

Family life in Tower Hamlets in a pandemic: early results

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Participants

Families in Tower Hamlets

- 992: 870 with child/ren under 5; 62 pregnant; 60 pregnant and had child under 5
- 34.3% White British/Irish
- 35.6% Bangladeshi
- 30.1% wide range of other ethnicities include Somali, Black British and Indian

Family Playrooms

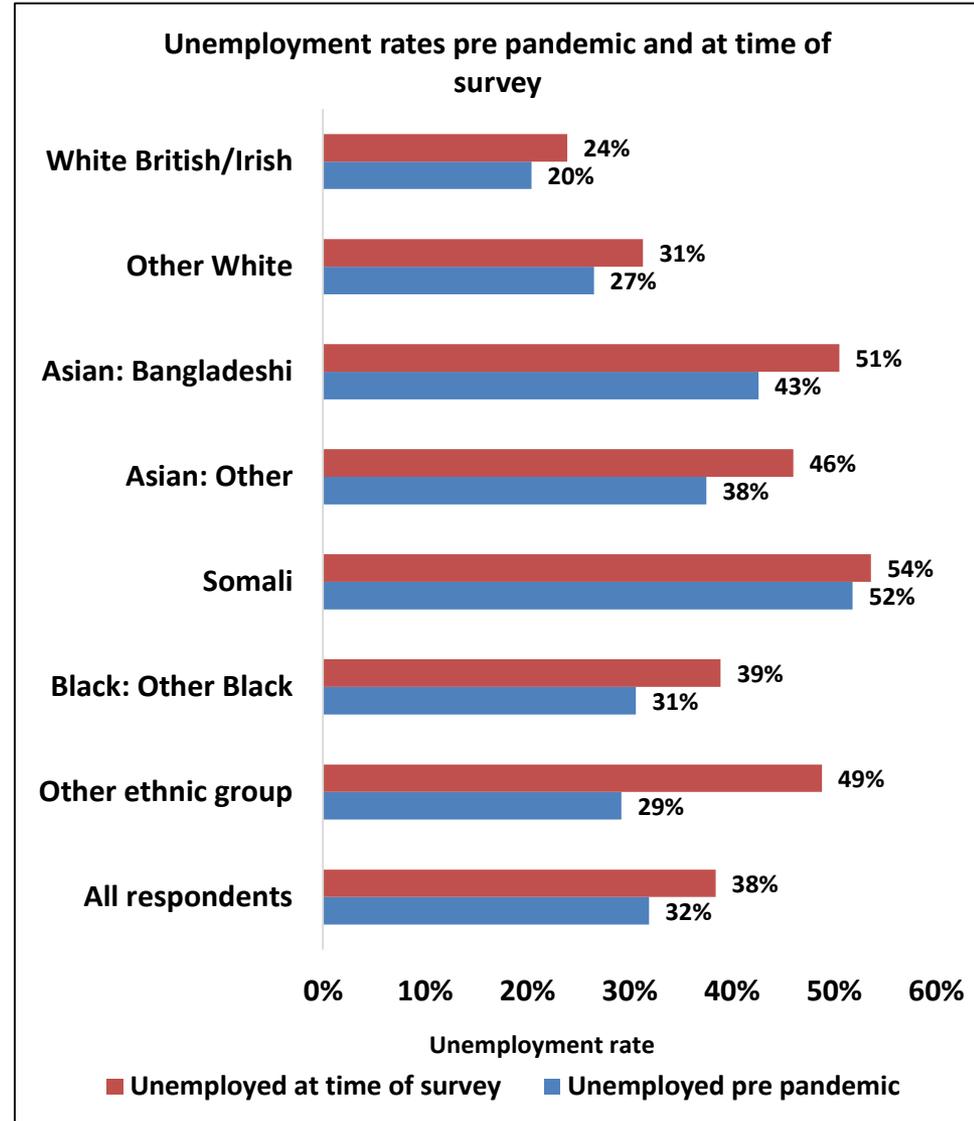
- Households with children under 11.
- 79% women. Survey predominantly reached Asian/Asian British mothers, aged between 31-40.
- The number of people in the household was most commonly 4, but ranged from 1 to 9
- Spread across the borough

Its been a tough year ...

- Unemployment rose from 33% to 40%. Somali (52%); Bangladeshi (43%)
- 67% some kind of income support benefit
- Universal Credit: 26% Bangladeshi, 41% Black vs 16% White British/Irish

Income

- High (£52k+): 22%
- Medium (£20.8 – 51.9k): 32%
- Low (up to £20.79k) 39%

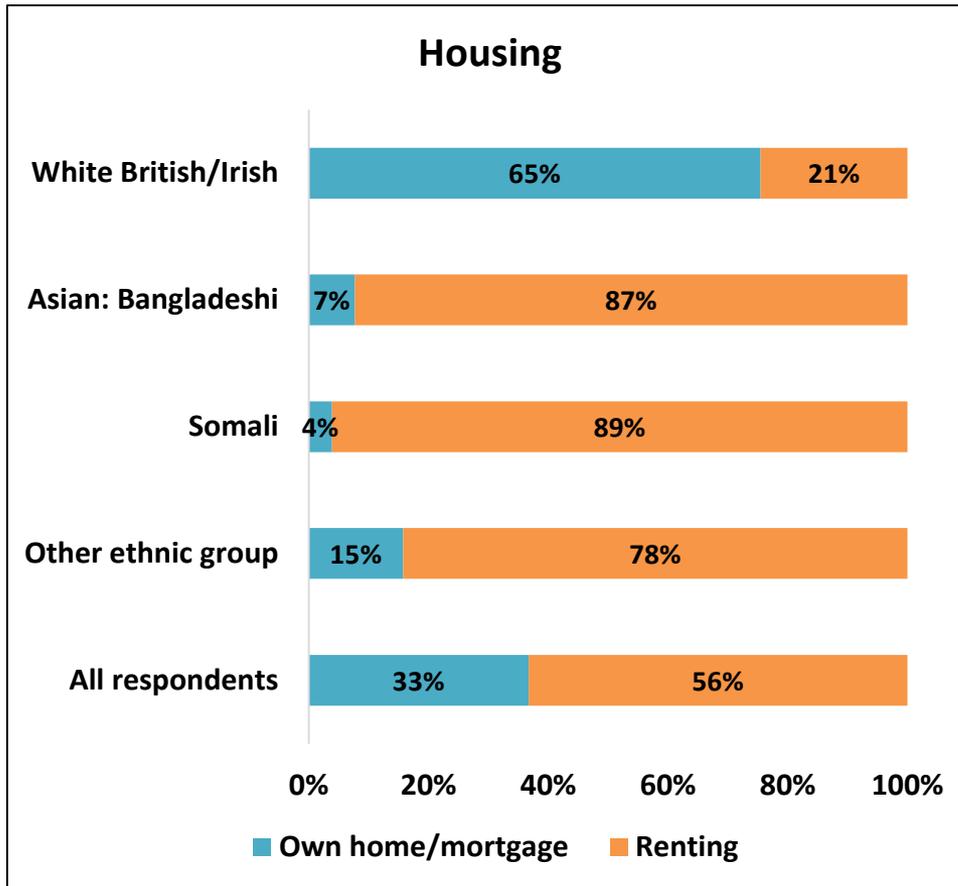


Food insecurity & Money worries

- 22% had used a food bank & 25% skipped meals recently

- *Not having enough money to even buy food for myself or my child and having to ask friends for money*
- *Worries about providing food for my children as work cannot provide overtime due to Covid19*

Housing



- Major home repairs needed? 20%
- Damp or mould? 28%
- More likely among Bangladeshi & Somali families
- One bedroom? 17%
- More likely among Black Other and Asian Other families

The hardest part is we are suffocated in our home we live in one bedroom flat with 6 of us there is nowhere to relax, play, sleep, eat, or do homework for me and my kids we are suffering big time

Environment and space



49% had access to outside space

Living in a flat with no garden is difficult. Feels like prison due to limitations and restrictions.

Nurseries are too busy and too small with very little outside spaces for kids to run and get sun/vitamin D, daily. The parks/grass are super dirty and not safe for babies/toddlers

... and one of the biggest challenges was simply “staying indoors”

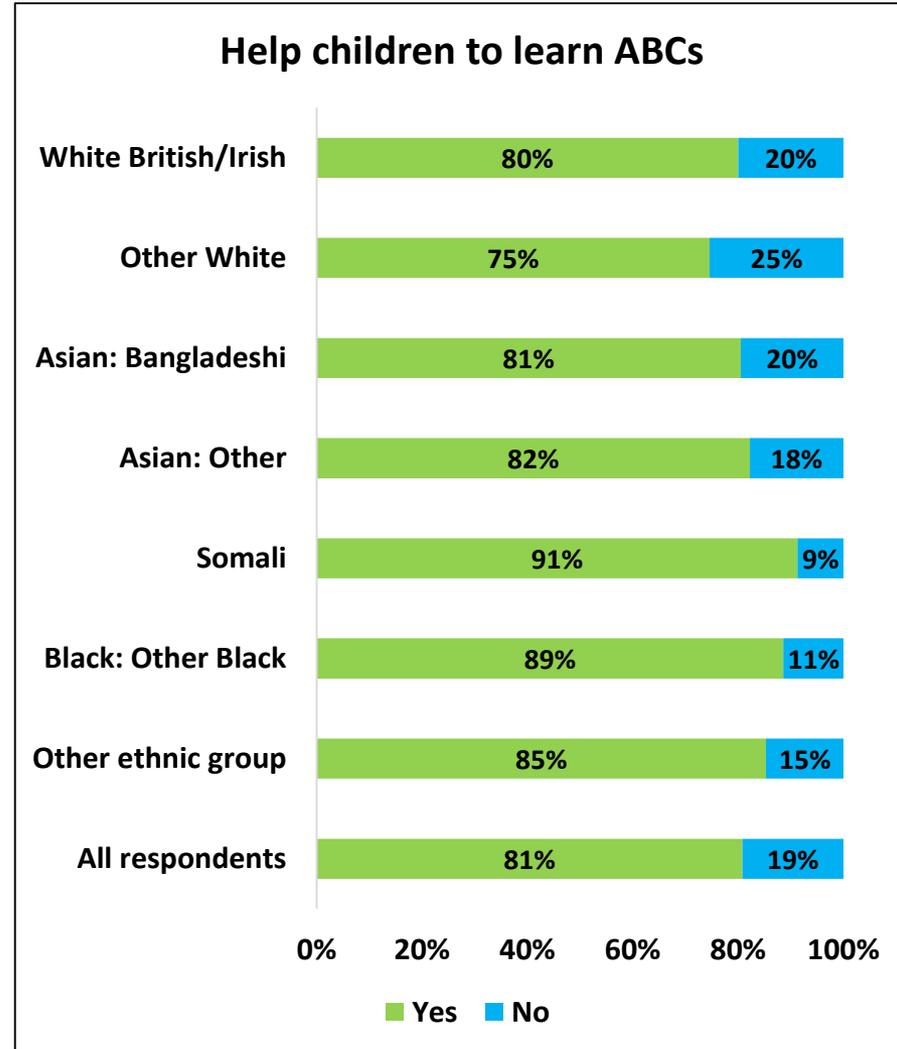


Access to health services

- Routine midwifery - 75%: Bangladeshi (69%); Asian Other (60%)
- *Wife have birth! Getting to the hospital, having to leave after the birth with baby in ICU. Not being able to see them for days.*
- New baby checks – 30%:
- *My anxiety is exacerbated by lockdown because the regular baby clinics are now unavailable. Thus I do not have regular interactions with health providers to ask questions on a casual basis as they come up, the anxieties build and I doubt myself.*

Supporting children

- Most children at home during lockdowns
- *The advice was to keep children at home if we were able, which we were since I am a stay-at-home mum.*
- 94% said they read to children at least some days a week, more likely among White families (56% said every day).



Supporting children

- *I am worried about the fact that my 7 year old son is really struggling with reading and writing and it is difficult to keep my children occupied and safe when everything is closed.*
- *My son feeling left out of his friend group as they were invited back to nursery but he was not, due to limited capacity.*
- *Worry about children's learning and falling behind.*

Connection and support

*“We now have 2 jobs.
Home schooling and
our full-time jobs.
Extremely stressful and
demanding.”*

*“Supporting my partner
through the illness
whilst having to work
full time and provide
childcare. Missing my
family and particularly
not being able to see or
look after my mum who
is having treatment [for
an illness].”*

Connection to...

**share laughter,
swap tips,
“support each other,
gather together, talk
about what’s
bothering you”,
“play”,
“share how you feel
with others”,
“keep in touch” and
“have a proper
conversation”.**

*It is hard for me to get
support or advice from
others which is how I
would normally cope*

Disconnection and returning to normal

*“not much connection
with community and fear
from unsubstantiated
fear mongering through
media”*

*“fear of unknown, feeling
strange and lonely in
social gatherings”*

*We have a lot more
family time together
and are closer than
ever.*

Relationships with partner

- 27%: spending more time as family was enjoyable
- But - 38%: 'nothing' was better.
- 75%: good or excellent relationship with partner
- Lower relationship quality: **Black 35%; Asian Other: 28%, White Other: 26%**, White: 20%, Bangladesh: 20%, Somali: 22%, Other ethnic groups: 12%.

Buying" time from my partner so that I can do more work while he looks after the children. This is a constant struggle. My work is more flexible so it is mostly me that has to flex to fit all the work and childcare in.

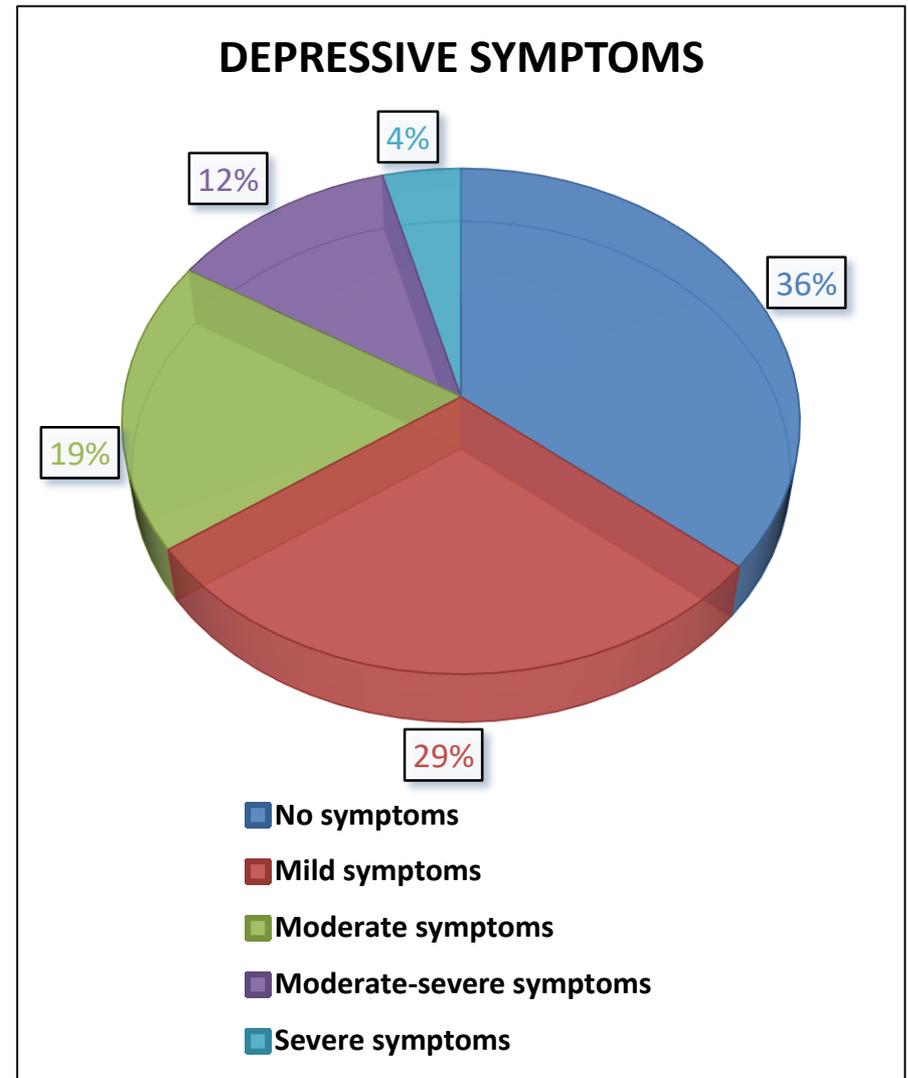
Coping with a newborn, toddler & teens and trying to explain to my husband I need help.

Mental health

- 29% mild & 31% moderate to severe depressive symptoms
- More likely in lower income groups, and among Black respondents

PLUS

- 17% moderate anxiety (20% White, 18% Bangladeshi and 18% Black) symptoms
- Much higher than national rates



Top tips for a happy and healthy life from families

- Environment – “Get out every day and keep active.”
- Play and activities – “Make time for play – that includes adults too!”
- Security – “Build a routine that looks after the whole family.”
- Connection – “Check in and chat with your support network.”

Your Top Tips for Health and Happiness

Build a new routine that looks after the whole family - including you!

Routines got disrupted - so it was time to create new ones. You said *"find 'me-time' by taking turns with other family members"* and *"plan things out the day before"*.



 Bromley by Bow Centre

Dreams and reconnecting



Find out more

- Claire Cameron, Thomas Coram Research Unit,
UCL Social Research Institute
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- [Families in Tower Hamlets: impacts of COVID-19 | Institute of Education - UCL – University College London](#)