



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

**THE SYRIAN REFUGEE  
MENTAL HEALTH  
PANEL STUDY  
THE COVID-19 REPORT**

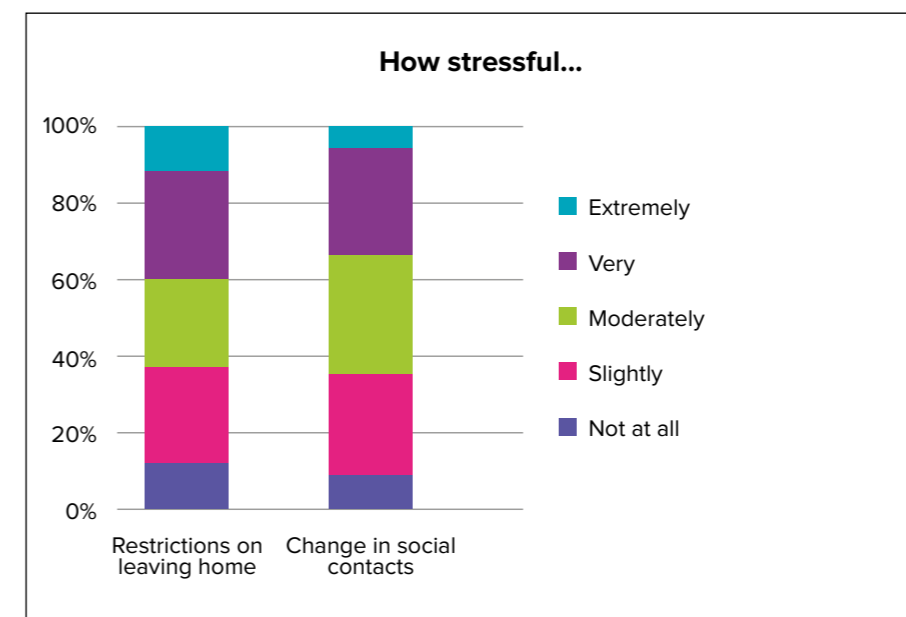
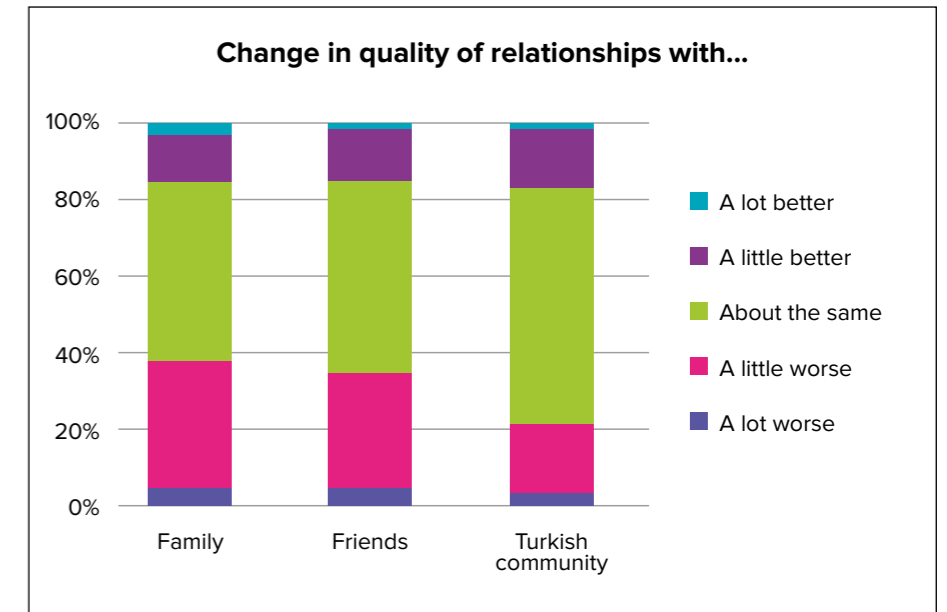
December 2020

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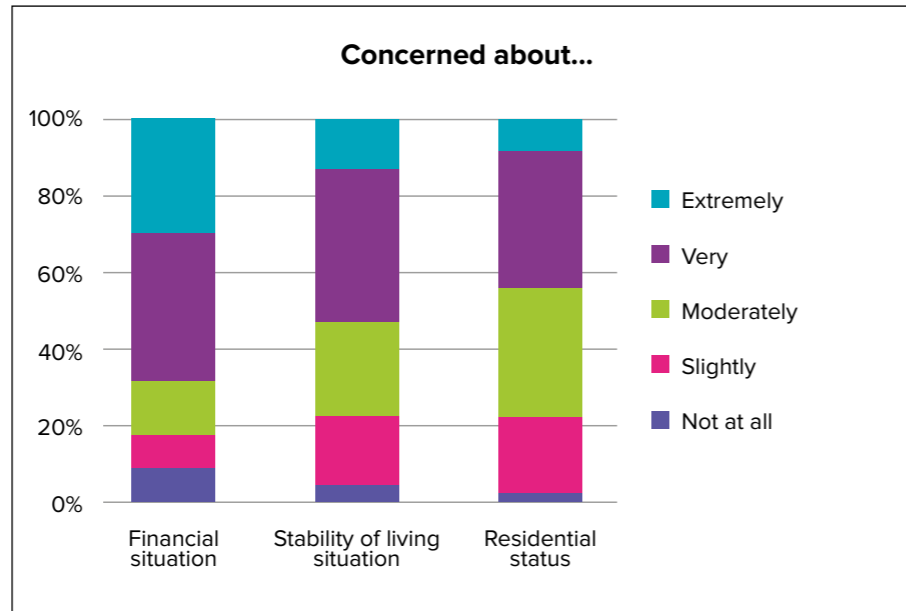
# 1. LIFE CHANGES UNDER COVID-19

The majority of Syrian refugees in our sample did not perceive any change in the quality of their relationships with their family members (48%), their friends (50%) and the Turkish community (62%) at the time of the survey fieldwork (compared to the previous two weeks). However, more respondents felt that the quality of their relationships had worsened than had improved. 37% and 35% of respondents think that their relationship with their family and friends, respectively, worsened a little or a lot. Only 20% of respondents reported that their relationship with the Turkish community deteriorated, and about 16% of respondents think that their social relationships improved.



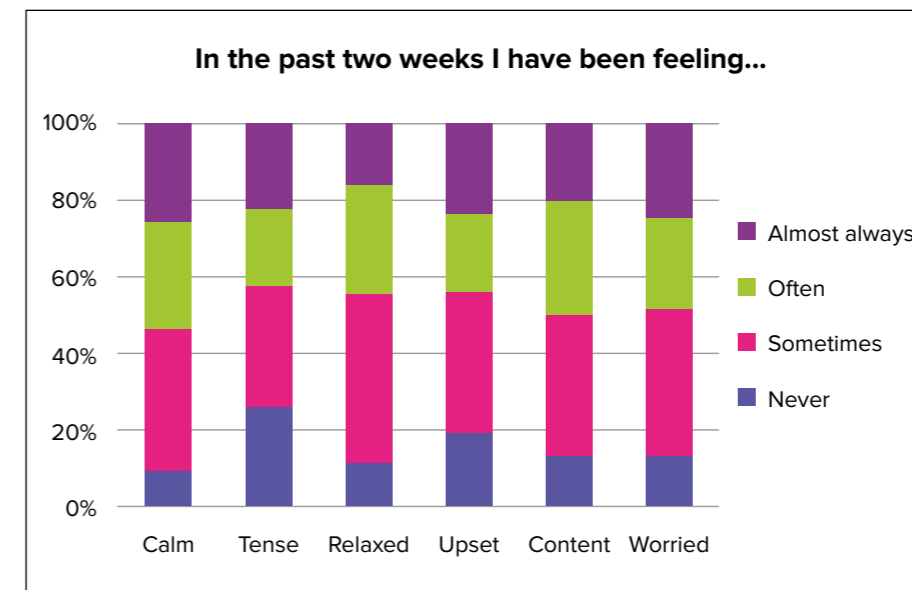
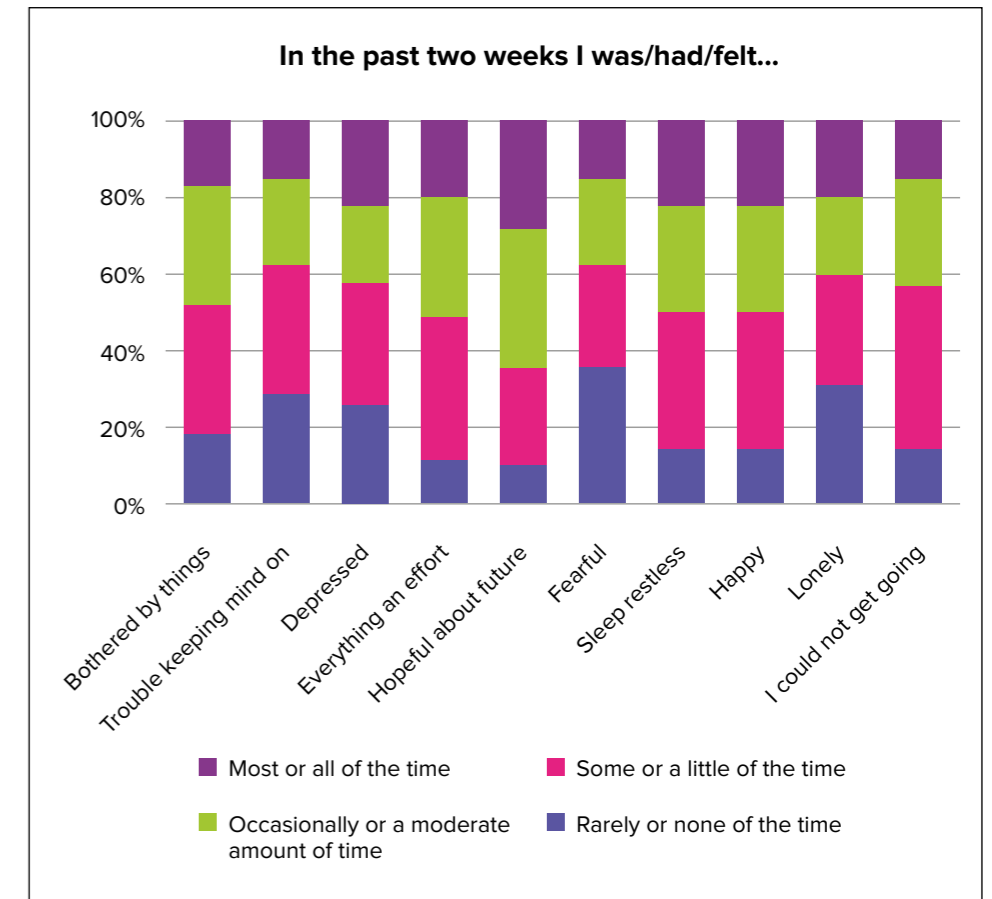
Change in social contacts has been very or extremely stressful for 33% of respondents; 31% found change in social contacts to be moderately stressful, and 36% found it only slightly stressful or not stressful at all. Restrictions on leaving their home were perceived as quite stressful by 40% of respondents; only 22% found restrictions to be moderately stressful, and 38% found them to be slightly or not stressful at all.

Changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic have created financial problems (such as closure of business, salary cut, loss of job, etc.) for respondents and their families to a large degree for 68% of the sample; only 32% reported being moderately, slightly or not at all affected. 53% responded that they are very or extremely concerned about the stability of their living situation, and 44% reported that they are very or extremely concerned about the stability of their residential status in Turkey. A little more than one quarter of the sample said that these issues preoccupied them only slightly or not at all.



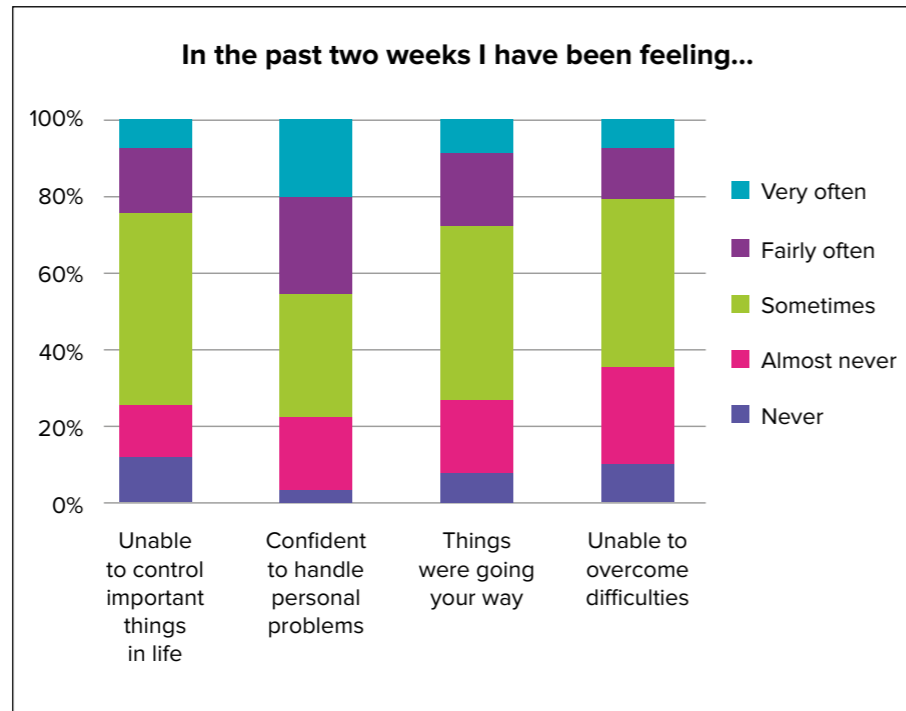
## 2. MENTAL HEALTH IN COVID-19 TIMES

44% of the sample reported experiencing symptoms of depression at least occasionally. Above this average percentile were specific symptoms: “I was bothered by things that usually do not bother me” (48%), “I felt that everything I did was an effort” (52%), “my sleep was restless” (51%), and “I was happy” (50%). 17% of respondents mentioned that they have been experiencing symptoms of depression most or all of the time. Above this percentile, sleep restlessness (22%) and depressed mood (21%) stand out.

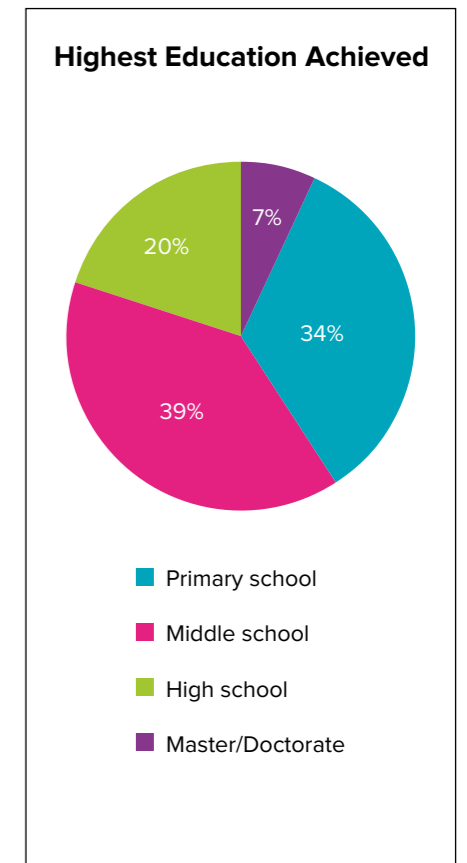
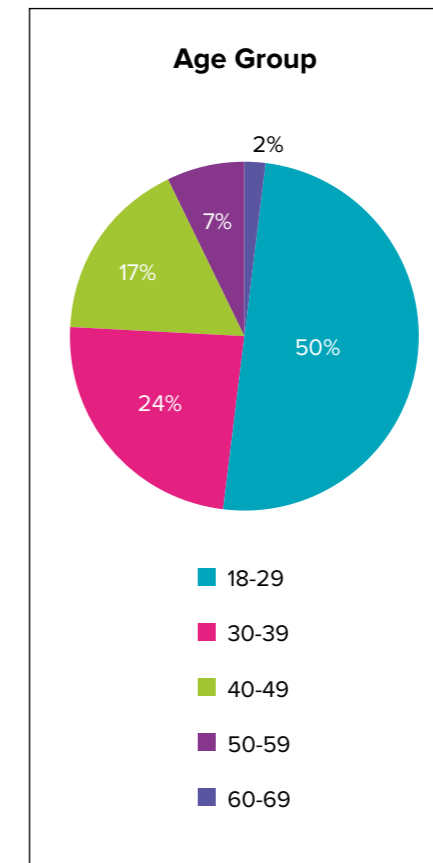
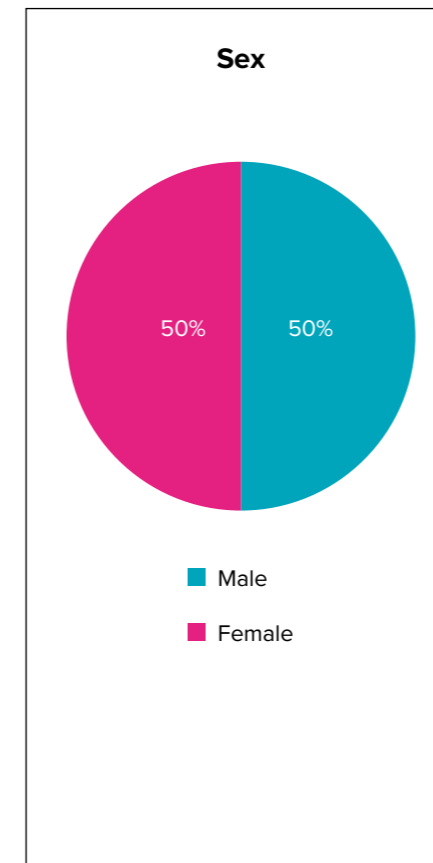


31% of the sample endorsed experiencing symptoms of anxiety often or almost always, and 17% responded “almost all of the time.” Almost half of the sample responded that they have been feeling worried at least often, and a quarter of the sample almost always. 23% of the sample has been feeling either tense or upset almost always.

23% of the sample reported experiencing symptoms of stress fairly or very often; only 6% of respondents reported doing so extremely often. 27% of the sample mentioned that things were never or almost never going their way while 24% felt they were never or almost never in control of the important things in their life. Similarly, 23% felt they were never or almost never confident in their ability to handle their personal problems, and 20% never or almost never felt difficulties were piling up that they could not overcome them.



### 3. RESPONDENTS' SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS



## 4. SURVEY INFORMATION

The results included in this report come from a project on “The effects of Covid-19 measures on mental health of Syrian refugees” funded by a COVID-19 ODA Rapid Response Fund provided to the University of Liverpool by Research England. The project was awarded to Dr Luca Bernardi (Principal Investigator) and Dr Özge Zihnioğlu (Co-Investigator) in June 2020 and lasted until December 2020. Prof Ian H. Gotlib (Stanford University) participated as external advisor.

A two-wave panel survey (with computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) methodology) of a representative sample of the estimated 500,000 Syrian refugees in Istanbul was commissioned to the polling firm Frekans Research. The participants included adult refugees (aged 18 year or older) living under humanitarian protection in Turkey but not in camps. An ethics application for the study received approval prior to the fieldwork on 30th June by the School of Histories, Languages and Cultures Ethics Committee of the University of Liverpool (reference number 7866). Respondents’ confidentiality and anonymity were fully protected, participation in the study was voluntary, and participants’ informed consent was asked before starting the survey.

Our questionnaire integrates and adapts a selection of questions about life changes due to COVID-19 from the CoRonavlrUS Health Impact Survey (CRISIS) developed by the National Institute of Mental Health (<http://www.crisissurvey.org>) with validated measures of mental disorder. Professional translators at Frekans Research translated the questionnaire into both Turkish and Arabic and the Turkish translation was approved by Dr Özge Zihnioğlu.

The first wave was conducted between 9th and 15th July (N=302). The follow-up was conducted between 11th and 14th September (N=210) and the response rate was around 70%. Thus, the analyses reported in this report are based on the full sample of 512 survey respondents.

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## 5. CONTRIBUTORS



### Luca Bernardi

Luca Bernardi is Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Politics at the University of Liverpool. His areas of research include mass-elite linkages, public opinion and public policy, and mental health and political perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. He is the Principal Investigator of two projects on the consequences of COVID-19 on mental health and political attitudes funded by Research England and the British Academy. He teaches research design applied to political representation and political psychology.



### Özge Zihnioğlu

Özge Zihnioğlu is Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Politics at the University of Liverpool. Her main research interests include Turkish civil society, EU-Turkey relations, and EU civil society support. Her research was funded through British Council, British Academy, Mercator Foundation and TUBITAK. Zihnioğlu is a member of Carnegie Endowment’s Civic Research Network. Zihnioğlu received the Young Scientist Award from Turkey’s Science Academy (2015) and from the International Relations Council (2018).



### Ian H. Gotlib

Ian H. Gotlib is the David Starr Jordan Professor and Director of the Stanford Neurodevelopment, Affect, and Psychopathology (SNAP) Laboratory at Stanford University. In his research, Dr. Gotlib examines psychobiological factors that place children, adolescents, and adults at increased risk for developing depression and engaging in suicidal behaviors, as well as processes that are protective in this context. Dr. Gotlib’s research is supported largely by grants from the National Institutes of Health.

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