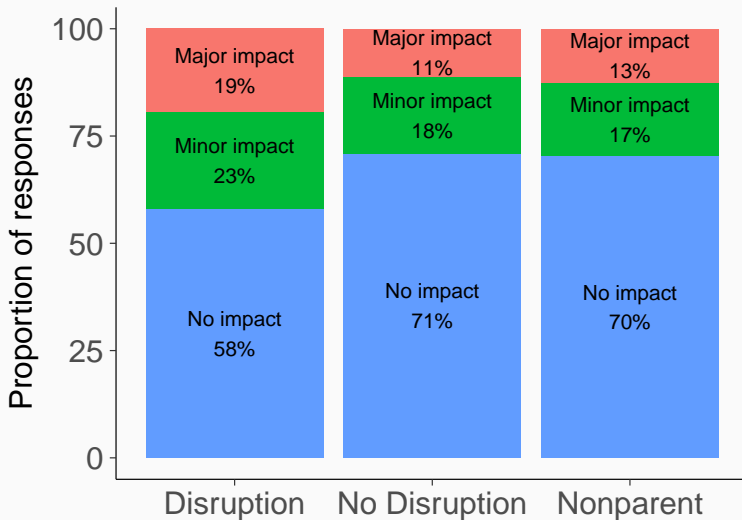
Parents rapidly lost access to child care in mid-March.

- The bulk of school closures occurred between 11 and 19 March (Decker et al., 2020).
- Between 40 and 55 percent of parents who lost child care had an adult working at home.
- Majority of KidTalk respondents providing 5+ extra hours of child care during work hours.

Impact of COVID on mental health: Loss of child care

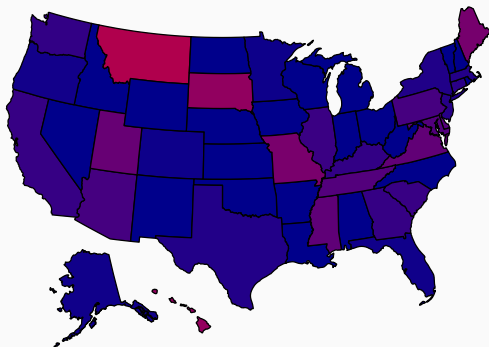


Impact of COVID on mental health: Loss of child care



Frequency of streaming data and COVID rates: 3 March

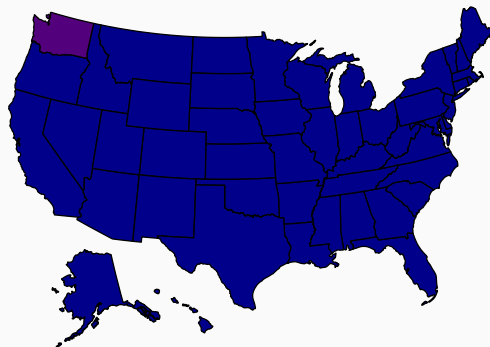
Streaming.



Percent change



Weekly COVID cases (per 100,000).



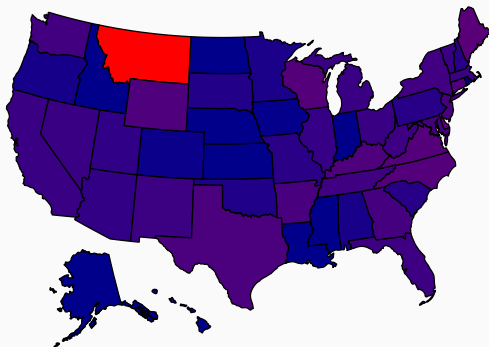
Cases



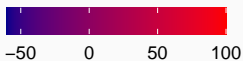
Sources: Reelgood and The New York Times

Frequency of streaming data and COVID rates: 9 March

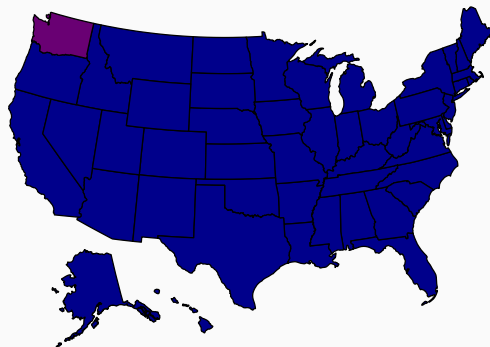
Streaming.



Percent change



Weekly COVID cases (per 100,000).



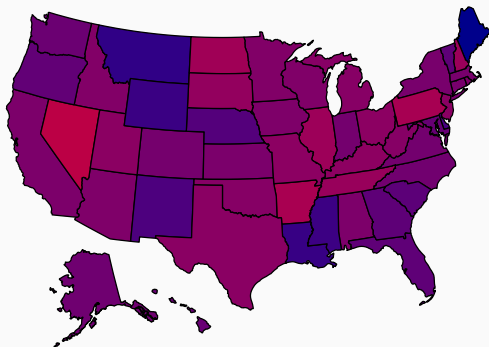
Cases



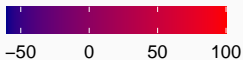
Sources: Reelgood and The New York Times

Frequency of streaming data and COVID rates: 16 March

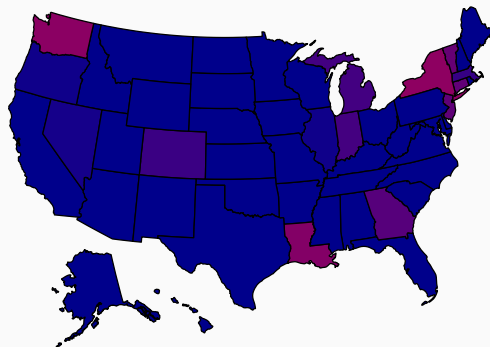
Streaming.



Percent change



Weekly COVID cases (per 100,000).

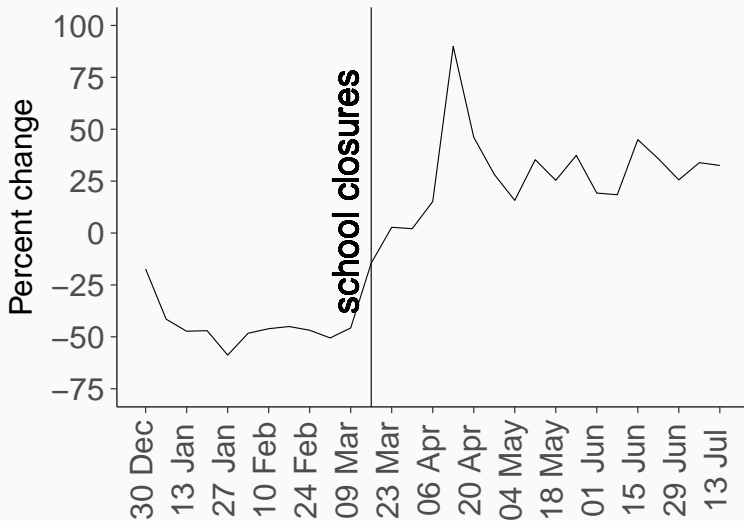


Cases



Sources: Reelgood and The New York Times

Percentage change in streaming averaged across states



Child care is a factor in increased screen time and parental stress

- Two main findings:
 1. Decrease in parent well-being is tied to loss of child care.
 2. Increase in screen time is tied to loss of child care.
- Policies may wish to target child care interruptions.

Broader implications

- Understanding screen time:
 - Access to child care is more important than preference.
 - Preference-based interventions would likely not work.
- The COVID pandemic:
 - Has created natural experiments.
 - Will help us create better interventions for children and families.

Thank you so much for listening!

- Check out our preprint: <https://psyarxiv.com/zqc4t>
- Check out the KidTalk project: <https://kiddtalkscrapbook.org>
- Email me: robbinpb@bc.edu
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