

# 7 Inclusion, community relations and COVID-19

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While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the way almost everyone connects with each other, spends their time, relates to society and experiences safety, some groups have suffered more than others. Those with financial difficulties, the unemployed, women and people without university education felt particularly lonely in 2020, as did younger people and those living alone. Apart from the youngest age group, these characteristics were already risk factors for well-being pre-COVID, but absolute gaps widened for vulnerable groups since then. Similar patterns can be observed for feeling left out of society. Both men and women experienced an increase in the burden of unpaid domestic work and care for children (or other family members), but most of this additional burden still fell on women. Women have also been affected by increases in domestic violence.

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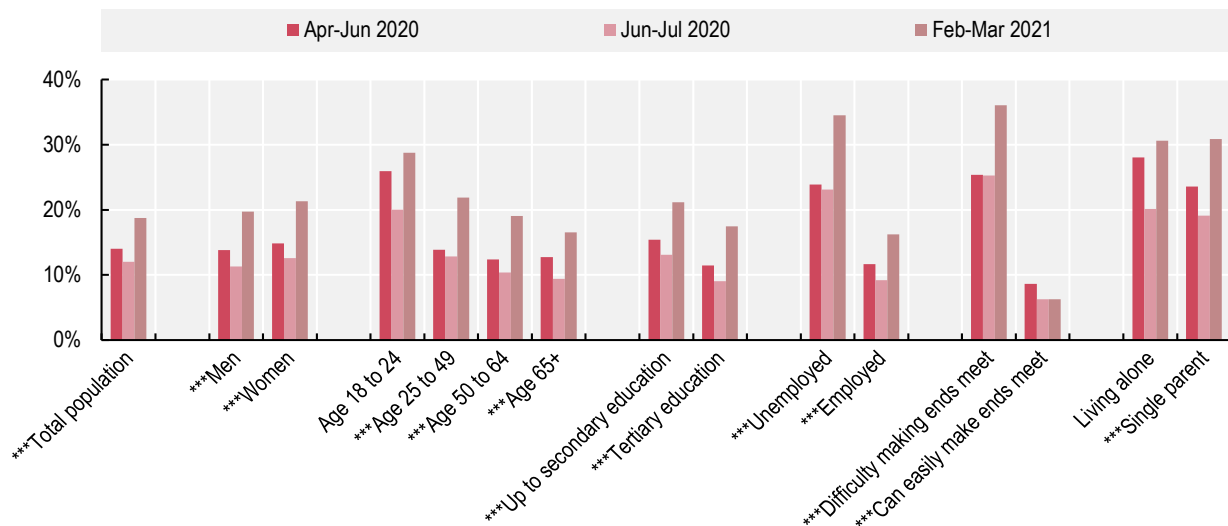
## 7.1. Social connections

*Loneliness has hit everyone, but particularly vulnerable groups*

**A year of multiple lockdown rounds, social distancing and restrictions on travel and gatherings has made nearly everyone more lonely, but some groups more so than others.** In European OECD countries, nearly 1 in 5 people overall felt lonely most or all of the time in February–March 2021, up from 1 in 7 in April–May a year earlier (see Chapter 4). A closer look at different subgroups reveals that people with financial difficulties, the unemployed, younger people, those with up to secondary education, women, people living alone as well as single parents were disproportionately affected (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1. People in precarious financial and work situations, the young and those living without a partner felt loneliest in the first year of the pandemic**

Share of people feeling lonely most or all of the time in the past two weeks, by population group, OECD 22, Apr–Jun 2020 – Feb–Mar 2021



Note: The OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden. Categories preceded by \*\*\* saw statistically significant (at the 5% level) changes from April–June 2020 to February–March 2021. Difficulty making ends meet is captured by the question: “A household may have different sources of income and more than one household member may contribute to it. Thinking of your household’s total monthly income: is your household able to make ends meet?”. “With difficulty” refers to respondents answering with difficulty or with great difficulty, while “easily” refers to respondents answering fairly easily, easily or very easily. Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 survey.

Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[1]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

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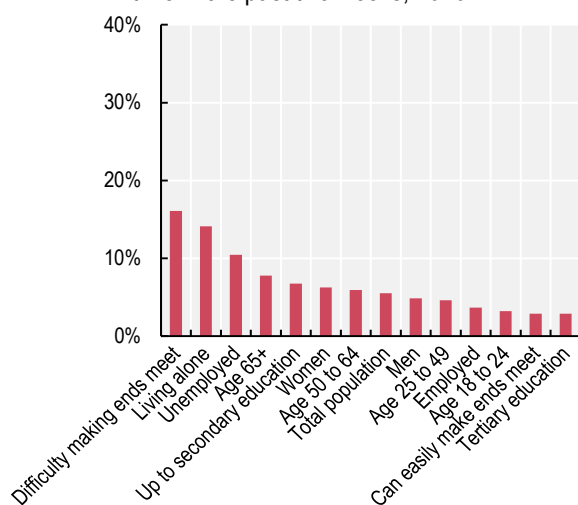
**The risk factors for loneliness were nearly identical before and during the pandemic.** In 2016, people in European OECD countries who were struggling financially, without a job, living alone, lower educated or female were already more likely to be lonely (Figure 7.2, Panel A). In addition, single parents, people living in urban areas, and those with a disability or diagnosed mental health condition felt most lonely pre-COVID and throughout 2020 (Eurofound, 2020<sup>[2]</sup>; Loneliness New Zealand Charitable Trust, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>; ANUPoll, 2020<sup>[4]</sup>; ONS, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>; Kühne et al., 2020<sup>[6]</sup>; NZ Social Wellbeing Agency, 2020<sup>[7]</sup>). However, two patterns stand out about the impact of COVID-19. First, while between 2016 and 2020 *relative* loneliness inequalities by ability to make ends meet, employment status, educational attainment or gender narrowed

(because every population group, including those previously protected, experienced increases in loneliness), these inequalities remain very substantial (Figure 7.2, Panel B). For instance, in the first year of the pandemic a person living in a European OECD country who had difficulty making ends meet was more than three times more likely to feel lonely compared to a person who could easily meet household expenses; similarly, someone with up to a secondary education was 1.3 times more likely to be lonely than a peer with a tertiary degree.

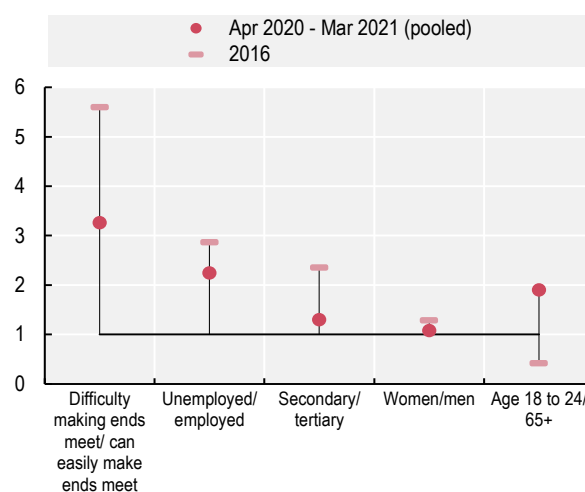
**Figure 7.2. Gaps in loneliness between population groups have narrowed since 2016 as overall levels increased for everyone but remain substantial**

Loneliness, by population group, OECD 22, 2016, average over 3 survey waves in Apr-Jun 2020, Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021

Panel A. Share of people feeling lonely most or all of the time in the past two weeks, 2016



Panel B. Ratios of loneliness pre- and during Covid



Note: The OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden. See the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet. In Panel B, ratios with values above 1 indicate worse outcomes for the population subgroups listed first, values below 1 indicate worse outcomes for the population subgroups listed second. While the 2020-2021 and 2016 data are not directly comparable due to differences in sampling between the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey and the European Quality of Life Survey (although the question asked is the same), the ratios provide a useful point of comparison over time. Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey.

Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (2018<sup>[8]</sup>), *European Quality of Life Survey 2016*,

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/fourth-european-quality-of-life-survey-overview-report>; and Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[11]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

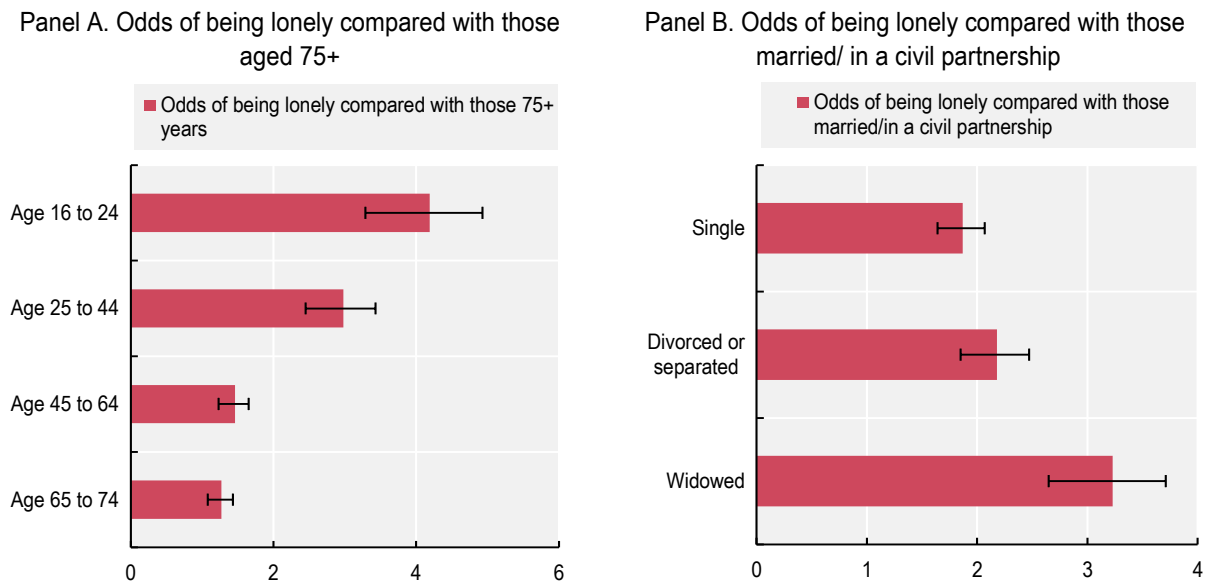
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**Second, younger people have been particularly hit by loneliness during the pandemic.** Before COVID-19, some evidence supported the idea of loneliness increasing with age, while other sources pointed to loneliness being more prevalent among younger cohorts.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, in 2020 young people consistently emerged as the age group feeling the most lonely during the pandemic (Figure 7.2). Official statistics from New Zealand and Great Britain confirm this pattern: in the former, 57% of New Zealanders aged 18–24-years felt lonely at least a little of the time during the past four weeks in March 2021, compared to 34% of those aged 65 years and older (StatsNZ, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). In the latter, the 16-24 and 25-44 years age cohorts had 4.2 and 3 times the odds of being lonely in the past week between October 2020 - February 2021, compared to people aged 74 years or over (Figure 7.2, Panel A). In February 2021, loneliness

prevalence among students in England was more than triple that of the general population (ONS, 2021<sup>[10]</sup>). Marital status and household size, which vary by age, are also important drivers of loneliness: in Great Britain, those living alone had almost 1.6 times the odds of feeling lonely compared to people in two-person households, and all categories of unmarried people were more lonely than those married or living in a civil partnership (Figure 7.2, Panel B).

### Figure 7.3. In Great Britain, younger and unmarried people were more likely to experience loneliness during lockdown


Odds of reporting feeling lonely in the last 7 days, among people in Great Britain who said their well-being was affected by the coronavirus, Oct 2020 - Feb 2021



Note: In Panel A, odds ratios compare the likelihood of reporting lockdown loneliness for someone in a specified age group compared with those aged 75 years or over, while controlling for other possible influences. In Panel B, odds ratios compare the likelihood of reporting lockdown loneliness for someone in a specified living arrangement compared with those in married/civil partnership, while controlling for other possible influences. Lockdown loneliness is defined as those who said their well-being had been affected by the coronavirus through feeling lonely in the last seven days. The error bars show the degree of confidence of the estimates.

Source: ONS (2021<sup>[11]</sup>), *Mapping loneliness during the coronavirus pandemic*,

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/mappinglonelinessduringthecoronaviruspandemic/2021-04-07>.

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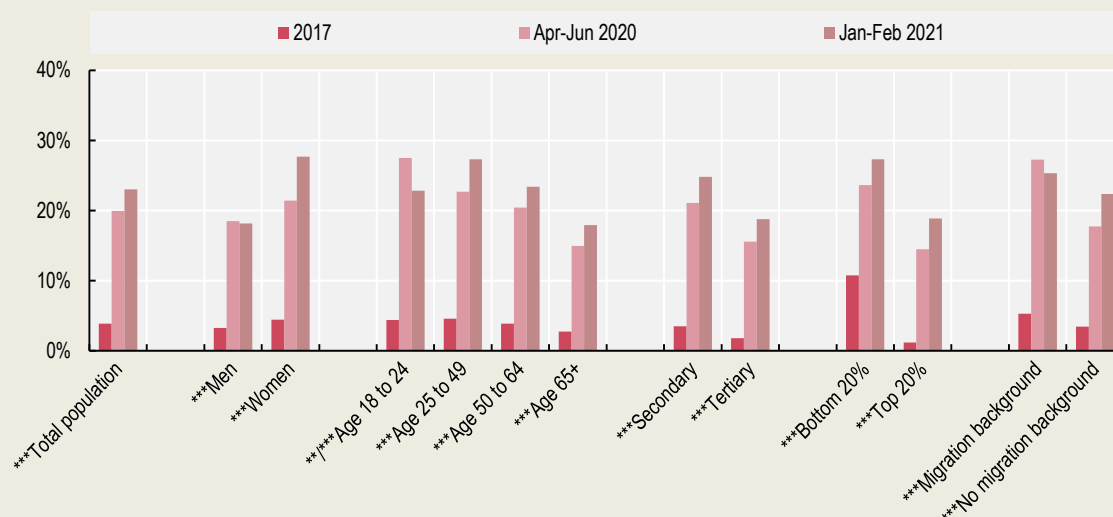
#### Box 7.1. Spotlight: Differences between loneliness and social isolation during the pandemic

Loneliness and social isolation are two related but different aspects of social connectedness. Generally speaking, social isolation refers to the amount of social contact a person has in terms of the number and frequency of contacts. Loneliness, in contrast, occurs when social relationships are perceived by a person to be less in quantity, and especially in quality, than desired (Social Wellbeing Agency, 2020<sup>[12]</sup>; OECD, 2021<sup>[13]</sup>). This implies that someone can feel lonely despite regular contact with family and friends, and that a person can be isolated without necessarily feeling lonely. While isolation is not a requirement for feeling lonely, being socially isolated does increase the likelihood of being lonely.

German data on self-reported social isolation from 2017 and at two time points during the COVID-19 pandemic show that, as with the loneliness trends described in this chapter, social isolation has progressively increased for all population groups since the start of 2020 (Figure 7.4). Many of the risk factors for perceived social isolation – low income, being female, being younger, having a lower education – were similar to those identified for loneliness in the broader European context.


**Figure 7.4. In Germany, income, gender and younger age were associated with feeling socially isolated pre-outbreak, and remained so during the pandemic**

Share of people in Germany feeling socially isolated, by population group, 2017, Apr-Jun 2020, Jan-Feb 2021



*Note:* Socially isolated is defined as respondents who say they feel very often or often socially isolated. Migration background is defined as respondents or either of their parents being born in a country other than Germany. \*\* denotes categories with between 100 and 300 observations in April-June 2020 and January-February 2021. More than 500 observations per category are available for all other categories. Categories preceded by \*\*\* saw statistically significant (at the 5% level) changes from 2017-2021. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The data can be accessed via the research data centre of the SOEP. Refer to Box 3.1 for methodological details.

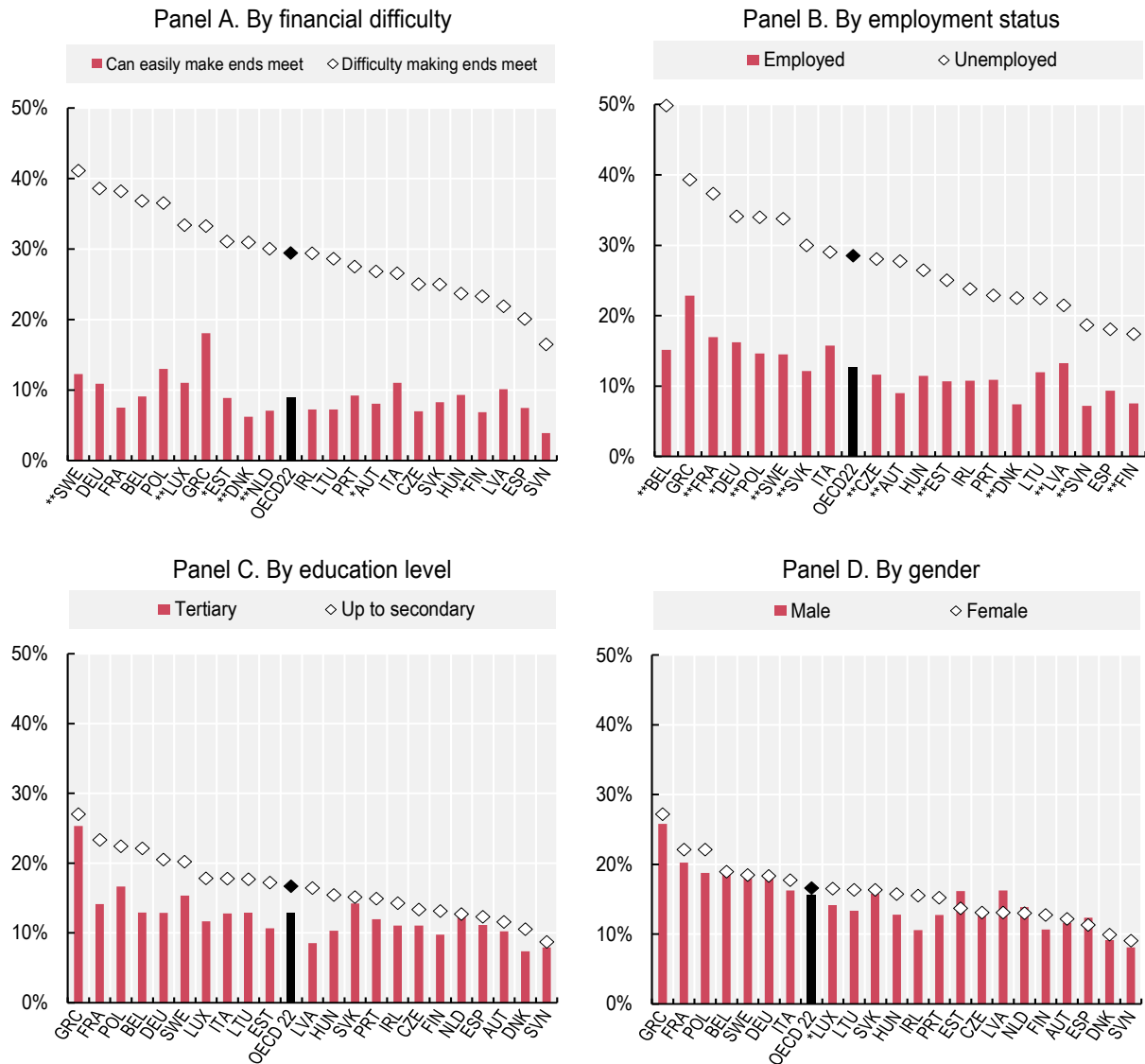
*Source:* Kühne et al. (2020<sup>[6]</sup>), "The need for household panel surveys in times of crisis: The case of SOEP-CoV", *Survey Research Methods*, Vol. 14/2, pp. 195-203, <https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2020.v14i2.7748>.

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**Socio-economic risk factors for loneliness are similar across OECD countries.** In all European OECD members covered by the Eurofound Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey, a larger share of people with difficulty making ends meet, of the unemployed and of those with secondary or lower education felt lonely between April - June 2020, compared to those who are better-off financially, employed or more highly educated (Figure 7.5, Panels A-C). The same was true for women compared to men in most countries, though gaps are much smaller than those relating to socio-economic status and only significant for Hungary and Ireland (Figure 7.5, Panel D). In Great Britain, 9% of people who earn up to GBP 10 000 were lonely between March 2020 - April 2021 compared to 3.3% of those with a yearly income of GBP 40 000 or above (Figure 7.6). Further, local authority areas with higher unemployment (in October 2019 - September 2020) had higher proportions of lonely residents between October 2020 - February 2021 (ONS, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>).<sup>2</sup> In Germany, gender gaps in loneliness progressively widened over the course of the pandemic: in 2017, the prevalence of loneliness among women was around 3 percentage points higher than among men. This gap rose to 6.5 percentage points in April-June 2020, and to close to 10 percentage points in January-February 2021. Similar patterns can be observed for social isolation (Figure 7.7).

**Figure 7.5. Socio-economic risk factors for loneliness during COVID-19 are similar across European OECD countries**

Share of people feeling lonely all or most of the time in the past two weeks, OECD 22, average over 3 survey waves in Apr-Jun 2020, Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021

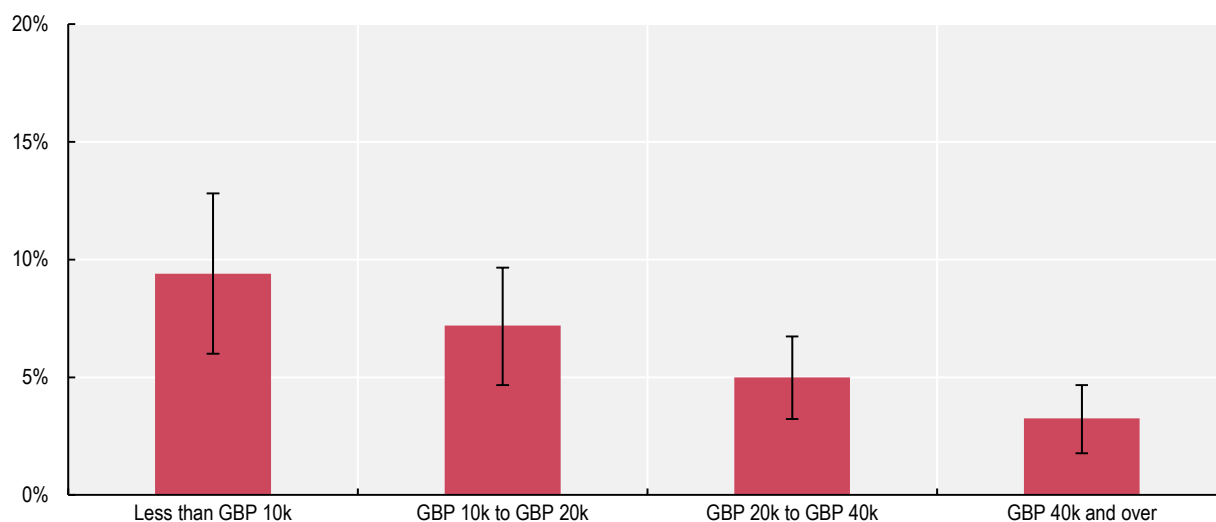


Note: In all panels, the OECD 22 average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Data are not reported for countries where fewer than 100 observations are available. \*\* denotes countries with between 100 and 300 observations per category; \* denotes countries with between 301 and 500 observations per category. More than 500 observations per category are available for all other countries. Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 survey. In Panel A, see the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet. Differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for all countries, including OECD 22. In Panel B, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for all countries, including OECD 22, except for Latvia and the Netherlands. In Panel C, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, OECD 22, Poland and Portugal. In Panel D, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for Hungary and Ireland.

Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[1]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

**Figure 7.6. In Great Britain, loneliness in the first year of COVID-19 was worse for lower-income groups**

Share of people in Great Britain feeling often or always lonely, by annual personal income, Mar 2020 - Apr 2021



*Note:* Chronic loneliness is defined as adults aged 16 years or over that were asked how often they felt lonely and responded with often or always. Income refers to total annual income of individuals from all sources, gross of tax. The error bars show the lower and upper intervals of the estimates.

*Source:* ONS (2020<sub>[14]</sub>), *Personal and economic well-being in Great Britain: January 2021*,

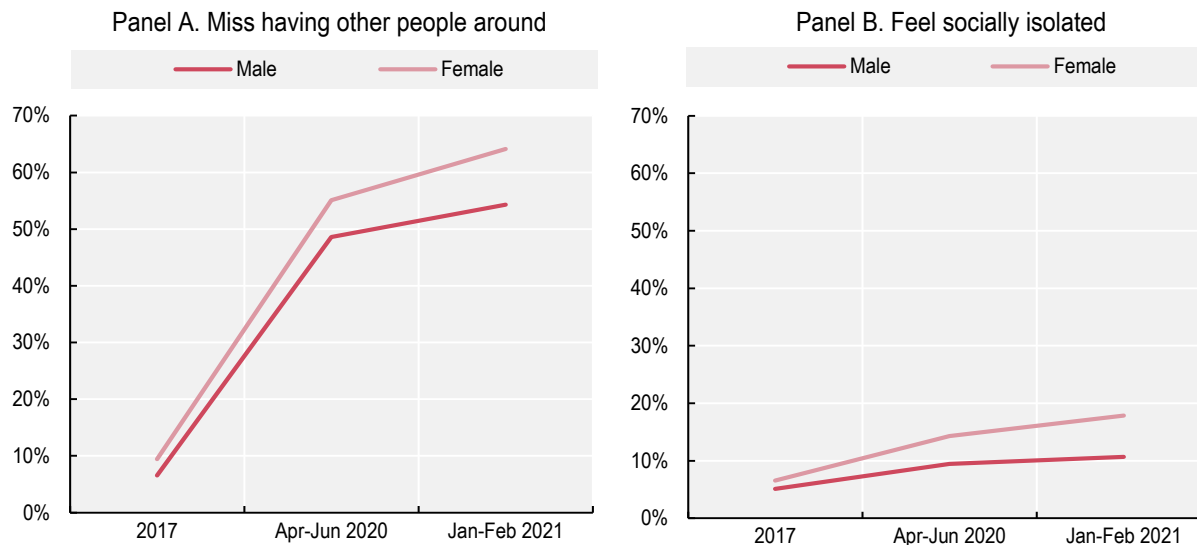
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/incomegroupsplitestimatesonpersonalandeconomicwellbeingacrosstime>.

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**Very little COVID-19 specific data by race, ethnicity or migration status currently exist with regard to social connections.** In the United Kingdom, a quarter of people from the white Irish and Indian ethnic groups reported either continuing to feel lonely often or experiencing an increase in feelings of loneliness between 2019 - April 2020 (ONS, 2020<sub>[15]</sub>). In comparison, only 18% of white British, 11% of Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, and 10% of Chinese and other Asian ethnic groups said the same, after controlling for a range of other factors.<sup>3</sup> In Germany, rates of loneliness have risen in the first year of the pandemic for those both with and without a migration background; but, by early 2021 gaps flipped compared to 2017, with those with a migration background feeling less lonely than those without (Figure 7.8).<sup>4</sup> However, people with a migration background were still more likely to say that they feel socially isolated (Figure 7.4).

**Figure 7.7. In Germany, gender gaps in loneliness and social isolation widened**

Share of people in Germany saying they very often or often miss having people around or feel socially isolated, by gender, 2017, Apr-Jun 2020, Jan-Feb 2021



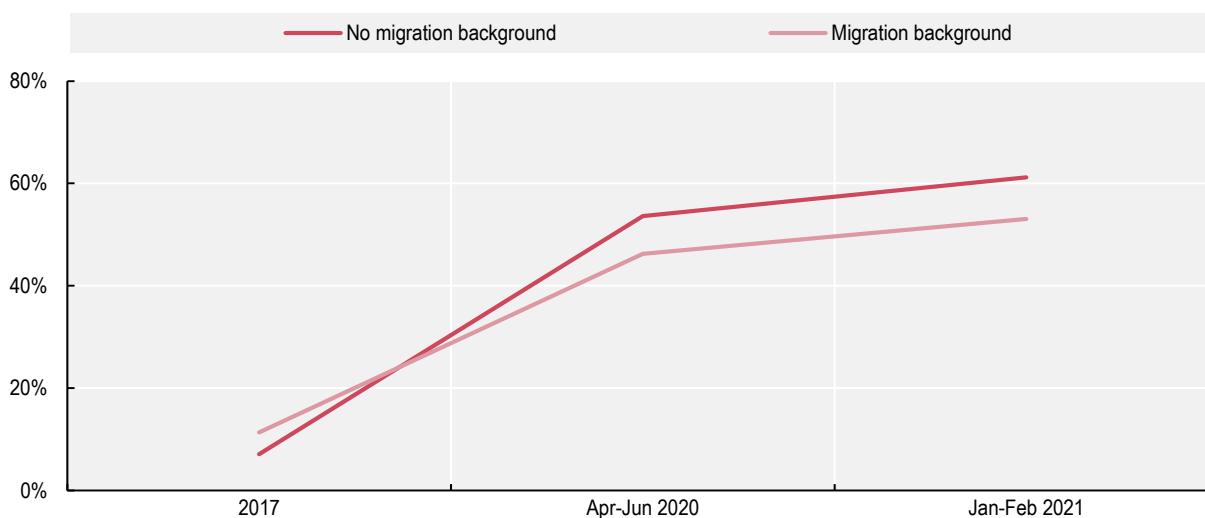
Note: Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The data can be accessed via the research data centre of the SOEP. Refer to Box 3.1 for methodological details.

Source: Kühne et al. (2020<sup>[6]</sup>), "The need for household panel surveys in times of crisis: The case of SOEP-CoV", *Survey Research Methods*, Vol. 14/2, pp. 195-203, <https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2020.v14i2.7748>.

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**Figure 7.8. In Germany, people with a migration background felt comparatively less lonely**

Share of people in Germany saying they often or very often miss having other people around, by migration background, 2017, Apr-Jun 2020, Jan-Feb 2021



Note: Migration background refers to respondents/parents being born outside Germany. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The data can be accessed via the research data centre of the SOEP. Refer to Box 3.1 for methodological details.

Source: Kühne et al. (2020<sup>[6]</sup>), "The need for household panel surveys in times of crisis: The case of SOEP-CoV", *Survey Research Methods*, Vol. 14/2, pp. 195-203, <https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2020.v14i2.7748>.

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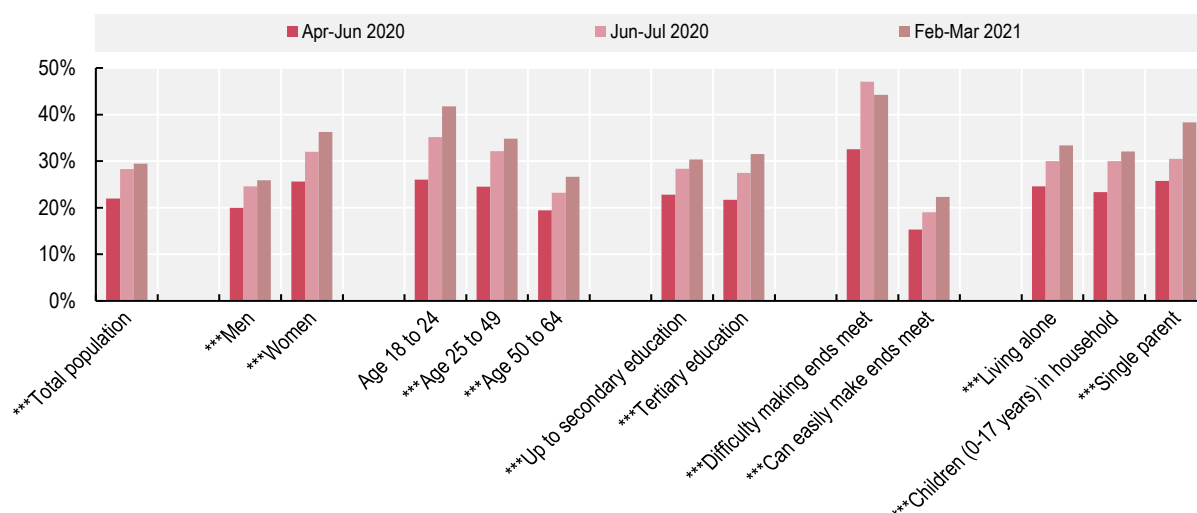
## 7.2. Work-life balance

*Changed working conditions have brought benefits and challenges to different groups...*

**Working conditions in 2020 (including both telework and contact restrictions for those at a work location outside the home) have worn most people out, but especially those struggling financially, people with young children and women.** In April-June 2020, 22% of workers in 22 European OECD countries said they had always or most of the time felt too tired after work to do some household chores in the previous two weeks, while by February-March 2021 this share had risen to 29.5% (see Chapter 4). A closer look at different population groups shows that the prevalence of exhaustion was higher than the population average for people struggling to make ends meet, single parents, people living with children, those aged 18-49, women, and people with up to secondary education (Figure 7.9). People with difficulty making ends meet were particularly affected: more than a third in April-June 2020 and almost half by February-March 2021 reported being too tired after work to finish household chores.

**Figure 7.9. All employed people have felt more exhausted as the pandemic dragged on, but particularly those with difficulty making ends meet**

Share of employed people reporting feeling too tired after work to do necessary household chores, by population group, OECD 22, average over 3 survey waves in Apr-Jun 2020, Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021



Note: The OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Categories preceded by \*\*\* saw statistically significant (at the 5% level) changes from April-June 2020 to February-March 2021. See the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet. Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 survey.

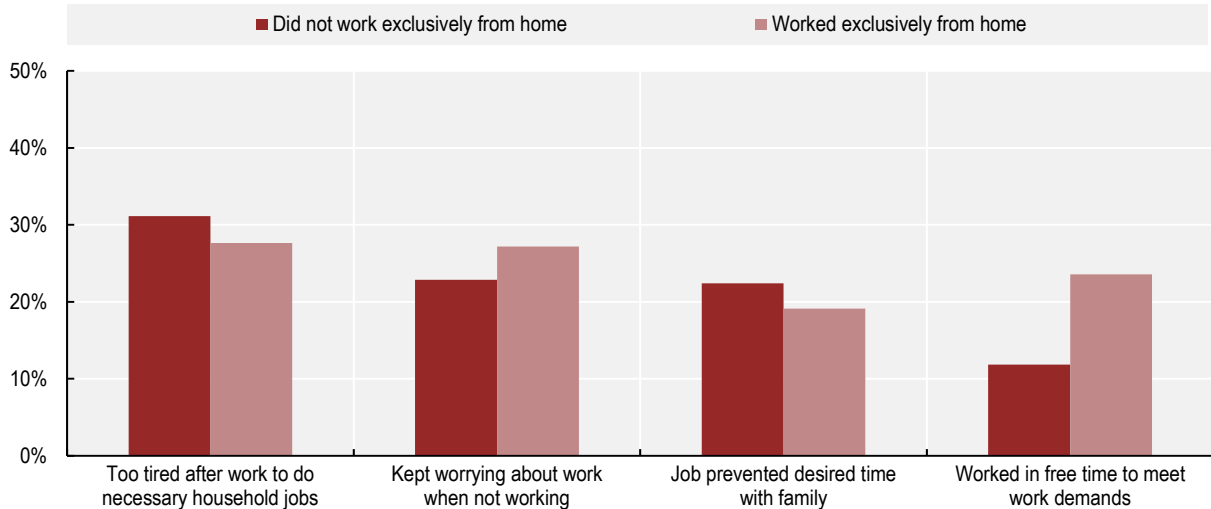
Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[1]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

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**Those working from home felt less exhausted at the end of the day, but work was more likely to seep into their regular lives.** Between June 2020 - March 2021, workers in 22 European OECD countries who were working exclusively from home were almost 4 percentage points less likely to feel too tired at the end of the day to do necessary household chores, and less likely to feel that their job prevented them from spending time with family. However they were also nearly 12 percentage points more likely to work in their free time to meet work demands, and 4 percentage points more likely to keep worrying about their job when not working (Figure 7.10).


**Figure 7.10. Those working at home were less tired and could spend more time with their family, but were more likely to work after hours and to worry about their jobs**

Share of employed people experiencing work-life balance challenges, by work location, OECD 22, average over 2 survey waves in Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021



*Note:* The OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden. Variables are defined as: (1) the share of people answering “always” or “most of the time” to the question: “How often in the last 2 weeks, have you felt too tired after work to do some of the household jobs which need to be done?”; (2) the share of people answering “every day” or “every other day” to the question: “Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you worked in your free time to meet work demands?”; (3) the share of people answering “always” or “most of the time” to the question: “How often in the last 2 weeks, have you kept worrying about work when you were not working?”; and (4) the share of people answering “always” or “most of the time” to the question: “How often in the last 2 weeks, have you found that your job prevented you from giving the time you wanted to your family?” Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey.

*Source:* OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sub>[11]</sub>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

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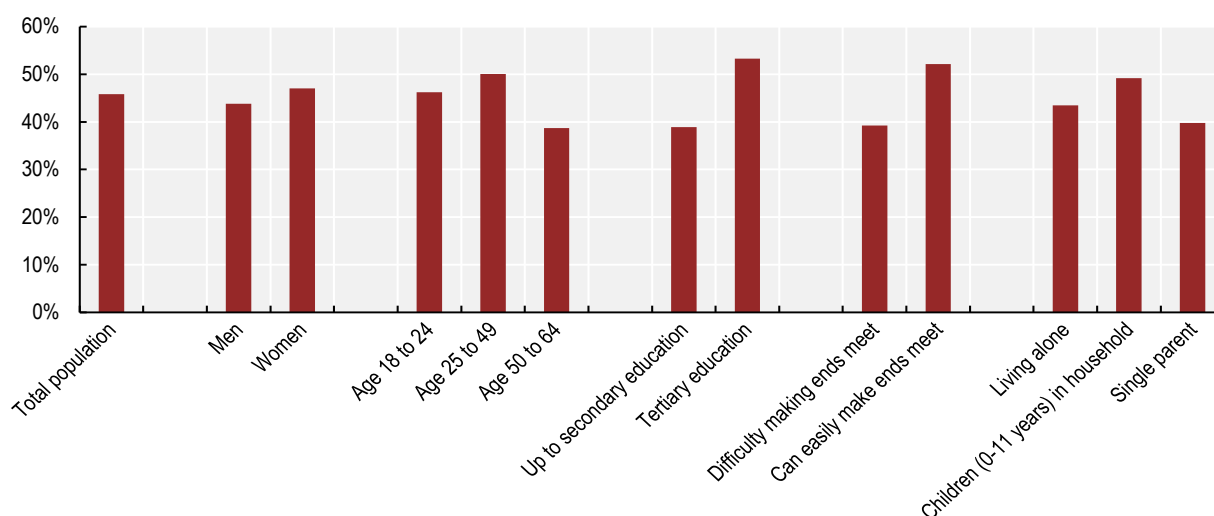
**Focusing on different types of teleworkers, parents experienced more flexibility and family time, while younger people felt isolated from colleagues and prone to “workaholism”** (see Box 5.5). On the one hand, there is evidence that, due to the combination of teleworking and school closures, parents were more likely than non-parents to report being unable to meet deadlines, and that teleworking parents with children up to 18 years found it more difficult to get their work done without interruptions compared to parents without minor children (Parker, Menasce Horowitz and Minkin, 2020<sub>[16]</sub>). But, across the EU 27 members in June-July 2020, teleworkers with children under age 12 were also less likely to report that their job prevented them from spending time with family than those working at other locations (Eurofound, 2020<sub>[2]</sub>). Teleworking experiences have also differed by age. According to a survey conducted in 9 countries by the Capgemini Research Institute in September-October 2020, 61% of employees aged 31-40 (compared to just over half of all surveyed employees) felt burnt out as a result of working remotely, while “workaholism” was found to be more common among younger workers living alone (Capgemini Research Institute, 2020<sub>[17]</sub>). Younger workers have also been less likely to feel motivated to do their work since the pandemic started, and more likely to feel isolated at work (see Box 5.5).

...but many people would like to continue working from home to some degree

**Overall, preferences for working remotely in the future are substantial.** Almost half of all employed people in 22 European OECD countries (45.8%) would like to work from home at least several days a week after COVID-19 subsides (see Chapters 2 and 4), a feeling that is shared across all socio-demographic subgroups interviewed between June 2020 - March 2021 (Figure 7.11). Preferences for telework are highest among those with children or in the age range more likely to have children (aged 25-49), among women, the well-educated and those who can easily make ends meet (who are likely to be in jobs that allow for remote work and to have larger living spaces to turn into a home office – see Chapter 5). But even among people with up to secondary education and those struggling to make ends meet, more than a third would prefer working from home at least a few times a week.

**Figure 7.11. Preferences for remote work are highest for those with child-caring responsibilities, women and the better educated**

Share of employed people who, if they had the choice, would like to work from home daily or several times a week if there were no restrictions due to COVID-19, by population group, OECD 22, average over 2 survey waves in Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021



Note: The OECD 22 average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. See the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet. Refer to Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 survey.

Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[11]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

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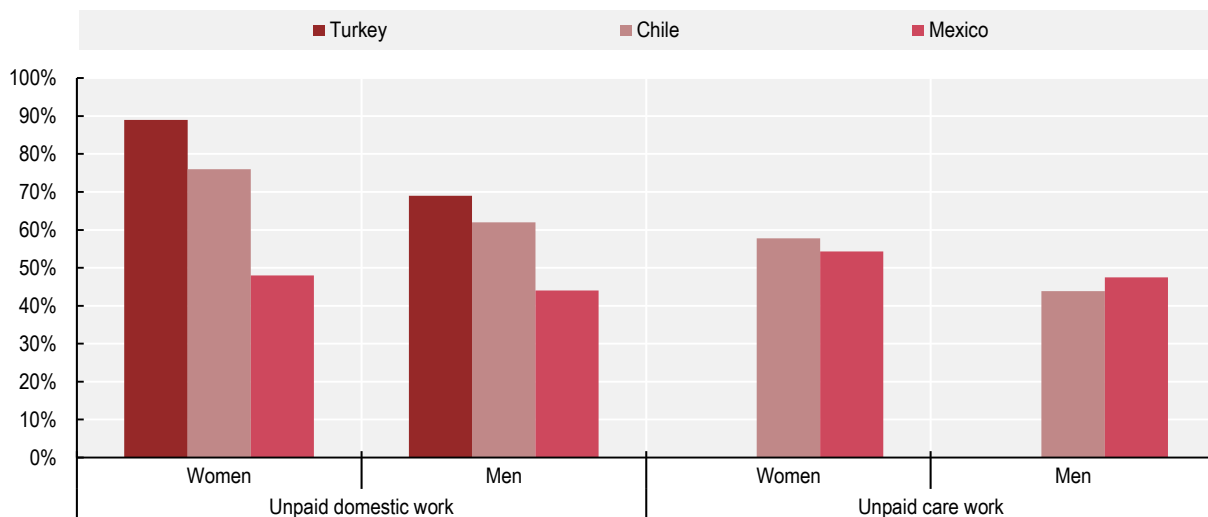
*Women still spend more time on care and housework than men*

**With more people at home due to pandemic-related measures, household chores and care have multiplied in some countries – and the majority of this work falls on the shoulders of women.** Evidence from UN Women Rapid Gender Assessment Surveys conducted in April 2020 in Chile, Mexico and Turkey suggest that both women and men reported an increase in time spent on unpaid domestic work and care work since COVID-19 struck, with stronger rises for women (Figure 7.12). In Australia, more than one in three women (38%) and one in three men (33%) surveyed in June-July 2020 reported an increase in unpaid time spent caring for others. However, women were twice as likely as men to report

performing most of the unpaid domestic work, and more than three times as likely to perform most of the unpaid caring responsibilities in their household (ABS, 2020<sub>[18]</sub>). The Future of Business Survey, a collaboration between the OECD, the World Bank and Facebook that documented the experience of over 150 000 business leaders from over 50 countries between May - October 2020, also found that 31% of female business leaders reported spending more time on domestic tasks since the pandemic began, compared to 25% of male business leaders. The gap widened when considering only business leaders with a spouse: in October 2020, 23% of female business leaders with a partner spent more than six hours per day on domestic tasks, compared to only 12% of male business leaders with a partner. The most cited domestic responsibilities were home-schooling (25% female to 19% male), household chores (41% to 27%) and caring for dependents (31% to 24%) (Facebook; OECD; The World Bank, 2020<sub>[19]</sub>).

### Figure 7.12. In Chile, Mexico and Turkey, being at home more at the outset of the pandemic has meant more work for everyone, especially women

Share of people who reported an increase in time spent on at least one unpaid domestic and care work activity since COVID-19, by gender, Apr-2020



Source: UN Women (n.d.<sub>[20]</sub>), Covid-19 Data Monitor (database), <https://data.unwomen.org/COVID19>.

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**Figure 7.13. After a temporary reduction in March-April 2020, the gender gap in unpaid work in Great Britain reverted to pre-pandemic levels six months later**

Minutes per day spent on paid and unpaid work for adults aged 18 years or over, by gender, 2014-15 for the United Kingdom, Mar-Apr 2020 and Sep-Oct 2020 for Great Britain



Note: Only times that people identify as their main activity at any given point are shown. Refer to Box 7.2 for methodological details.

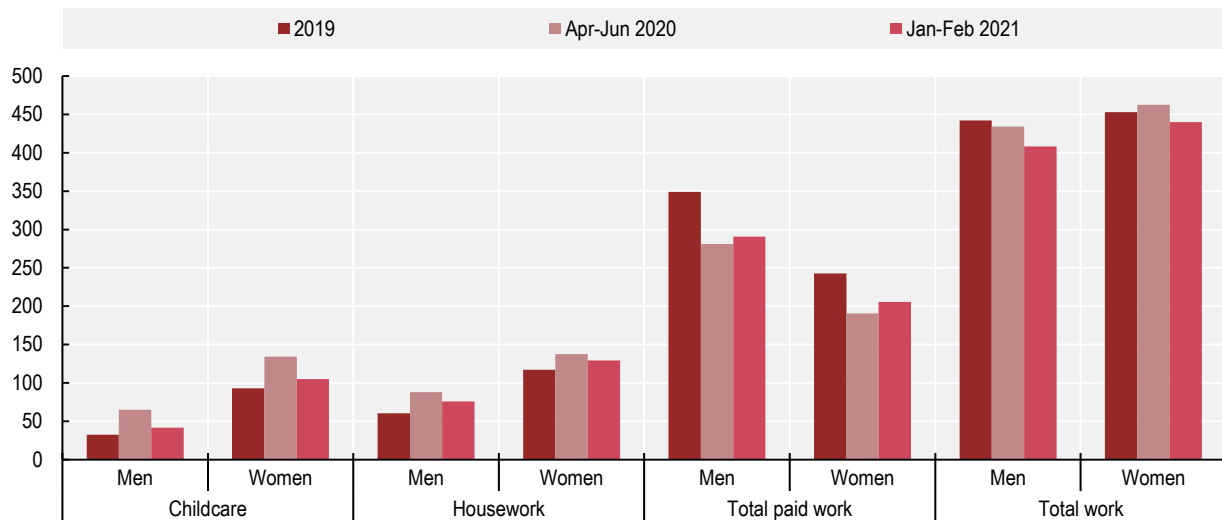
Source: ONS (2021<sup>[21]</sup>), *A "new normal"? How people spent their time after the March 2020 coronavirus lockdown*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/anewnormalhowpeoplespenttheirimeafterthemarch2020coronaviruslockdown/2020-12-09>.

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**In other countries, men stepped up their share of unpaid work in return for being more affected by reduced paid working hours – though this seems to be a temporary phenomenon and the increase was still not enough to match women’s contribution.** During the first national lockdown in the United Kingdom in March-April 2020, the gap in unpaid work between men and women initially declined slightly compared to 2014-15 (it still remained large, at 1 hour and 7 minutes a day). However, as people returned to work and schools reopened in September-October 2020, so did older gender patterns: men reduced their daily contribution to household tasks by three times the amount of women (18 and 6 minutes, respectively) compared to six months earlier (Figure 7.13). In Germany, by January-February 2021, men increased their daily time spent on housework by 15 minutes (compared to 12 minutes for women). Nevertheless, women still performed the majority of unpaid work, increased their time spent on childcare more than men (12 vs 9 minutes), and worked half an hour more if both unpaid and paid work are considered (Figure 7.14). In addition, existing gender gaps in dissatisfaction with family time, sleep and leisure time have increased in Germany over this same period (Figure 7.15). In June 2021, women in Columbia were more likely than men to feel consistently overburdened by domestic chores (25.2% vs 12.8%) (DANE, n.d.<sup>[22]</sup>).

**Figure 7.14. In Germany, women continue to work more than men if unpaid work is taken into account**

Minutes per day spent on paid and unpaid work in Germany, by gender, 2019, Apr-Jun 2020, Jan-Feb 2021



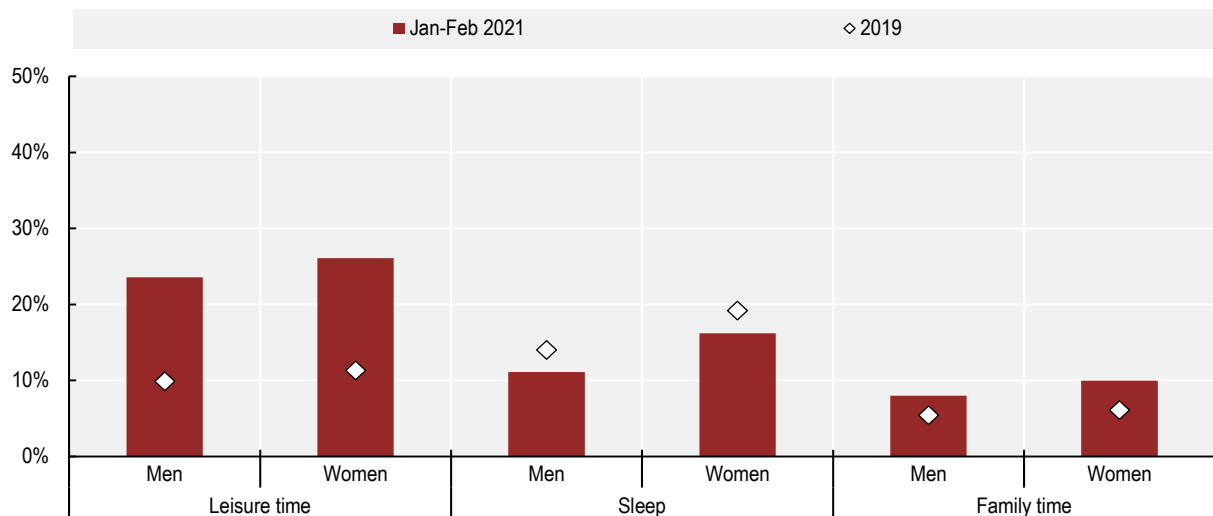
Note: Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The data can be accessed via the research data centre of the SOEP. Refer to Box 3.1 for methodological details.

Source: Kühne et al. (2020<sup>[6]</sup>), "The need for household panel surveys in times of crisis: The case of SOEP-CoV", *Survey Research Methods*, Vol. 14/2, pp. 195-203, <https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2020.v14i2.7748>.

StatLink <https://stat.link/7gap6c>

**Figure 7.15. Gender gaps in dissatisfaction with how time is spent have widened in Germany compared to 2019**

Share of people in Germany dissatisfied with their time use in selected areas, by gender, 2019, Jan-Feb 2021



Note: People who answered 4 or less on a scale of 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied) for each of the areas of time use are defined as dissatisfied. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The data can be accessed via the research data centre of the SOEP. Refer to Box 3.1 for methodological details.

Source: Kühne et al. (2020<sup>[6]</sup>), "The need for household panel surveys in times of crisis: The case of SOEP-CoV", *Survey Research Methods*, Vol. 14/2, pp. 195-203, <https://doi.org/10.18148/srm/2020.v14i2.7748>.

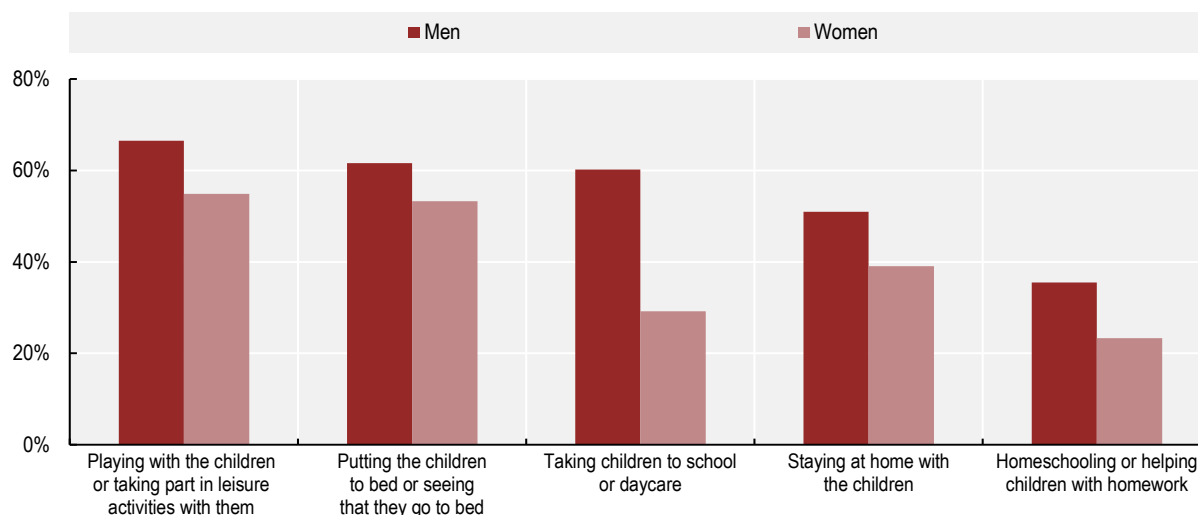
StatLink  <https://stat.link/e4ah7z>

**Working parents, most of all working mothers, have struggled with care work.** In the United States, 52% of employed parents with children younger than 12 reported difficulties in meeting their childcare responsibilities in October 2020, up from 38% in March 2020. In addition, 36% of teleworking mothers reported having heavy childcare duties, as compared to 16% of teleworking fathers (Pew Research Center, 2020<sub>[23]</sub>).<sup>5</sup> An earlier study from the United States, relying on data from the Current Population Survey up to May 2020, found that school closures and stay-at-home orders particularly affected working mothers (forcing them to take leave) but had no immediate impact on fathers' leave or leave of women without school-age children (Heggeness, 2020<sub>[24]</sub>).

**Some evidence also suggests that the contributions of men to unpaid work could be overestimated.** In Canada, when asked in June 2020, men were much more likely than women to report that they shared parental tasks equally with their partner (Figure 7.16). This pattern is consistent with previous studies (Pew Research Center, 2015<sub>[25]</sub>). Indeed, research shows that men tend to overestimate the time they spend on unpaid family work, particularly when this information is collected using stylized questions (i.e. respondents answer questions about their activities retrospectively) instead of time-use diaries (i.e. respondents record their activities over a period of time in a diary) (Kan, 2008<sub>[26]</sub>; UN, 2005<sub>[27]</sub>).

**Figure 7.16. In Canada, men's and women's perceptions of how parental tasks are divided differ**

Share of men and women in Canada reporting that they perceive a task to be equally shared by both parents, Jun-2020



Note: The analysis is limited to respondents who were living with a spouse or partner at the time of the survey.

Source: Statistics Canada (2020<sub>[28]</sub>), *Caring for their children: Impacts of COVID-19 on parents*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00091-eng.htm>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/k2iv5x>

### Box 7.2. Innovation: Online time-use surveys in times of a pandemic

Several OECD countries have moved towards online collection of time-use data during the pandemic.

#### **United Kingdom: 2020 online time-use study**

Under COVID-19 restrictions in Great Britain, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) carried out a special online time-use survey for adults aged 18 years or over between 28 March - 26 April 2020, with a second wave conducted six months later, between 5 September - 11 October 2020 (ONS, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>; ONS, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>). As part of trying to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on household behaviour more broadly, respondents were asked to record the average minutes per day and week spent on various activities (e.g. travelling and transport, working from and away from home, total paid work, unpaid childcare and other unpaid work, study, keeping fit, personal care, entertainment and socialising).

#### **Australia: Australia's Time-Use Survey**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) launched an online time-use survey in 2021 to collect information about how Australians balance their time between work, family, leisure, caring and other activities (ABS, 2021<sup>[30]</sup>). The survey collects general information on everyone in the household and includes questions about employment, childcare and health, asking each household member who is aged 15 or over to complete a time-use diary and record all activities over a two-day period.

### 7.3. Safety

*Feelings of safety when walking alone at night did not change much during 2020, but domestic violence against women increased markedly*

**Women continued to feel less safe than men when walking alone at night in their neighbourhoods during COVID-19, but not more so than before.** Men have felt safer than women when walking alone at night in all OECD countries every year since data collection of the Gallup World Poll started in 2006 (OECD, 2020<sup>[31]</sup>). Gender gaps in feeling safe outside the house broadly remained stable during the pandemic: in 2020, an average of 33.7% of women and 18.5% of men in OECD countries felt unsafe when walking at night, a slight increase of 1 and 2 percentage points year-on-year, respectively (Gallup, n.d.<sup>[32]</sup>).

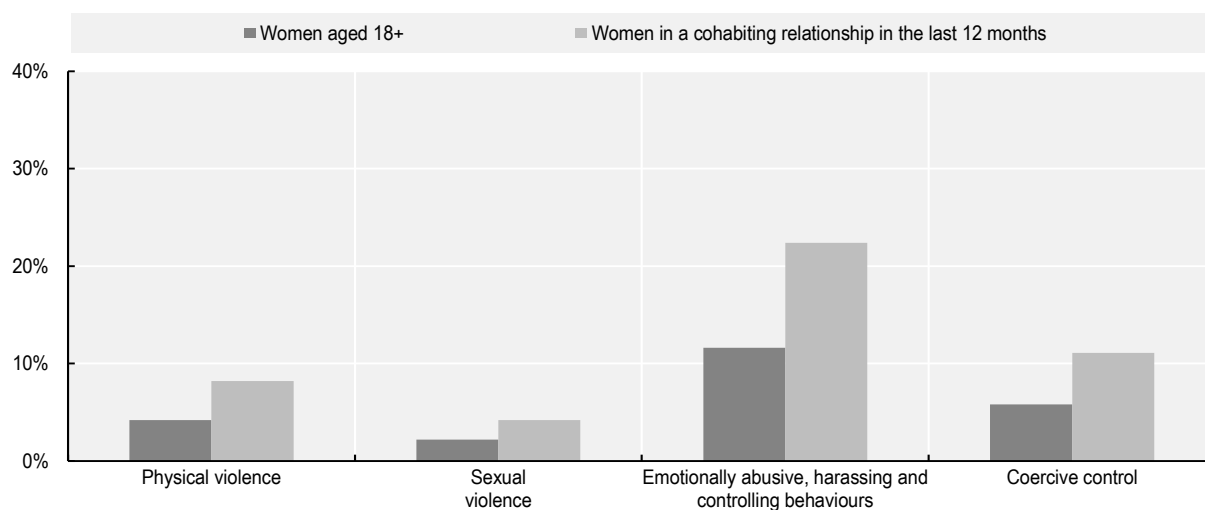
**Personal safety in the home became more precarious.** Lockdowns, isolation, school closures and job losses during COVID-19 have created fertile conditions for domestic abuse, and intimate partner violence against women and girls worldwide has intensified since the pandemic outbreak (OECD, 2020<sup>[33]</sup>).<sup>6</sup> Population surveys and official crime statistics both suggest a rise of domestic violence: for instance, according to an online survey by the Australian Institute of Criminology, close to 1 in 4 Australian women experienced domestic violence in the three months prior to May 2020, with many of them identifying the pandemic as the onset of their experience (Figure 7.17). One in 10 women (as well as 1 in 17 men) in Canada were very or extremely concerned about the possibility of violence in the home in April-May 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2020<sup>[34]</sup>). In England and Wales, police records indicate a 7% increase in the total number of offences related to domestic abuse from March to June 2020 year-on-year (Figure 7.18), and the number of domestic abuse killings of women in the United Kingdom was the highest of any 21-day period in the past decade during the first three weeks of the first national lockdown in March-April 2020 (Home Office, 2020<sup>[35]</sup>).



**Demand for victim support services also suggests the rise of domestic violence.** In the United Kingdom, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline registered a 65% increase in calls and contacts logged between April and June 2020 compared to the year's first three months. Victim Support handled 12% more domestic abuse in the first week that lockdown restrictions were eased in mid-May compared to the previous week, reflecting the difficulties victims faced in safely seeking support during confinement (ONS, 2020<sup>[36]</sup>). Similarly, Canada's Assaulted Women's Helpline handled 77% more calls from March to December 2020 compared to the average annual number of contacts, while in Mexico City, there were 58% more requests to the Línea Mujeres helpline from January to September 2020 than in the same period for 2019 (Data-Pop Alliance, 2020<sup>[37]</sup>; AWHL, n.d.<sup>[38]</sup>). Calls to national helplines for victims of domestic violence also markedly increased in Italy (by 73% during the first lockdown from March to mid-April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019) and France (by around 400% between prior to the first lockdown in March and the end of April 2020) (Istat, 2020<sup>[39]</sup>; Republique Francaise, 2020<sup>[40]</sup>).

### Figure 7.17. More than 20% of all Australian women cohabiting with a partner experienced emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviours in May-June 2020

Share of women in Australia who reported experiencing different types of domestic violence in the last three months, May-Jun 2020



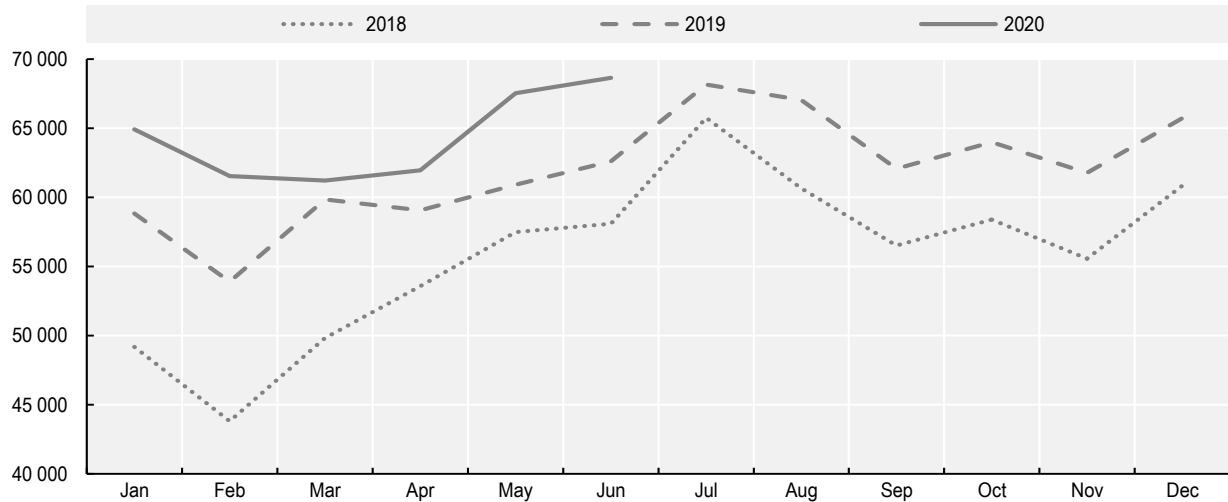
*Note:* The survey was conducted by i-Link Research Solutions between 6 May and 1 June 2020. Domestic violence is defined here as physical violence, sexual violence and emotionally abusive, harassing or controlling behaviour involving intimate partners.

*Source:* Australian Institute of Criminology (2020<sup>[41]</sup>), *The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic*, [https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28\\_prevalence\\_of\\_domestic\\_violence\\_among\\_women\\_during\\_covid-19\\_pandemic.pdf](https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/seirf0>

**Figure 7.18. Domestic abuse offences in England and Wales were on the rise in the first half of 2020**

Number of offences (excluding fraud) in England and Wales (excluding GMP) flagged as domestic abuse-related, Jan 2018 - Jun 2020



*Note:* The gradual increase in police-recorded domestic abuse-related offences over recent years partly reflects improved recording of these offences by the police; therefore it cannot be determined whether the observed increase in reported cases can be directly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Police-recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics. Data from April-June 2020 are provisional. Data for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) on domestic abuse-related offences are not included.

*Source:* ONS (2020<sup>[42]</sup>), *Domestic abuse during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, England and Wales: November 2020*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabuseduringthecoronaviruscovid19pandemicenglandandwales/november2020>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/s7ptlk>

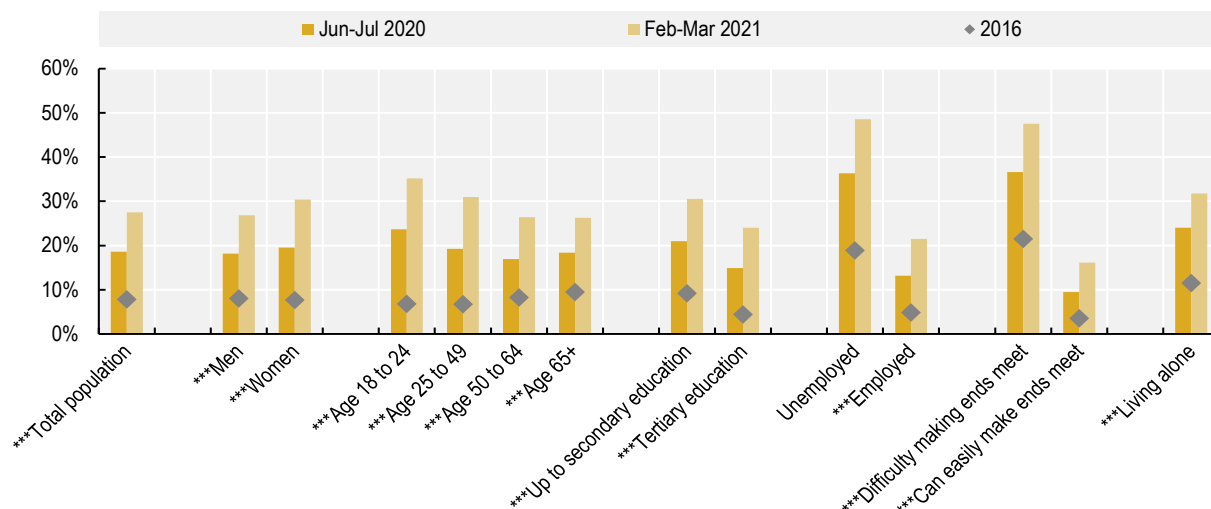
## 7.4. Civic engagement

*Vulnerable groups feel more disconnected from community life during COVID-19*

**Many people feel disconnected from communal life and** unable to shape the society they live in. In June-July 2020, when economies were temporarily re-opening, 18.6% of respondents in European OECD countries agreed with the statement that they felt left out of their societies. Six months later, this share had risen to 27.5% (see Chapter 4). This feeling was particularly acute among those with difficulty making ends meet, the unemployed, the lower educated (all of whom were already more likely to feel left out in 2016) as well as younger people up to age 24 (Figure 7.19). This pattern holds at both the OECD average and individual country level (Figure 7.20).

**Figure 7.19. The unemployed, those with financial difficulties or less than university education and younger people were all more likely to feel left out of society in the first year of the pandemic**


Share of people agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “I feel left out of society”, by population group, OECD 22, 2016, Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021



Note: The OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Categories preceded by \*\*\* saw statistically significant (at the 5% level) changes from June-July 2020 to February-March 2021. See the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet, and Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey. The 2020-2021 and 2016 data points are not directly comparable due to differences in sampling between the Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey and the European Quality of Life Survey (although the question asked is the same).

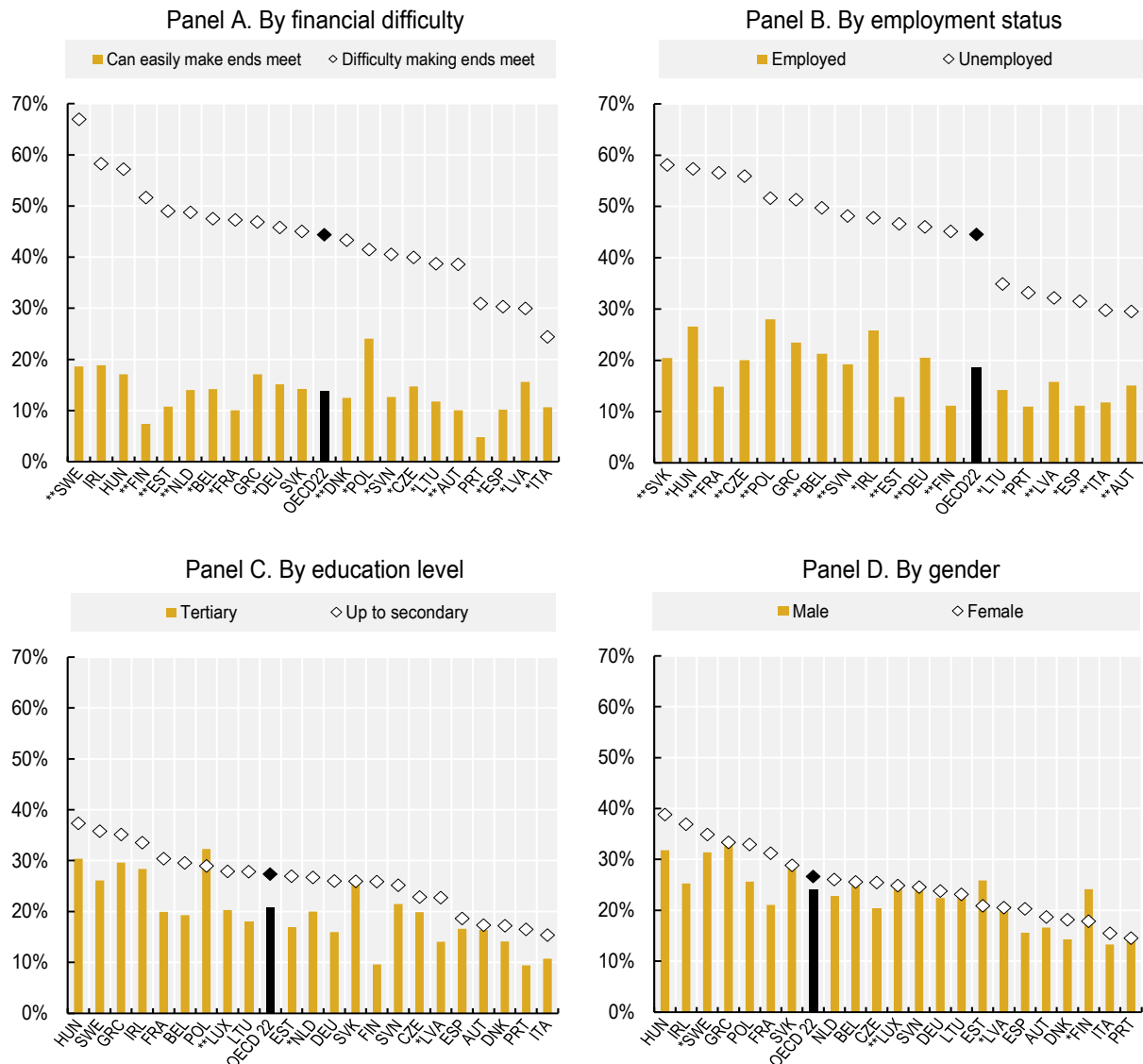
Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (2018<sup>[8]</sup>), *European Quality of Life Survey 2016*,

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2017/fourth-european-quality-of-life-survey-overview-report>; and Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[11]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/0hivrw>

## Figure 7.20. Inequalities in feeling left out of society are similar across European OECD countries

Share of people agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “I feel left out of society”, by financial difficulty, employment status, education and gender, average over 2 survey waves in Jun-Jul 2020, Feb-Mar 2021



Note: In all panels, the OECD average includes Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Data are not reported for countries where fewer than 100 observations are available. \*\* denotes countries with between 100 and 300 observations per category; \* denotes countries with between 301 and 500 observations per category. More than 500 observations per category are available for all other countries. See Box 2.1 for methodological details on the Living, working and COVID-19 survey. In Panel A, see the note of Figure 7.1 for the definition of difficulty making ends meet. Differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for all countries, including OECD 22. In Panel B, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for all countries, including OECD 22, except for the Netherlands. In Panel C, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for all countries, including OECD 22, except for Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain. In Panel D, differences between groups are significant (at the 5% level) for the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland and OECD 22.

Source: OECD calculations based on Eurofound (n.d.<sup>[1]</sup>), *Living, working and COVID-19 e-survey* (database), <http://eurofound.link/covid19data>.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For instance, 2018 data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) as well as 2016 data from the European Quality of Life Survey showed that older age groups were more lonely than those 18-24 year old (Eurofound, 2018<sup>[8]</sup>) (Eurostat, n.d.<sup>[45]</sup>). However, in the United Kingdom, younger adults aged 16 to 24 already reported feeling lonely more often than those in older age groups in 2016-17 (ONS, 2018<sup>[47]</sup>), as was the case for young people aged 15-24 in New Zealand in 2018 (StatsNZ, n.d.<sup>[46]</sup>). Further research on the impact of question wording on responses to questions about loneliness, as well as on whether people adapt their frame of reference with age will be needed to understand these patterns better.

<sup>2</sup> Higher unemployment in a local area was also linked to greater average anxiety in that area as well as poorer life satisfaction, with the link between high levels of unemployment and poorer life satisfaction becoming stronger during the pandemic.

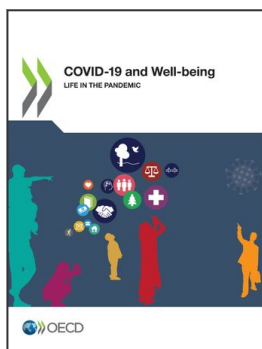
<sup>3</sup> These include the respondent's age, gender, whether living alone, changes in help and support received since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, and having a health condition.

<sup>4</sup> This might be partly due to the fact that persons with a migration background are less likely to live alone (Kuhnt and Krapf, 2020<sup>[43]</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> This study is based on 2 029 U.S. adults who have children younger than 18, were working part time or full time, and had either one or more than one job. Data were collected as part of the online survey Center's American Trends Panel conducted from 13-19 October 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Evidence from previous disease outbreaks also highlights a strong relationship between gender-based violence and crisis situations. For instance, the Ebola outbreak in sub-Saharan Africa during 2015-16 significantly increased the risk of sexual exploitation for women and children (John et al., 2020<sup>[44]</sup>).





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