

Effects of pandemic school and care disruptions on child and family well-being

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Motivation

This fall, it looks like:

- 1) Most employers will have resumed in-person work
- 2) All kids <12 will be unvaccinated
- 3) Many kids 12+ will be unvaccinated
- 4) Variants will be circulating

→Classroom/school closures due to positive cases will be likely, with disruptive implications for families

Can we use evidence from last school year on disruptions by mode, parent/child mental health, and perceived learning loss to inform school and public health policy?

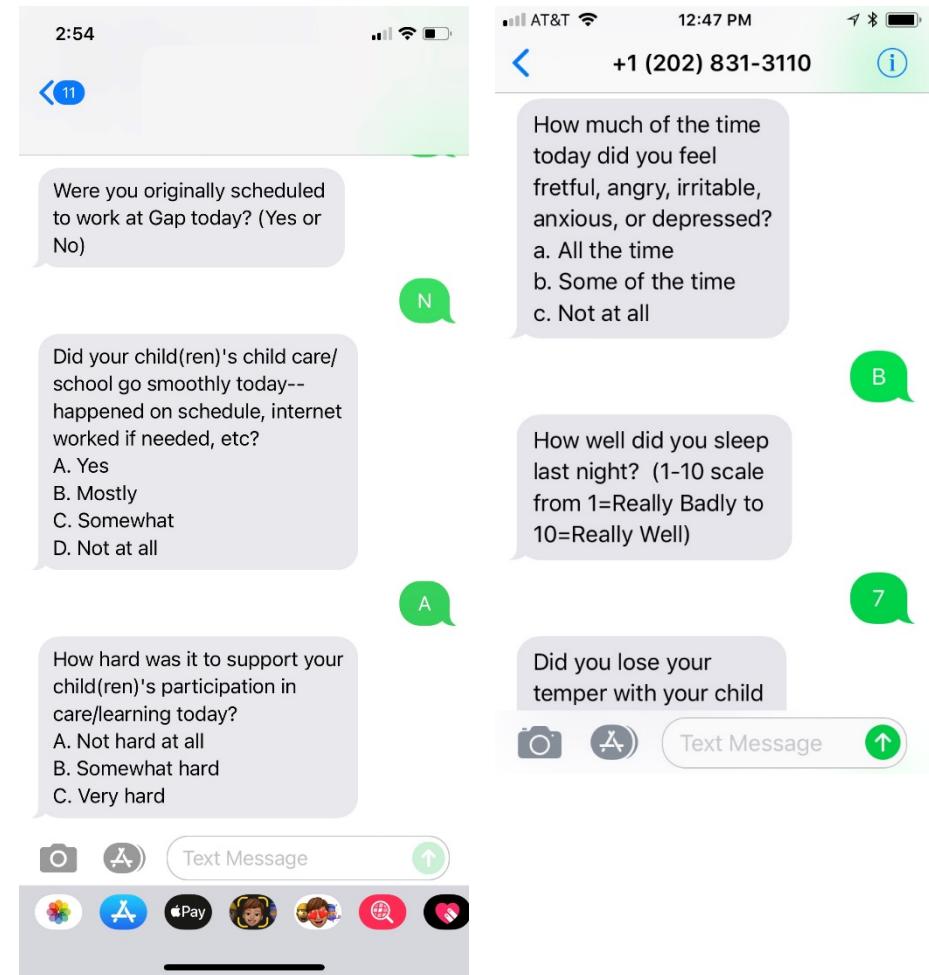
We draw from our ongoing surveys of vulnerable families

- Sample of ~1,000 hourly service workers with young children in Philadelphia, recruited in late summer-fall, 2019
- Originally focused on work schedule unpredictability and worker and family well-being

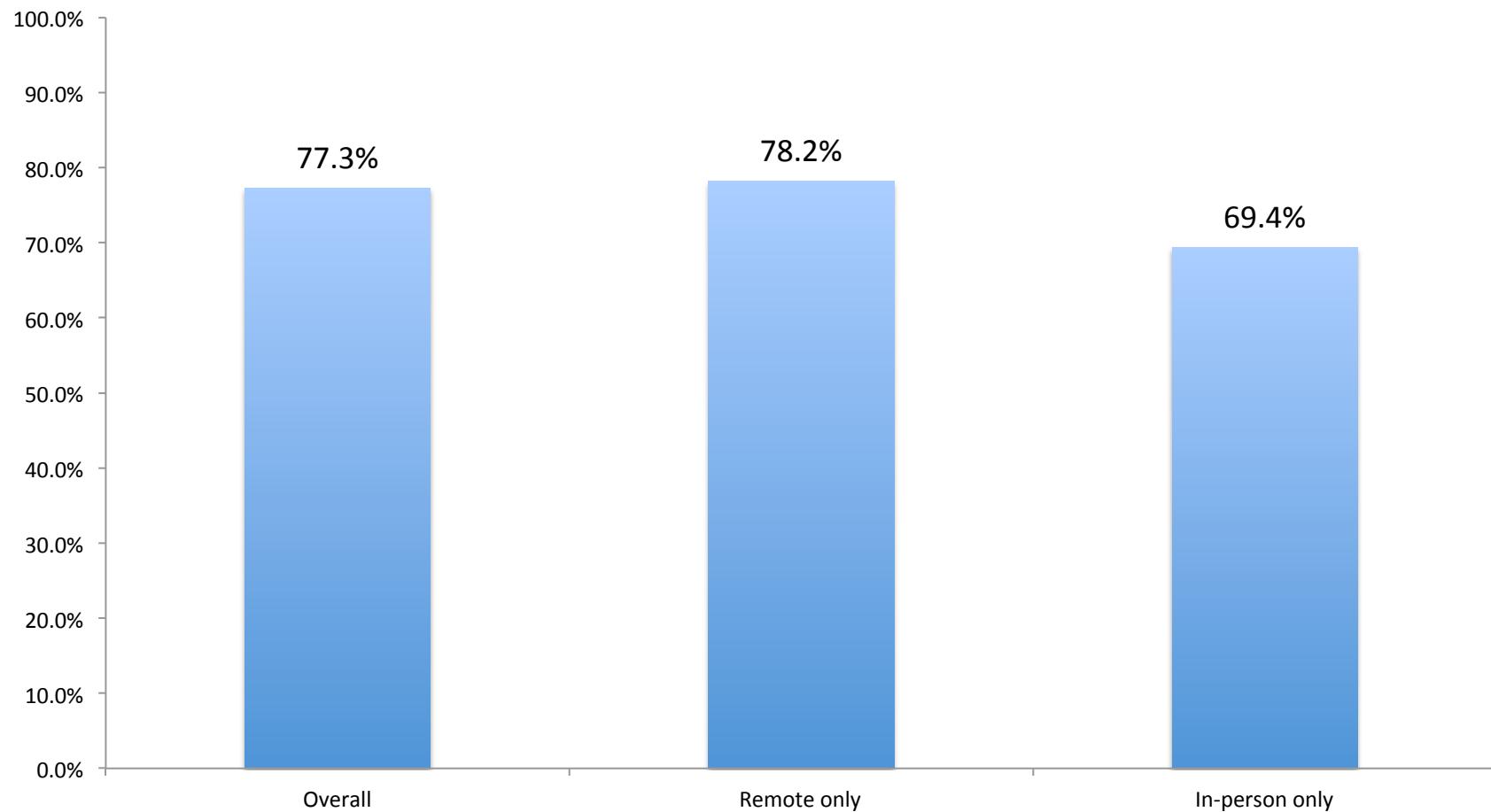
Sample Characteristics	Mean	St. Dev.
Race/ethnicity (%):		
African-American (non-Hispanic)	49.5%	
White (non-Hispanic)	18.2%	
Asian (non-Hispanic)	3.3%	
Multi-racial (non-Hispanic)	2.3%	
Hispanic (of any race)	22.5%	
Age	31.0	7.0
Female (%)	83.1%	
Education (%):		
Less than a high school education	26.3%	
Exactly a high school education	44.3%	
Monthly household income	\$2,239	\$1,672
Child characteristics		
Age	4.9	2.6
Female (%)	50.0%	

Approach

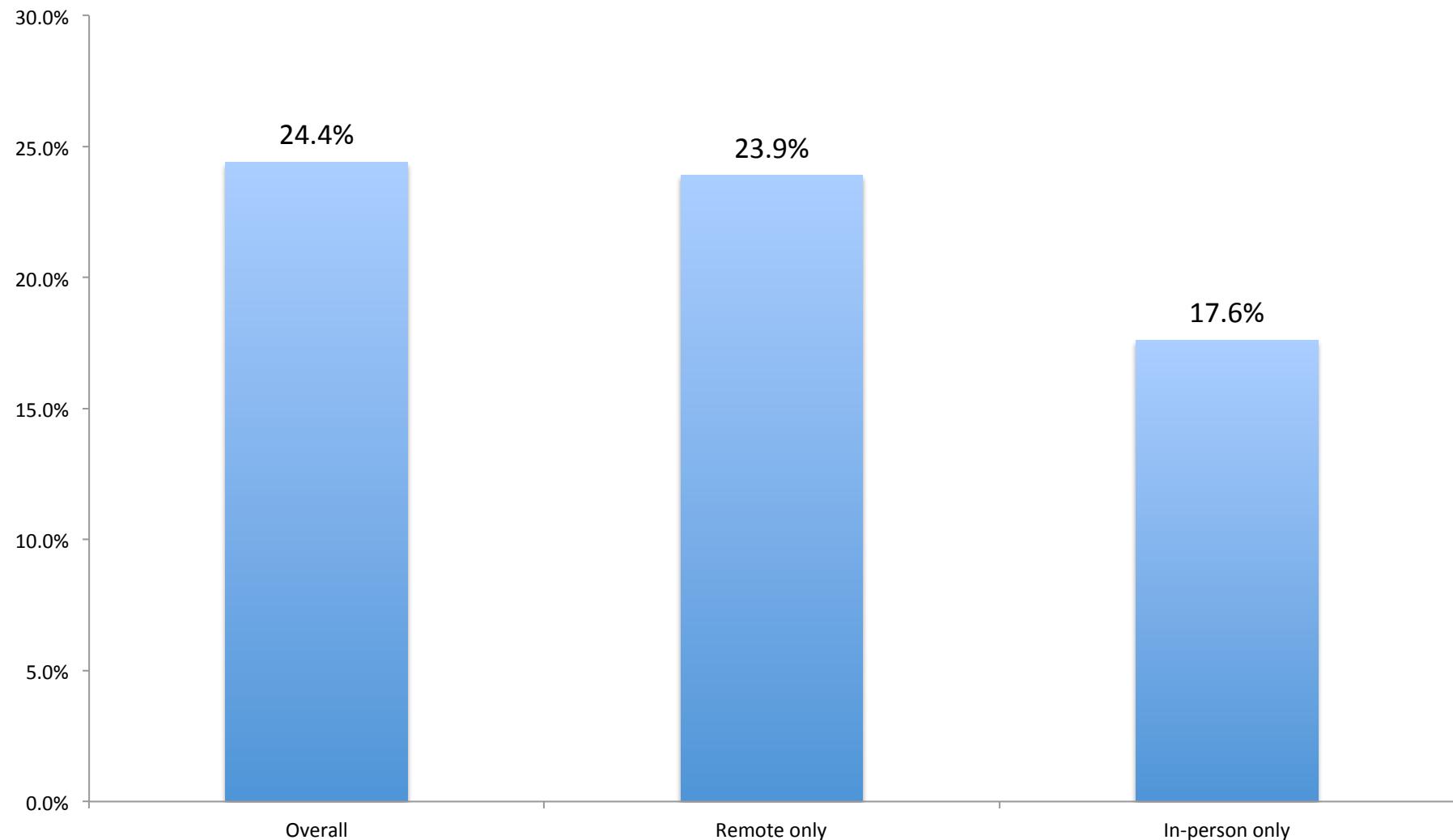
- Ask parents about their work and home experiences and well-being via basic SMS text message every day for 1 month
- Latest wave of daily data collection was in Fall 2020, added questions about school/care disruption
- Context: Philadelphia public schools all-virtual in Fall 2020; some charters, privates & day care centers in-person over this period



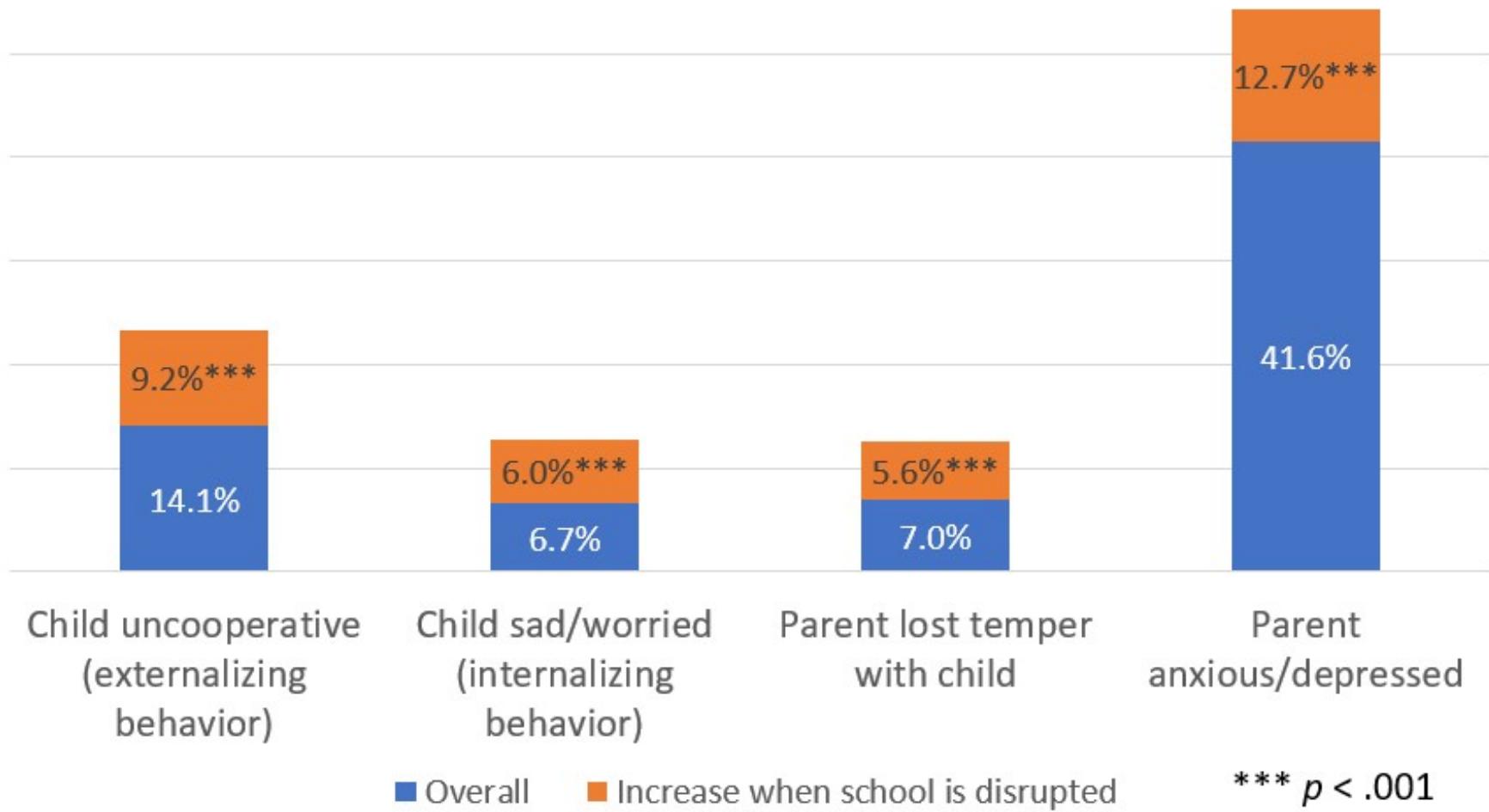
Percent of families experiencing at least 1 disruption during the Fall 2020 sample month



Share of days over the sample month with a disruption



Family well-being is worse on days with disruption to school or child care



Fall disruptions predict reported parent concerns in Spring

P(parent wants a change in mode) P(parent reports learning less than usual)

Share of days disrupted in Fall	.304*** (.053)	.164** (.062)
Base rate	0.398 (.015)	0.724 (.018)

Results

- school/care instability was common and frequent last fall
 - Even higher in remote, so moving away from in-person doesn't reduce
 - But still quite high in-person
- (w/family FE) instability on a given day harms family well-being, across modes
 - Worse child internalizing & externalizing symptoms
 - Worse parent mood & harsh parenting behavior
- extent of Fall disruptions predicts:
 - parents' Spring perceptions of learning: more disruptions, less learning
 - parents' dissatisfaction with their mode, as proxied by wanting to switch modes (*except* among those using in-person)

Considerations for Policymaking

- Instability in care and school is harmful to children and families
- Other modes even worse, but in-person still has high levels
- Steps that reduce cases and therefore school closures can improve child and family well-being

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Thank you!

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