

At-the-moment stress for parents during COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions

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New research from the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, The Ohio State University, and San Jose State University finds that during COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, parental stress was higher during the workday compared to after the workday and lower during weekends than during weekdays.

Previous research compares [parental stress](#) before and during the pandemic, but none has measured it during stay-at-home orders. In this study, scientists assessed how time-varying and day-varying factors are related to parents' level of stress. In specific, stress was examined 3 times a day for 14 days for survey participants in Ohio from April to May 2020.

Specific findings include:

- Parents reported lower levels of stress when completing an evening survey, but higher levels when they were at work and during weekdays compared to weekends.
- Being at work (compared to being at home) was related to significantly higher levels of stress among parents.
- Across all parents, stress levels increased progressively throughout the period, peaking in the last week observed.
- Having one adult in the home was related to higher stress than two adults.
- The number of children under 18, biological sex of the child, and parent's education were not related to at-the-moment stress for parents.
- COVID-19 milestone dates were unrelated to stress levels.

Says study co-author, Dr. Paul Gruenewald, "Parents need respite in the form of childcare and child-only activities to reduce stress—especially during the work week when they are juggling employment and their children's schooling. Providing parents with skills and tools to identify and reduce [stress](#) may be one way of helping [parents](#) cope with extremely difficult situations."

More information: Freisthler, Bridget et al. "Understanding At-the-Moment Stress for Parents during COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Restrictions." *Social Science & Medicine* (2021): 114025.

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