



Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

Title of Research Study:

Families (Un-)locked: Relationships Emerging from COVID-19 into the “New Normal”

The University of Worcester (UK) and Griffith University (Australia) engage in a wide range of research which seeks to provide greater understanding of the world around us, to contribute to improved human health and well-being and to provide answers to social, economic and environmental problems.

We would like to invite you to take part in an international research study which involves completing an anonymous online survey. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done, what it will involve for you, what information we will ask from you, and what we will do with that information.

Who is undertaking the research?

The Research Principal Investigator is [Dr Gabriela Misca](#), Senior Lecturer in Psychology, at the University of Worcester, UK (contact email: g.misca@worc.ac.uk) who is leading this international research study and coordinating the UK data collection site in partnership with [Relate UK](#).

Dr Misca is working in collaboration with [Dr Patricia Fronek](#) Senior Lecturer in Social Work (contact email: p.fronek@griffith.edu.au) and [Dr Lynne Briggs](#) Associate Professor in Social Work (contact email: l.briggs@griffith.edu.au) from Griffith University, Australia, who are Research Co-investigators and coordinators of the Australia data collection site, in partnership with [Relationships Australia](#).

What is the purpose of the research?

With lockdown and social isolation in place across countries around the world since March 2020, families and couples were facing added challenges. Life in lockdown has impacted family relationships in unprecedented ways: social isolation forced some people to live closer together and some further apart from other members of the families. In addition, many had to cope with the increased burden of care as a result of quarantines and/or caring for vulnerable members, as well as providing childcare and home-schooling. However some families were able to enjoy more time together and felt that this strengthened their relationships.

This study aims to understand the medium and long term effects of these added stressors on families and relationships, across different countries. The focus is on understanding the risk and protective factors in the ways that families cope and adapt to such challenges, with the ultimate goal to enable the development and implementation of appropriate interventions to support families and relationships to navigate “the new normal” and/or be better prepared through potential subsequent waves of the pandemic.

Who is funding the research?

This research is unfunded.

Who has oversight of the research?

The research has been approved by the Research Ethics Panel for the College of Business, Psychology & Sport at the University of Worcester UK in line with the University’s Research Ethics Policy (Ref No CBPS19200039-R). The approved protocols have also been scrutinised and approved by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee, Australia (Ref No: 2020/767).

For participants in the UK/EU:

The University of Worcester acts as the “Data Controller” for personal data collected through its research projects & is subject to the General Data Protection Regulation 2016. We are registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office and our Data Protection Officer is Helen Johnstone (infoassurance@worc.ac.uk). For more on our approach to Information Assurance and Security visit: <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/informationassurance/index.html>.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because you are an adult over 18 years old. We are hoping to recruit a large internationally diverse sample of over 2,000 individuals for this study.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide; the survey will be open for completion for a duration of 60 days from its launch.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked at the start of the survey to agree to a number of statements to indicate that you are over 18 years old, have read and understood the information about the study, and voluntarily agree to take part in the survey. By submitting the survey, you are providing consent for the information you have given to be used in the study.

You can withdraw from the survey by closing the browser page down without submitting your responses and your data will not be saved. Please note that once you have submitted your survey responses you will be unable to withdraw your data as participation is anonymous.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you wish to participate in further follow up surveys at 3 months interval from the initial one. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide an email for the research team to sent you the link to follow-up surveys; and to create

and make a note of your unique survey participant ID number. If you do not wish to enter this information, you do not have to.

If you provided an email address to receive follow-up survey links, this will never be passed to any third parties; and it will be removed before analysis takes place and will be deleted as soon as the study data collection finishes. Because the responses are all anonymous, the researchers will not be able to identify, act on or respond to any individual answers in the survey.

You have the right to discontinue your participation at any time and you can withdraw from future surveys by contacting us by email to familystudy@worc.ac.uk with your unique survey participant ID number and we will not contact you again.

What will happen if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part, you will answer a series of questions in relation to events over the past months about:

- yourself and your household
- your relationship and family experience
- your children if you have children aged 18 or under living with you
- your health and wellbeing
- and how you feel about the future

The survey will be anonymous and take about 20 minutes to complete entirely online, and can be done in one sitting.

At the end of the survey you will be asked to submit an email address if you agree to contribute to follow-up surveys later. We will then email you a link to follow-up surveys approximately every 3 months over the next year, and these follow up surveys will be shorter than the initial and take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

What are the benefits for me in taking part?

Your participation will make a valuable contribution to our understanding of stresses that impact family relationships, especially to better understand how families cope and adjust to the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. We aim to use this knowledge to develop and implement appropriate and effective interventions to support families and relationships to navigate “the new normal” and/or strengthened them through potential subsequent waves of the pandemic.

Are there any risks for me if I take part?

The research poses no risk to you or any participant, beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, some participants may find some questions sensitive. There is no obligation for participants to answer such questions and they simply can answer “prefer not to answer”.

If any participants are affected by any of the issues mentioned in the survey they can access for help or support as follows:

Participants from the UK:

- Visit Relate's comprehensive hub of COVID-19 information and signposting resources; <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information>
- In addition, relatehub <https://hub.relate.org.uk/> is offering free 30 minute WebChats with Relationships and Wellbeing Advisors as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants from Australia:

- Visit Relationship Australia comprehensive hub of COVID-19 related information which you may find useful: <https://www.relationships.org.au/news/blog/covid-19-and-supporting-healthy-relationships-in-australia>
- You can also access a comprehensive list of Crisis Help and Support agencies which offer free of charge services here: <https://www.relationships.org.au/relationship-advice/crisis-help>

For any queries regarding the survey please contact the Research team at familystudy@worc.ac.uk

What will you do with my information?

Your participation is fully anonymous which means that researchers will not know your name, no identifiable information is collected and IP address will not be stored.

Your responses will be treated confidentially at all times; that is, it will not be shared with anyone outside the research team or any third parties specified above unless it has been fully anonymised. At the completion of the project, we will retain information only in anonymised form. Research data will be kept in a password-protected file and will be stored for a minimum of three years after publication of the findings of the research.

During the study, all data / information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its [Information Security Policy](#).

We will process your personal information for a range of purposes associated with the study as follows

- To use your information along with information gathered from other participants in the research study to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have gathered.
- To summarise this information in written form for the purposes of dissemination (through research reports, conference papers, journal articles or other publications). Any information disseminated / published will be fully anonymised and there will be no way of identifying your individual personal information within the published results.
- To use the summary findings and conclusions arising from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your individual personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please email: familystudy@worc.ac.uk .

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you have any further questions then please contact the lead researcher Dr Gabriela Misca by email to: familystudy@worc.ac.uk .

If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact using the following details:

In the UK contact:

The secretary to Research Ethics Panel for College of Business, Psychology and Sport, University of Worcester, By email to: ethics@worc.ac.uk

In Australia contact:

The secretary for the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee:
research-ethics@griffith.edu.au

What happens next?

Please feel free to keep this information sheet for your records.

If you decide you want to take part in our study and we hope you do, please follow the link to complete the on-line survey.