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Time use and activity enjoyment across the UK pandemic.

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Research question

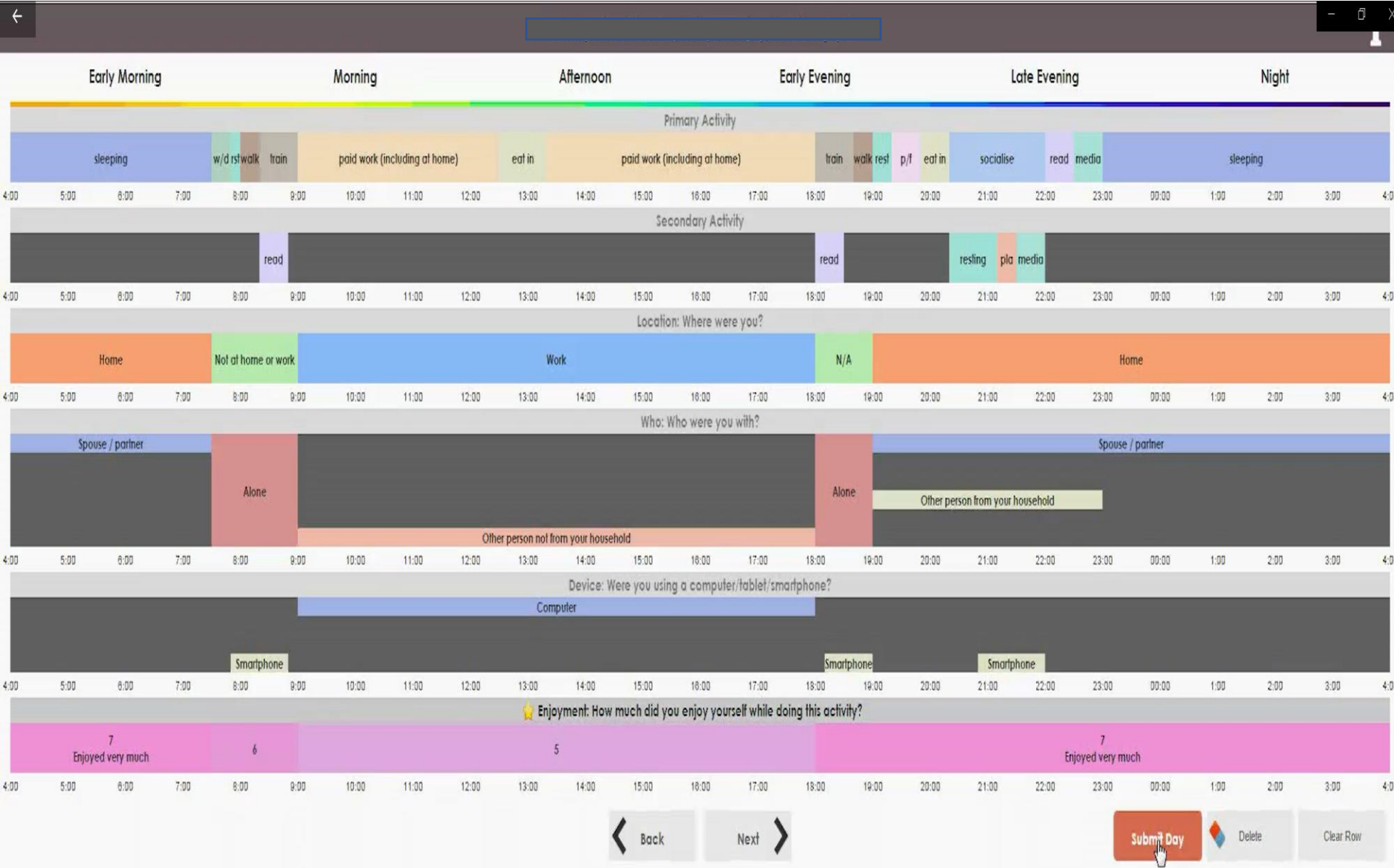
How did people spend their time across the course of the pandemic, especially during successive periods of lockdown and the final lifting of restrictions, and how was this related to their enjoyment of those activities?

An online time-use diary application

- In 2016 CTUR developed the online 'Click and Drag Diary Instrument' (CaDDI), using an international market research panel for comparative cross-national research on enjoyment
- When the pandemic struck we realised that this was potentially a rapid, cost-effective way of collecting real-time time use diary data on changing daily behaviours across the pandemic
- Sullivan O, Gershuny J, Sevilla A, Walthery P, Vega-Rapun M, (2020). 'Time use diary design for our times - an overview, presenting a 'drag-and-drop' diary instrument for online application.' *Journal of Time Use Research*
<https://doi.org/10.32797/jtur-2020-1>

- We collected diary information across 4 waves during the UK pandemic; 3 lockdowns and an intervening phase of more relaxed restrictions.
- We can directly compare these with the pre-pandemic wave collected in 2016, and with a post 'freedom day' (July 19th 2021) wave collected in August 2021.
- Total = 6 waves, approx. 6500 diaries. (The 6-wave dataset is available from the UK Data Archive, Study number 8741).

Example of completed 'Click and drag diary instrument' (CaDDI)



Dates and periods of survey

CaDDI Wave	Period (Govt definition)	Dates of survey	N of diaries
1	Pre-pandemic	February, October, December 2016	1011
2	1st national lockdown	May 2020	1004
3	Minimal restrictions	August 2020	987
4	2nd national lockdown	November 2020	1358
5	3rd national lockdown	January 2021	1254
6	Restrictions lifted	August 2021	1282

Sample

- Respondents were members of the large international Dynata market research panel, who volunteered for the surveys and were selected on the basis of quotas by age, sex, social grade and region that were nationally representative of the baseline 2016 UK population.
- They completed diaries for 1-3 days, giving a total across six waves of surveys of about 6500 days. Weights were calculated to yield the correct mix of days-of-the-week for each sex by (10-year) age group, and to correct for the 2016 age group quotas within waves. All analyses were conducted using these weights.

- The software requires complete (1440 minute) responses to 4 fields; the primary activity, location, co-presence and enjoyment fields.
- Median time to completion of the diary was 12-15 minutes (although note this is a market research panel)
- The accompanying questionnaire includes standard demographics, economic and employment circumstances, life-satisfaction and wellbeing (GHQ) questions, as well as pandemic-related questions on work status



Activities and enjoyment across the UK pandemic

- After 'freedom day' why did some activities go back to how they were before, while changes in some activities persisted ('stuck')?
- One possible answer lies in the relative enjoyment of the 'pre-pandemic' and 'pandemic' activity alternatives

Paper under review:

Lamote de Grignon, Juana L., Oriel Sullivan, Margarita Vega-Rapun, and Jonathan Gershuny: 'Big Changes in Daily Activities Across the Course of the UK Pandemic; but Which of Them Will Stick?' 2023

(SocArXiv. July 12. doi:10.31235/osf.io/h35cr)

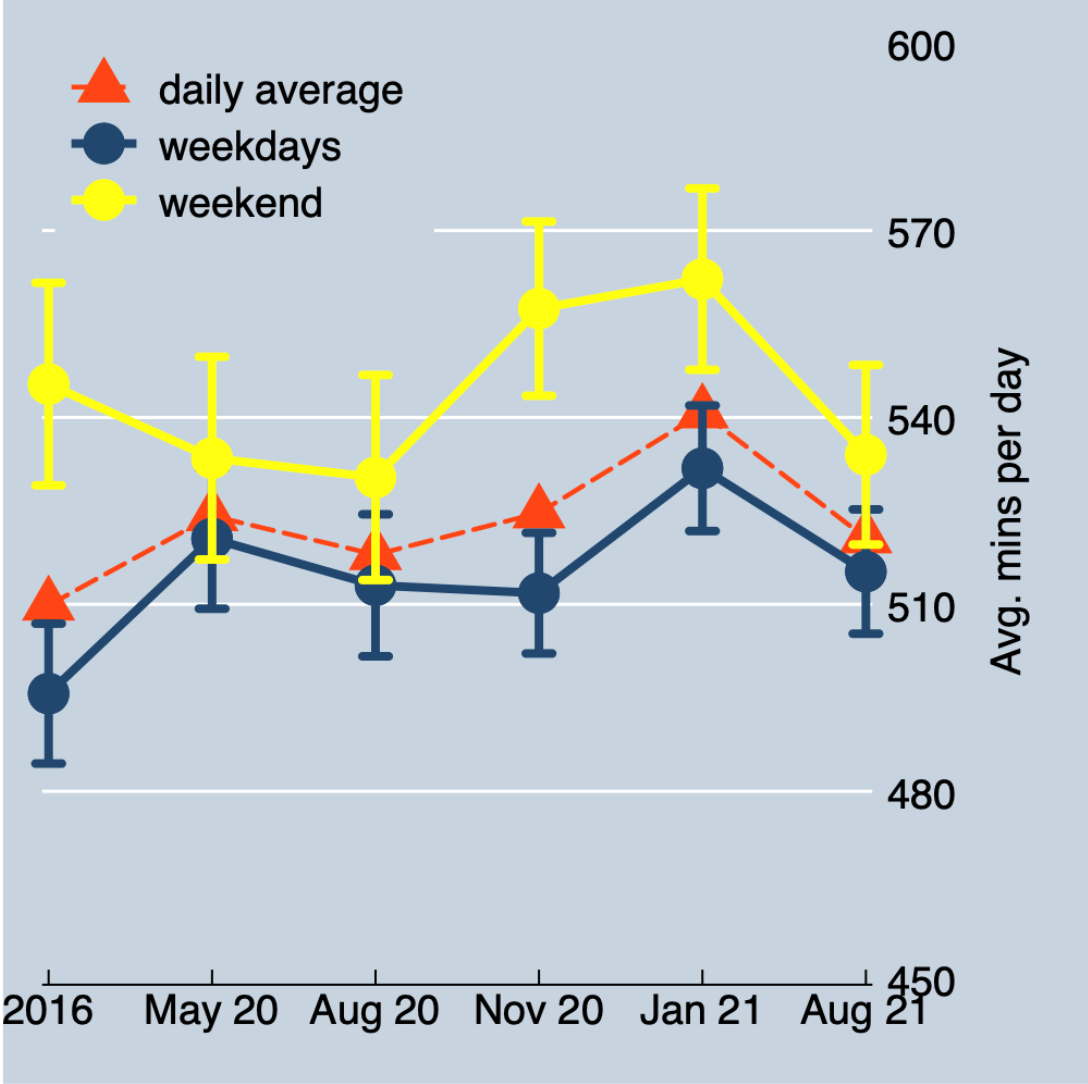
Method: OLS regressions

Dependent = Activity times (mean mins) and participation (%s) across waves

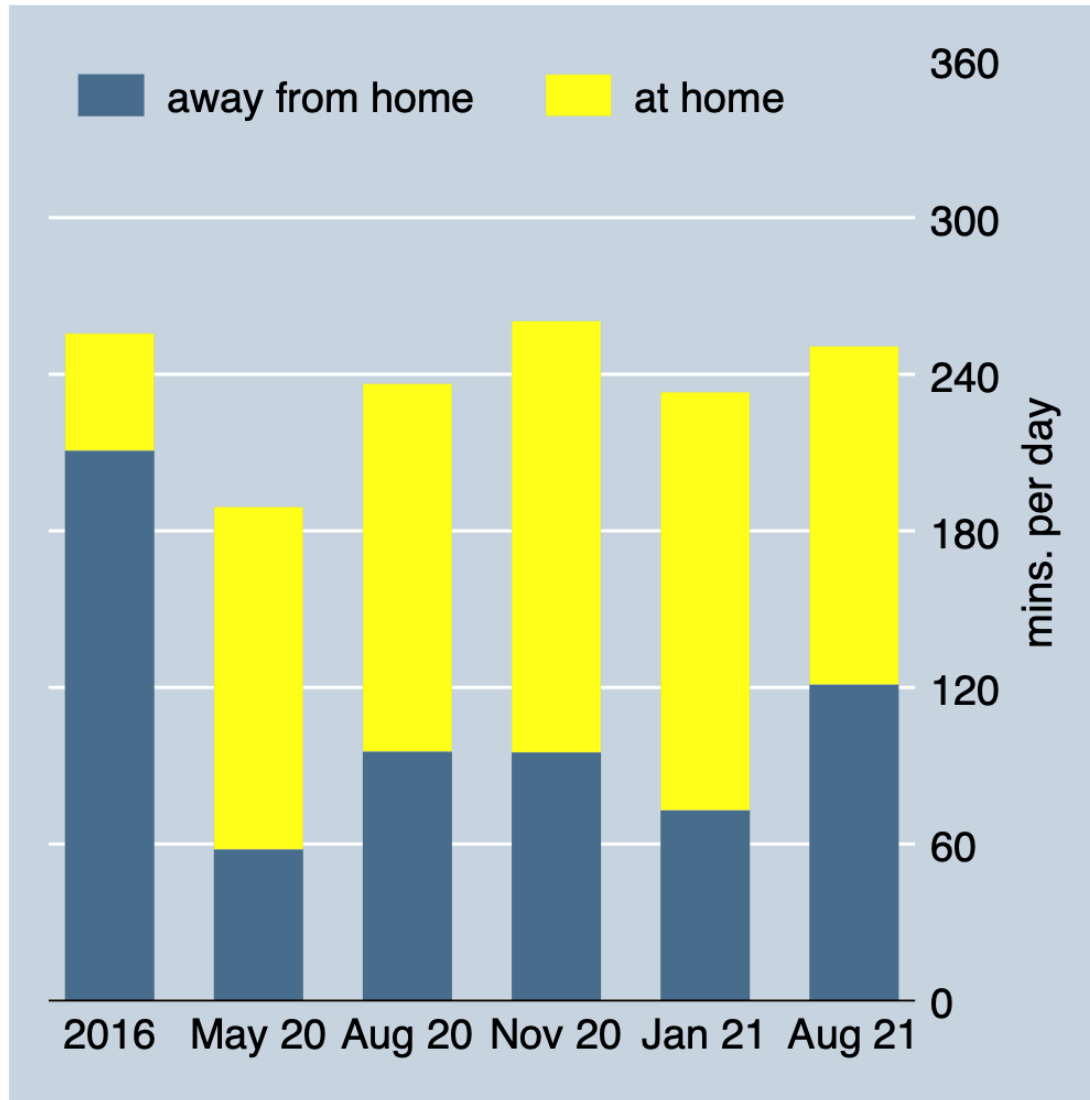
Sample selection = all 18-60+ (except where indicated) across 6 waves

Controls = sex, age group, employment status (not for paid work analysis), parental status (not for childcare analysis)

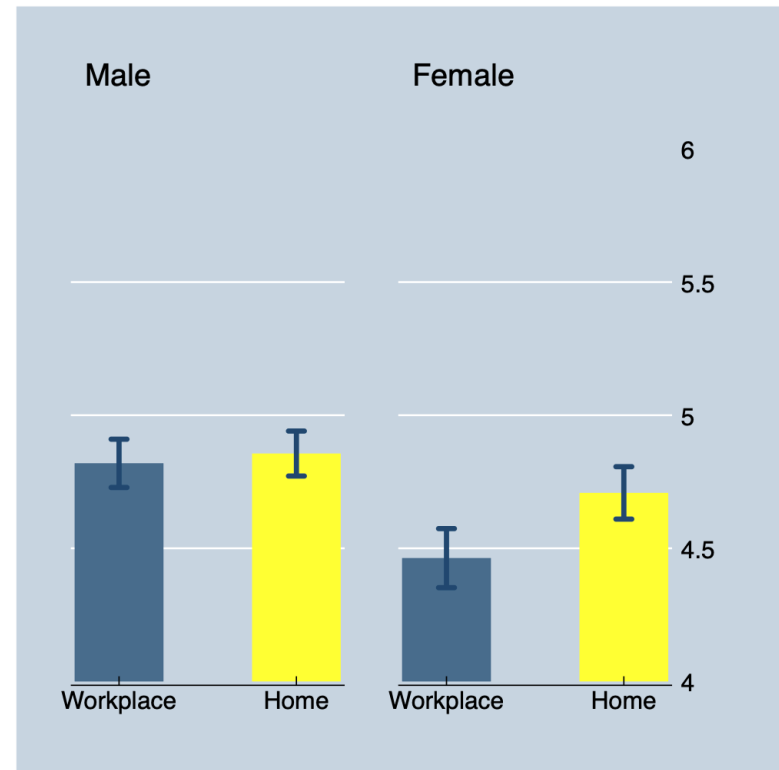
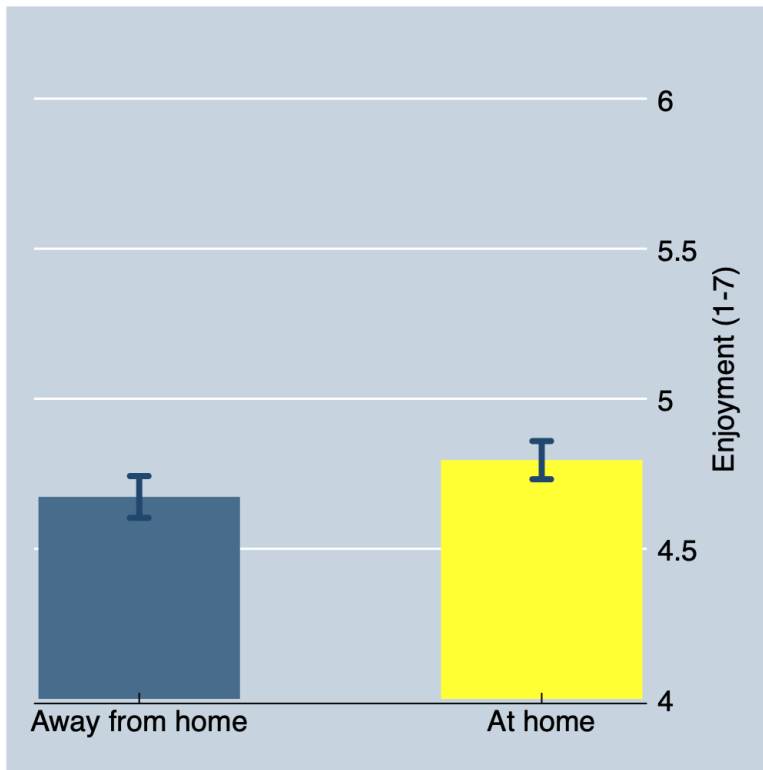
Sleeping across the pandemic



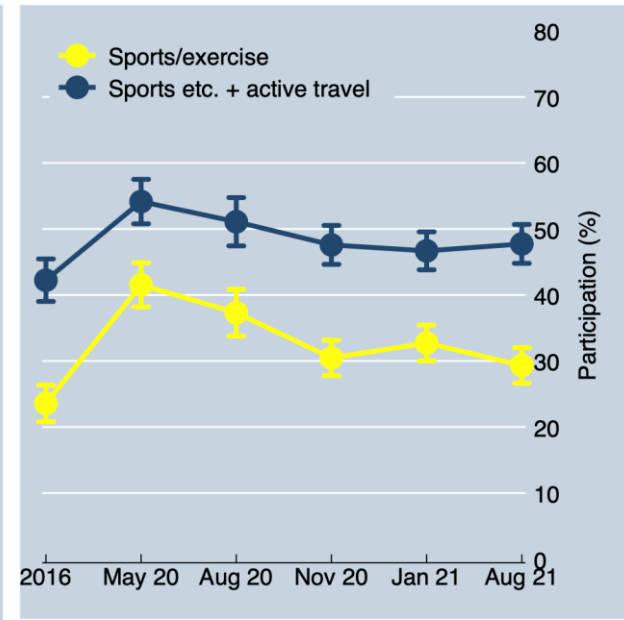
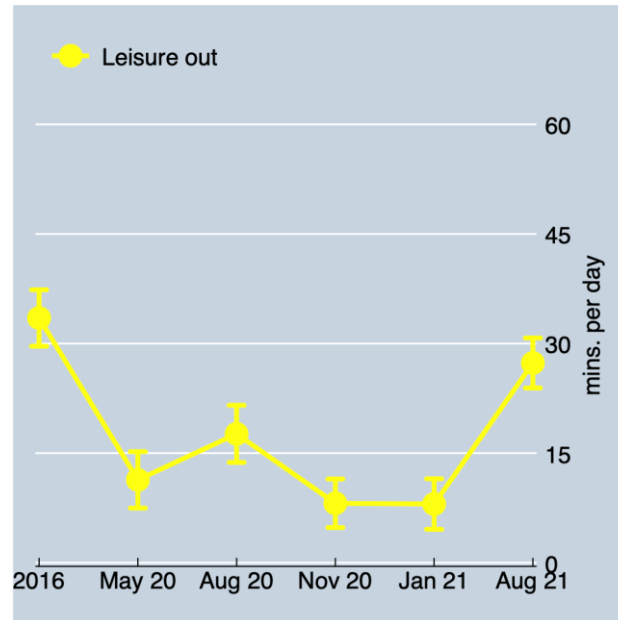
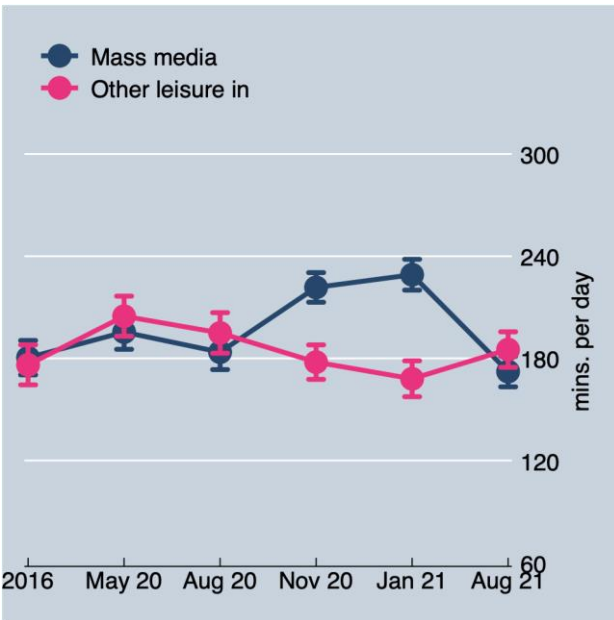
Paid work location across the pandemic (employed only)



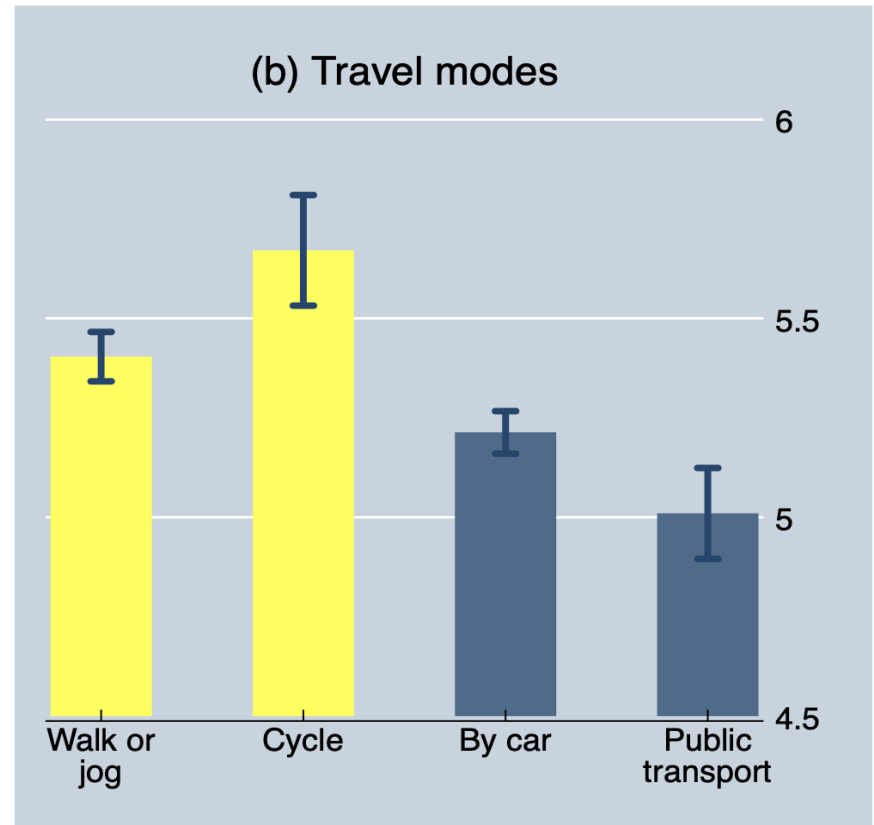
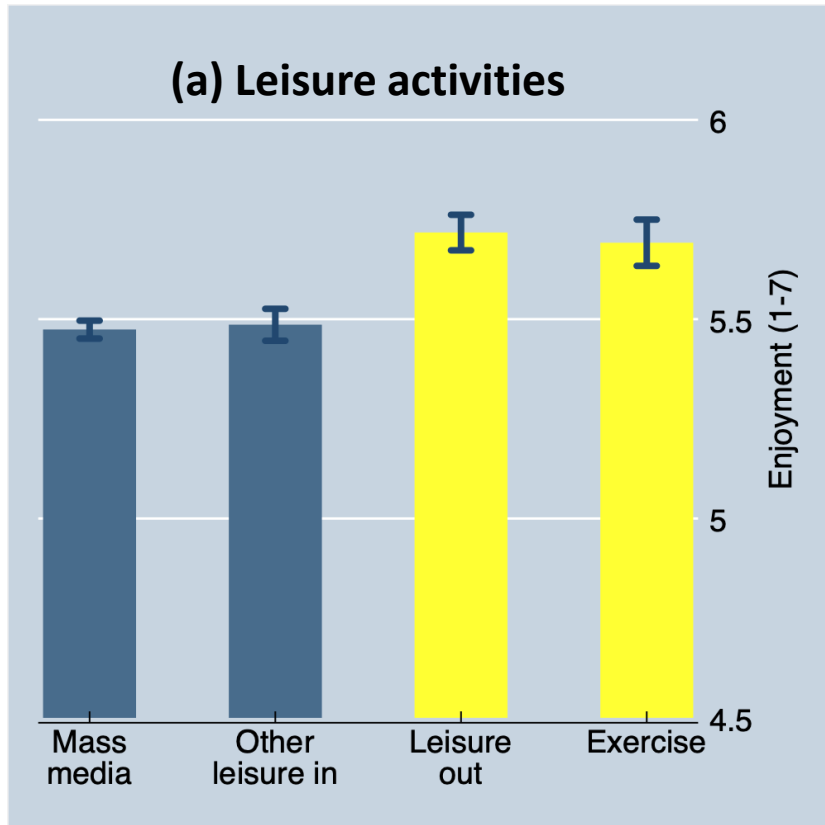
Paid work enjoyment by location (all waves)



Leisure activities across the pandemic

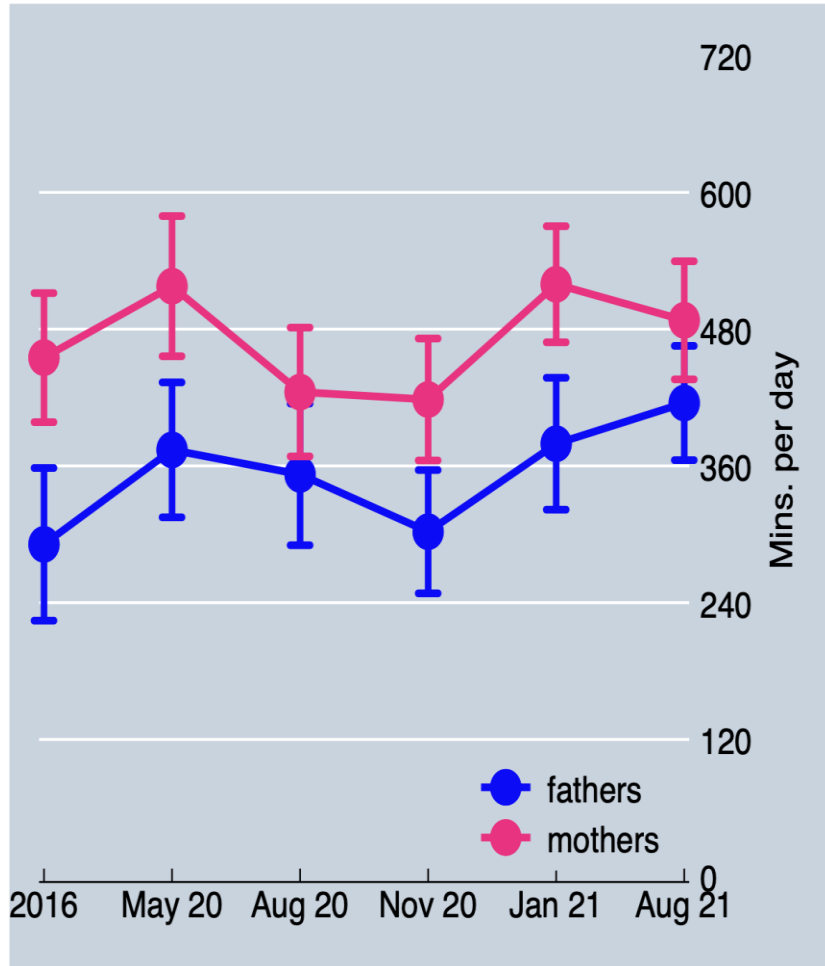


Leisure activities and travel type enjoyment (all waves)

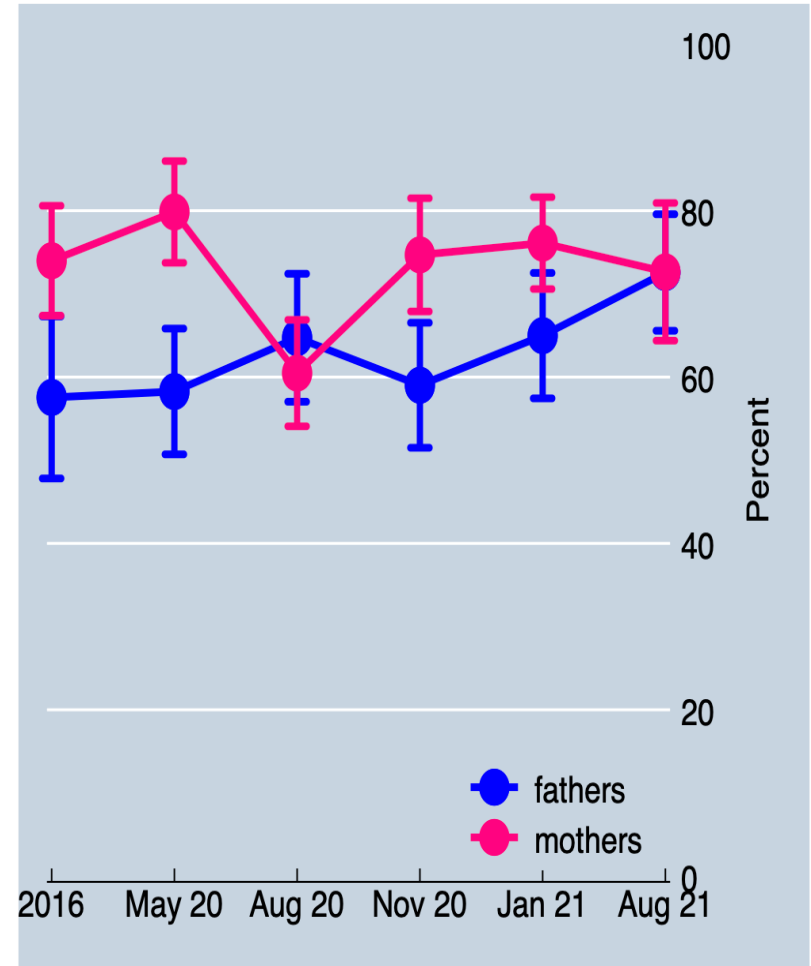


Gender convergence in child-associated time and participation (parents)

Mins/day

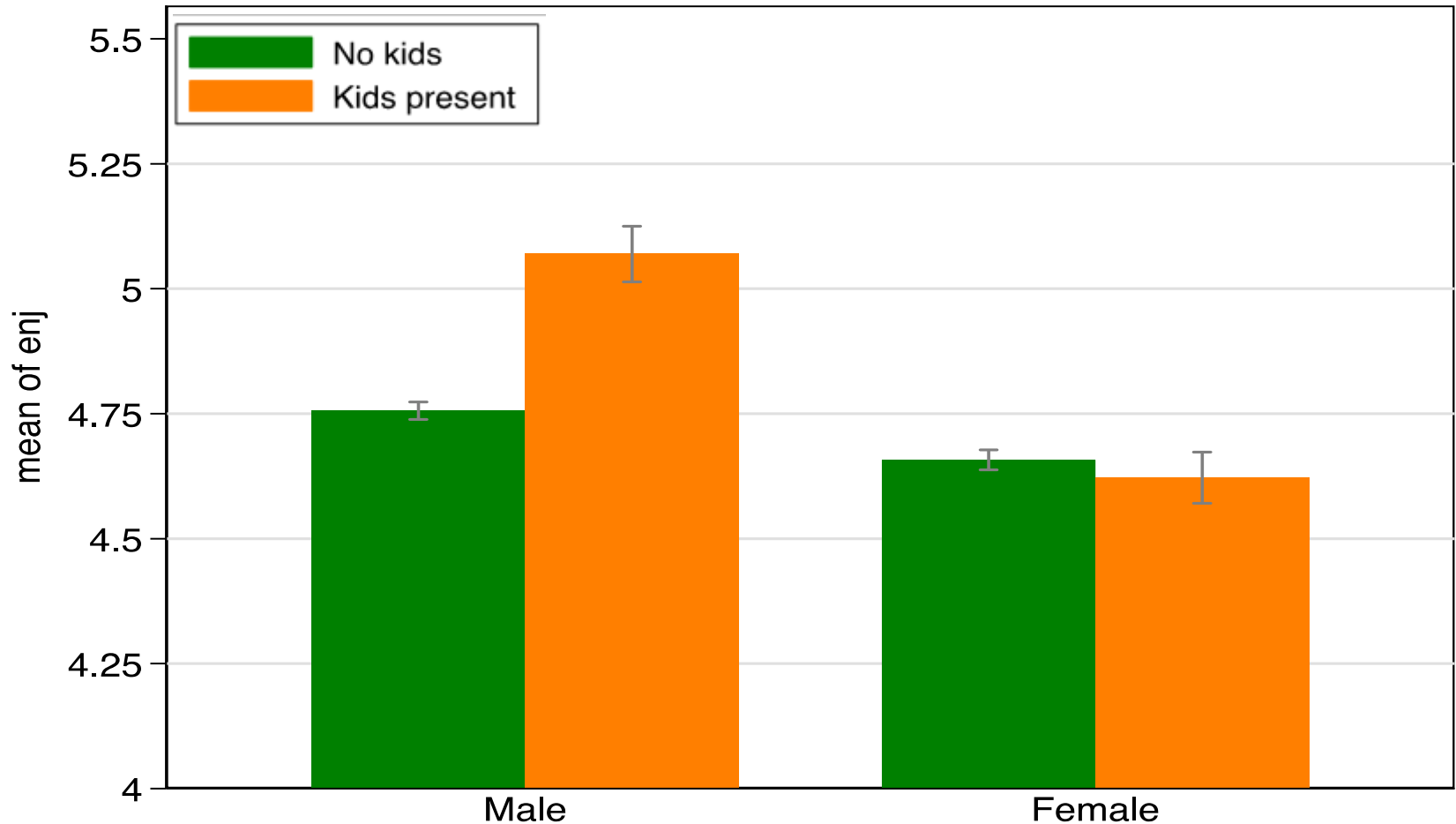


Participation (%)



Parents' enjoyment of paid work at home spent copresent with children (all waves)

Paid work at home



Conclusions:
what stuck
and what did
not

- By the summer of 2021 some activities had completely returned to their 2016 levels, but others had not:
- Sleep durations
- Time spent co-present with children
- Parents' leisure time with children
- Participation and time spent in physical activity

Correlation with enjoyment

- Our suggestion is that, when the new alternative dictated by the pandemic was less enjoyable than the pre-pandemic option (for example, TV-watching or other in-home leisure time compared to leisure out of home), things returned more-or-less to 'normal' as soon as people were free to do so.
- However, when the new option was more enjoyable (the increase in exercise, the shift towards physically active travel modes, the expansion of online shopping, the growth in working from home - for women -, and, in the case of fathers, an increase in participation in leisure spent with children), the new activity 'stuck'.

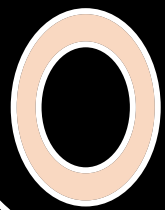
Policy conclusions

- The paradox: an incontestably negative event leading (or forcing) us to do things that we might not otherwise have done. And doing them, finding that we enjoyed them more than our previous behaviours?
- This glimmer of a silver lining will manifest only if policy can be tailored to support the more enjoyable alternatives (which in many cases might also have health and environmental benefits) -

Policy conclusions

For example:

- government and employer commitments in support of teleworking where desired by employees;
- support for flexible working arrangements, permitting a continued reduction in ‘social jetlag’; and
- continuing commitment to the provision of facilities related to active travel and exercising.



Thank you!

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