

Family life in Tower Hamlets in a pandemic: early results

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What we have done (so far)

Families in Tower Hamlets

- Survey of 958 families with children under 5, and pregnant women
- July – November 2020
- Borough led promotion through general and targeted communications
- £10 reward for participation

Family Playrooms

- “What makes the best start in life” through a lens of challenges, dreams and changes
- Online survey and community engagement activities – including 570 families
- June – November 2020



Participants

Families in Tower Hamlets

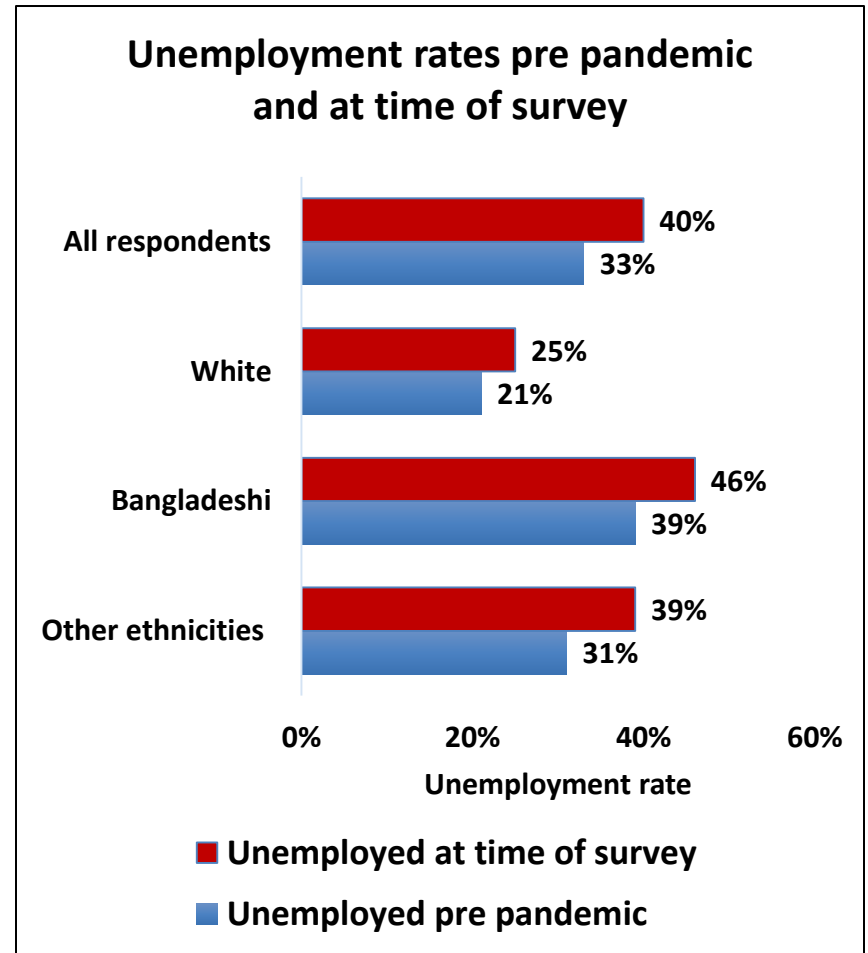
- 732 women and 224 men with children under 5
- Incl 117 pregnant women
- 34.5% White British or Irish
- 35.7% Bangladeshi
- 29.5% wide range of other ethnicities include Somali, Black British and Indian

Family Playrooms

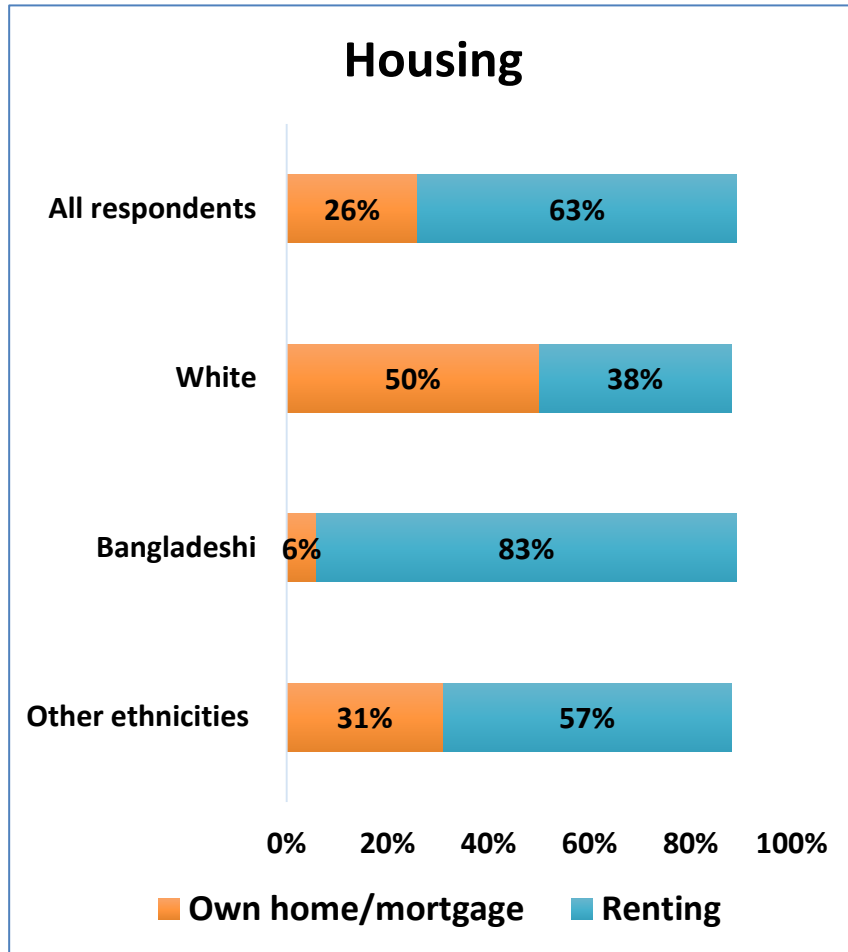
- Households with children under 11.
- 79% women. Survey predominantly reached Asian/Asian British mothers, aged between 31-40.
- The number of people in the household was most commonly 4, but ranged from 1 to 9
- Spread across the borough

Its been a tough year ...

- Unemployment 38.6% and rising. More likely among Bangladeshi and Other ethnicities than White respondents
- 39% in receipt of Universal Credit or Working Families Tax Credit
- 13.5% had used a food bank recently
- Finance and employment was second biggest worry



Housing



- Major home repairs needed? 19.6%
- Damp or mould? 31%
- More likely among Bangladeshi families

52% had access to outside space

Environment and space



Nature and parks were important to many families during lockdown

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”

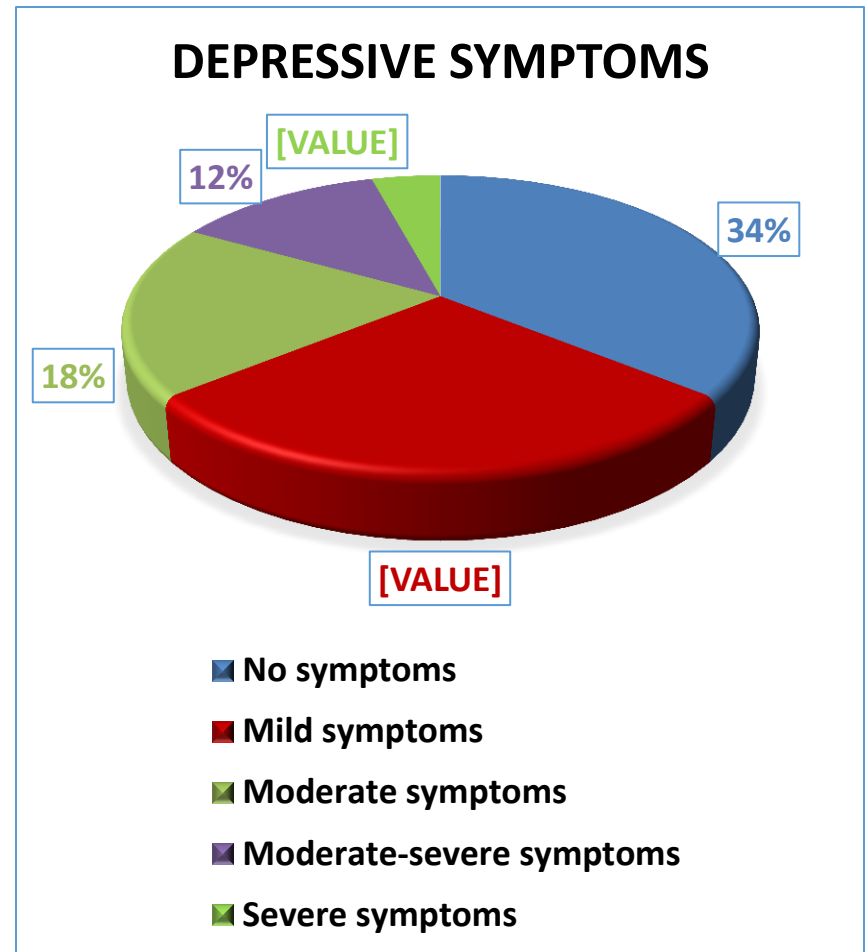


Access to health services

- Routine midwifery - 41%: Other (29%); White (60%); Bangladeshi (27%)
- Access to new baby checks - 29%: White (23%); Other (37%); Bangladeshi (31%)
- Routine HV contact 8-12 mth - 46%: White (50%); Other (44%); Bangladeshi (46%).

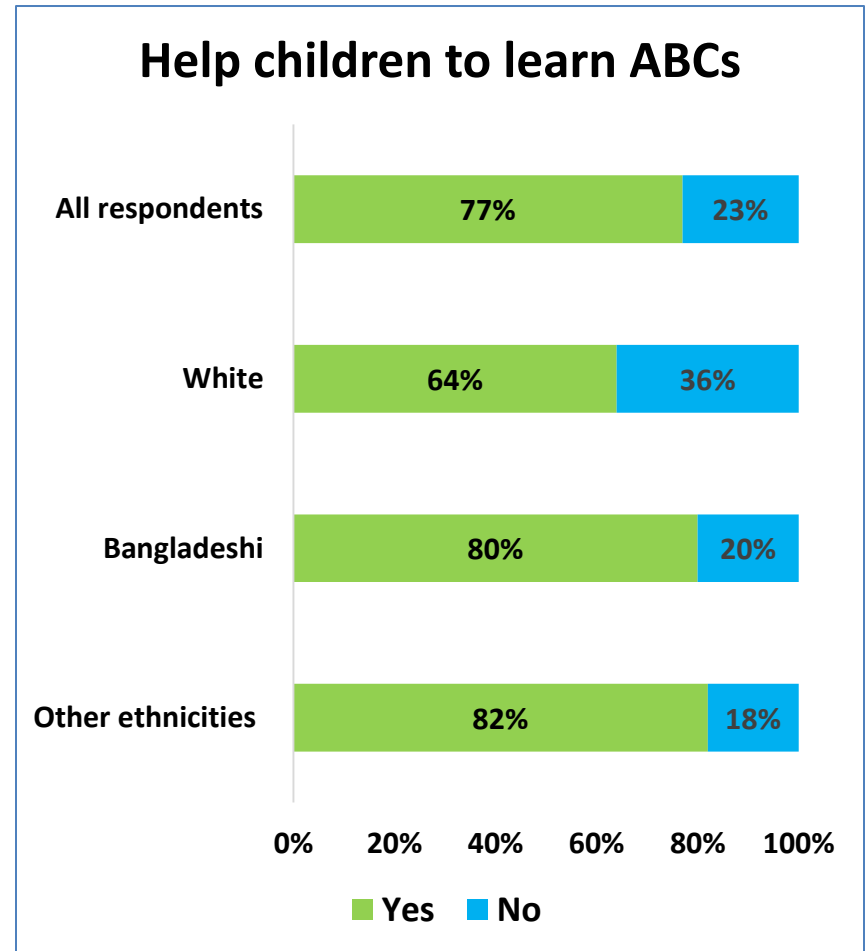
Mental health

- 30% mild
 - 34% moderate to severe
 - More likely in lower income groups, and among Bangladeshi respondents
 - Bradford: 2 in 5 had depression; more likely among those in financial difficulty, and White British group
 - ONS: 19% moderate to severe
- PLUS
- 27% had moderate – severe anxiety



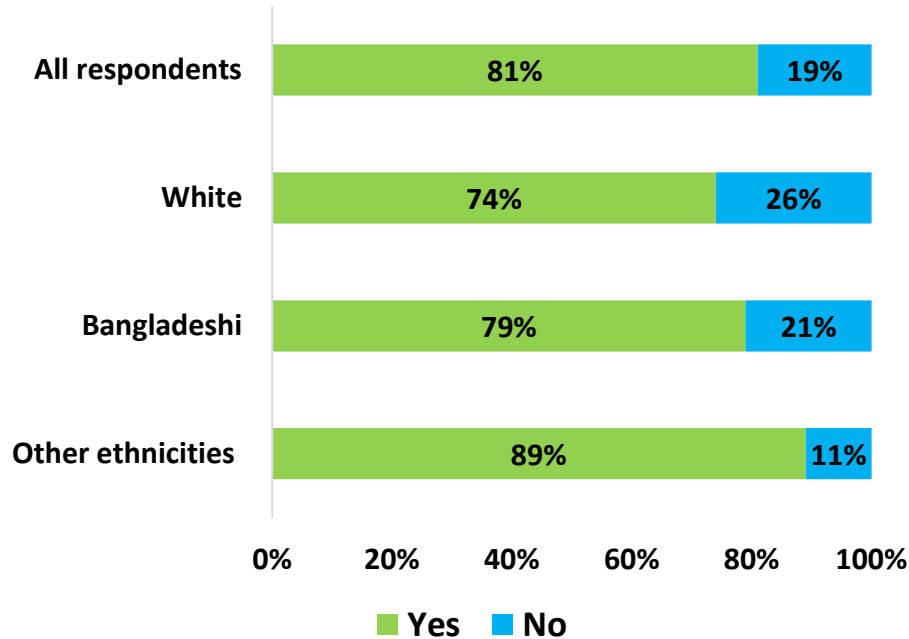
Supporting children

- Few children attending nursery or other preschool
- 93% of children read to at least some days a week, more likely among White families (63% said every day).

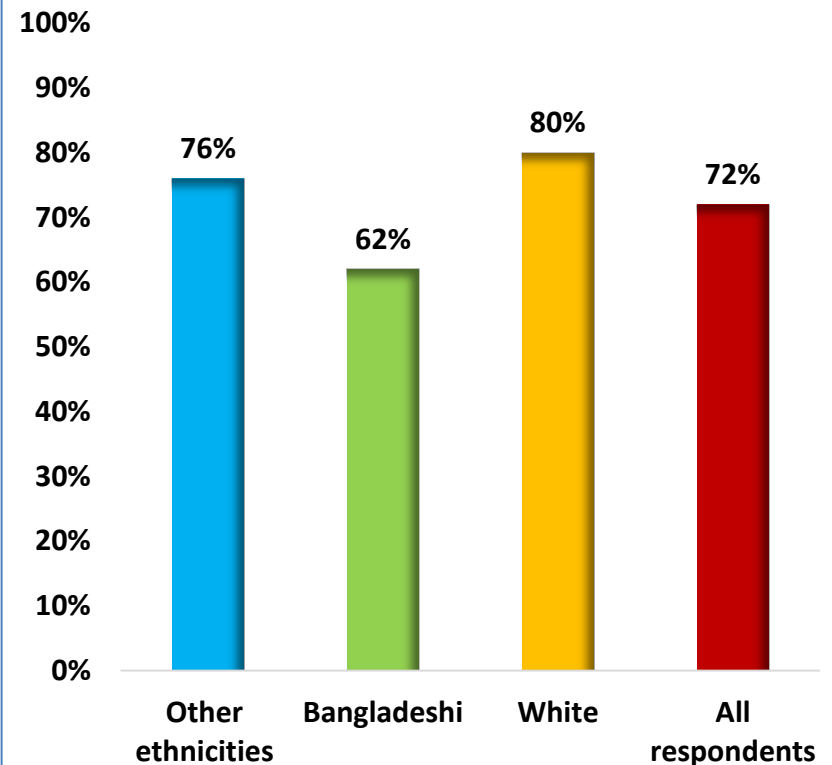


Supporting children

Help children to learn to count



Feel confident to support children's learning



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".**

**Methods: largely
digital! Video calls
and phone calls.**

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"*

Re-introducing support

**"Holistic family need
assessment"?**

Help in the community

- 52% had some help from family, friends or neighbours.
 - Bangladeshi (21%); Other (18%) White (14 %)
- Nearly half said the support had not changed
- 57% provided help to others
 - Shopping 35% - help with internet 13%
 - Meals 20% - help with children 10%

Loneliness:

- About half said they were lonely in past week
- Much more likely among those on low incomes

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.”

