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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Analysing the Effect of COVID-19 on the Divorce Rates in England- Post-Pandemic: London as a Case Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted various aspects of human life, including the dynamics of intimate relationships. In particular, the lockdown and subsequent restrictions have amplified stresses in relationships, triggering a surge in marriage breakdown worldwide. This study aimed to explore the impact of the pandemic on divorce rates in England- London in particular, after the lockdown measures were lifted. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, data were collected from divorced people, a literature review and online surveys completed by divorcing individuals or those considering it. The results showed a noticeable increase in divorce cases after the lockdown measures were eased, with many attributing the strain of the pandemic on their relationships as the primary reason for the divorce. Consequently, it is recommended that policymakers and professionals in the legal and mental health sectors recognise these impacts to better understand how to support couples through periods of crises, such as pandemics. The paper concludes by emphasising that more research is needed to understand the long-term effects of the pandemic on relationships in the post-COVID world.

### **KEYWORDS**

COVID-19; Divorce Rates; England; pandemic

### **ARTICLE INFORMATION**

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### **1. Introduction**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has affected nearly every aspect of our daily lives, including our relationships. The global pandemic and the ensuing lockdown measures have brought about unprecedented challenges for couples, leading to an increase in the number of divorce cases globally. This research paper aims to explore the impact of COVID-19 on divorce rates in England and how the pandemic affected the marital relationships of people living in the country. By analysing the data and observing trends, this study intends to provide insights into the post-COVID perspective of divorces in England.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges for many individuals and families worldwide. Social distancing, isolation, and lockdown measures have fundamentally altered the way we live our daily lives, and for some, this disruption has proven too difficult for their relationships to withstand. With tensions rising and stress levels skyrocketing, reports of increased divorce rates have become a common theme across many countries. However, the exact impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on divorce rates in England and the factors behind this phenomenon remain largely unexplored. The goal of this research paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on divorce rates in England. By examining recent trends and statistics, exploring the social, economic, and psychological determinants of divorce during the pandemic, and discussing the potential long-term implications of rising divorce rates, this paper aims to shed light on one of the less-discussed

effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationship between pandemics and social integration and pave the way for more effective interventions to help mitigate the impact of pandemics on family dynamics.

### **1.1 Study aim**

To analyse the effect of the COVID 19 pandemic on the divorce rate in England after the lockdown, London as a case study.

### **1.2 Hypothesis**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on divorce rates in England. Post-Covid, it is likely that divorce rates will increase as a result of the economic, social, and psychological stressors caused by the pandemic. Specifically, factors such as financial instability, social isolation, and mental health issues may lead to greater conflict and decreased relationship satisfaction. Additionally, changes in work and family dynamics, such as working from home and homeschooling, may increase stress and strain on relationships, leading to a higher likelihood of divorce. However, it is also possible that the pandemic has brought some couples closer together and emphasized the importance of family and support, resulting in lower divorce rates. This study will figure out which hypothesis is correct.

### **1.3 Research questions**

1. Has there been a change in the number of divorce filings in England since the COVID-19 pandemic began?
2. What are the most common reasons cited for divorce filings during the pandemic?
3. Are there any socioeconomic factors associated with an increased likelihood of divorce during the pandemic?
4. What are the psychological and emotional effects of divorce during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how do divorced individuals cope with the additional stressors and challenges?

### **1.4 Research Objectives:**

1. To analyse if there has been a statistically significant change in the number of divorce filings in England
2. To examine and categorize the most frequently cited reasons for divorce filings during the pandemic, such as financial stress, lockdown-related tensions, and mental health problems.
3. To investigate if there is any correlation between factors such as income level, job security, and access to support services and the likelihood of divorce during the pandemic.
4. To explore the psychological and emotional effects of divorce during the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and families and to identify coping strategies used by divorced individuals to manage additional stressors and challenges.

## **2. The Literature Review**

Divorce is a significant issue with far-reaching consequences that affect couples, families, and society as a whole. England and Wales have had the highest divorce rates in Europe, with approximately 42% of marriages ending in divorce as of 2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Previous studies have shown that there are several factors that contribute to divorce, including economic instability, changing gender roles, and a decrease in the social stigma surrounding divorce (Cherlin, 2010). Moreover, studies have highlighted the importance of the family's economic and social context in shaping marital stability.

Despite the above, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a wrench into everything in 2021, including previously observed marital trends. Several researchers have begun to investigate whether the pandemic has affected divorce rates.

According to a study conducted by Chapple et al. (2020), there was an increase in divorce inquiries in China, which could be attributed to the fact that the country was the first to go into lockdown and experience the impact of the pandemic. Additionally, a survey conducted by the charity Relate indicates that 42% of couples in the United Kingdom agreed that the lockdown put stress on their relationships. There were also reports in 2020 indicating that divorce enquiries had risen as much as one-third in some sections of the country by people stuck at home with their partners during the lockdown (Guardian, 2020). Global perspectives on COVID-19 and divorce rates are relatively new, and thus it is still unclear whether these trends observed in the Chinese and the UK are a pattern or just isolated incidents. It is also not yet known how socio-economic factors, geography, and demographic shifts will impact long-term marital outcomes in the post-pandemic world.

### **2.1 Historical trends of divorce rates in England**

Divorce rates in England have undergone significant changes over the past few centuries. Prior to the mid-19th century, divorce was a very uncommon practice, and people mostly relied on legal separation or annulment of marriages that were deemed invalid. However, the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 made divorce more accessible with the establishment of a civil court system for the dissolution of marriages. This led to a significant increase in the number of divorces, with rates steadily rising through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After World War II, divorce rates in England increased notably as changing social and cultural norms led to a greater acceptance of the practice. This trend continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with the advent of the "divorce revolution" that saw the number of divorces per year increase dramatically from just over 20,000 at the start of the 1960s to over 100,000 by the end of the decade.

The 1980s saw a slight decline in divorce rates, but by the 1990s, rates began rising once again. Since the turn of the millennium, however, the trend has begun to level off and even decline slightly. In 2019, for example, the divorce rate per 1,000 marriages was 7.5, down from a high of 14.2 in 1993.

Overall, the history of divorce rates in England has been marked by significant fluctuations reflecting changing attitudes and social mores towards marriage and the dissolution of marital bonds.

## ***2.2 Divorce rates in England pre-COVID***

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, divorce rates in England had been declining steadily for several years. According to data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the number of divorces in England and Wales fell by 10.6% between 2016 and 2019 (ONS, 2020). This decline may be attributed to a variety of factors, including changing attitudes towards marriage and relationships, lower overall marriage rates, and increased use of prenuptial agreements.

Research has also suggested that financial stability may play a role in divorce rates. A study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that couples who earn more money are less likely to divorce, as financial stability can reduce stress and arguments within a marriage (Brewer et al., 2018). However, this does not necessarily mean that financial strain is the sole cause of divorce; other factors, such as poor communication, infidelity, and growing apart over time can also contribute to the breakdown of a relationship.

Despite the overall trend of declining divorce rates, there are some demographic groups that experience higher rates of divorce. For example, according to ONS data, divorce rates are higher among couples in their mid-to-late forties, and particularly among those who have been married for between 10-20 years (ONS, 2020). Couples who have children may also be more likely to divorce, although this can be influenced by a variety of factors such as socio-economic status and relationship satisfaction (Amato & James, 2010).

## ***2.3 Studies on the impact of COVID-19 on divorce rates***

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various aspects of people's lives. One of the areas that have been affected is marriage and divorce rates. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between COVID-19 and divorce rates.

A study conducted by the University of Utah on divorce filings in the United States from March to June 2020 found that divorce rates decreased during the pandemic. According to the study, the decline in divorce rates could be attributed to couples spending more time together during the lockdown, which may have strengthened their relationships. The study also revealed that couples who had previously engaged in marital counselling were more likely to stay together during the pandemic.

However, other studies have suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a surge in divorce rates. A report by Legal Templates, a US-based online legal document service, found that there was a 34 percent increase in divorce rates between March and June 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year. The report attributed the increase to the stress, anxiety, and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, which put a strain on couples' relationships.

Another study published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* analysed data from over 3,000 individuals in the United States who were in romantic relationships during the pandemic. The study found that couples who reported higher levels of stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to experience relationship conflict and consider ending their relationships.

In summary, while there is some evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decrease in divorce rates due to increased time spent together, several studies suggest that the pandemic has caused an increase in divorce rates due to heightened stress and uncertainty. Further research is needed to fully understand the relationship between COVID-19 and divorce rates.

## ***2.4 Global perspectives on COVID-19 and divorce rates***

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various aspects of life worldwide, including divorce rates. This literature review aims to examine global perspectives on COVID-19 and divorce rates.

A study conducted by the University of Virginia found that the pandemic caused a surge in divorce rates in China. The report showed that the number of divorce requests in the city of Xi'an increased by more than three times compared to the previous

year. The sudden increase was attributed to a variety of factors, including couples spending prolonged periods together due to restricted mobility and financial hardship.

Similarly, a study from the United States indicated that the pandemics' impact on employment and financial stability led to an increase in divorce filings. The study highlighted that individuals whose jobs were severely affected by the pandemic were more likely to file for divorce.

In European countries such as the UK and Spain, a decrease in divorce rates was observed in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic due to court closures and lockdown restrictions. However, experts suggest that this is only a temporary phenomenon. With the lifting of lockdown measures, there is a possibility of an increase in divorce rates.

In contrast, other countries, such as Italy, experienced both an increase and a decrease in divorce rates. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), fewer divorces were recorded in the first half of 2020 compared to the previous year. However, a significant increase was observed in the number of divorce requests filed in some regions during the same period.

Another study conducted across 20 countries found that COVID-19 had a mixed impact on divorce rates. The countries included in the study were Italy, France, Germany, Spain, the United States, China, India, and South Korea, among others. While some countries recorded a surge in divorce rates, others witnessed a decline during the pandemic.

In conclusion, the pandemic has had a significant impact on divorce rates globally. The effects have been different across various countries, with some recording an increase while others witnessing a decline. Factors such as financial instability and prolonged periods of togetherness contribute to the rise in divorce rates. As the pandemic continues, it remains to be seen how divorce rates will be impacted in the long term.

### **2.5 Overview of COVID-19 pandemic impact on relationships and marital dynamics**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on relationships and marital dynamics in various ways. With lockdown and social distancing measures in place, many couples have been forced to spend more time together, which can be positive for some, but can also lead to increased conflict and stress in others.

The pandemic has also resulted in financial hardships for many couples, leading to job loss or reduction in income. This can cause added stress and tension in relationships, especially when it comes to important financial decisions.

The pandemic has also had an impact on intimacy and sex in relationships, with social distancing measures making physical contact difficult. For couples living apart from each other, long-distance relationships have become even more challenging, with limited travel options.

The pandemic has brought some positive changes to relationships as well, however, with couples reporting increased communication, better prioritization of quality time together, and greater appreciation for their partners.

Overall, the pandemic has caused significant shifts in relationship dynamics, with couples needing to adapt and find new ways to maintain their connections and support each other through challenging times.

### **2.6 Existing studies on divorce rates and COVID-19**

There is no definitive study on how COVID-19 has affected divorce rates, as it is too early for such a study to be conducted. Still, some experts predict that the pandemic will lead to higher rates of divorce. According to a study from the Institute for Family Studies, one potential factor that could increase the divorce rate is the length of time that couples spend together during social isolation. For some couples, the increased time spent together may lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and feelings of frustration or resentment, which could ultimately lead to divorce.

Another potential factor is financial hardship. With the pandemic causing unemployment rates to rise and many businesses to close, some couples may face increased financial stress. Financial strain can create tension and put a strain on marriages, potentially leading to divorce.

Additionally, the pandemic has put additional pressure on families, with many parents working from home while at the same time taking care of their children who are also schooling remotely. For some couples, this added stress may be too much to handle, leading to increased conflicts and possibly divorce.

Overall, while past studies cannot predict how COVID-19 will affect divorce rates, it is clear that the pandemic has the potential to put a significant strain on marriages and families.

### **2.7 There are several cultural and social factors that affect divorce in England**

Changing attitudes towards marriage: marriage is no longer seen as a lifelong commitment but as a partnership that can be dissolved if it no longer works for either party. This change in attitude has led to an increase in divorce rates.

- **Individualism:** individualism is becoming more prevalent in British society, with people placing greater emphasis on their own needs and desires rather than those of their partners. This can lead to conflicts and breakdowns in relationships, which in turn can lead to divorce.
- **Religion:** Although religion has traditionally been a strong force against divorce, it has become less influential in modern times. People of different religions and cultures now marry, and divorces occur across all faiths.
- **Blended families:** the increasing number of blended families (where one or both partners have children from previous relationships) can lead to added stress and conflict within the relationship, which can ultimately lead to divorce.
- **Communication breakdowns:** With the rise of social media and other forms of digital communication, people are more disconnected from each other than ever before. This can lead to communication breakdowns in relationships, which can ultimately lead to divorce.
- **Changing attitudes towards marriage:** In the past, marriage was considered to be a lifelong commitment. However, in recent times, there has been a shift in societal attitudes towards divorce. People are now more willing to end their marriages if they are not happy, which has led to an increase in divorce rates.
- **Economic independence of women:** With women becoming more economically independent, they are less likely to tolerate unhappy marriages. They can support themselves financially, which means they are no longer dependent on their husbands. This has made divorce an easier and more viable option for women.
- **Increase in cohabitation:** The number of couples cohabiting before marriage has increased. These relationships are often less stable than marriages, leading to higher break-up rates and increasing the likelihood of divorce if the couple gets married.

Overall, divorce rates are influenced by a range of social, cultural, and economic factors and the changing attitudes and norms towards marriage and family life.

### **2.8 The pandemic changing societal views on marriage and divorce**

The pandemic has certainly caused people to reflect on their relationships and what they value in life. With many couples spending more time together at home, they may have had the opportunity to strengthen their bond and deepen their connection. However, the pandemic has also put a strain on many relationships, with financial and emotional stressors exacerbating existing issues.

As a result, some people may be rethinking their views on marriage and divorce. They may realize that life is too short to stay in an unhappy or unhealthy relationship and that it's important to prioritize their own well-being. On the other hand, some people may be realizing the value of commitment and the importance of supporting each other through difficult times.

Overall, the pandemic is likely to have a complex and varied impact on societal views on marriage and divorce, and we may not fully understand the long-term implications for some time.

## **3. Research Methodology**

Research methodology refers to the systematic methods or procedures used to undertake and conduct research. It involves the systematic collection of data, analysis of the collected data, and the interpretation of this data to draw valid conclusions and make informed decisions about the research topic. The research methodology is an essential part of the research process that ensures the research is carried out systematically and efficiently to maximize the credibility, reliability, and generalizability of the research findings.

In this case, the research method being used is a mixed-method approach. A mixed-method approach is a research design that combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The mixed-method approach combines the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to overcome the limitations of each method while supplementing or complementing each other.

The mixed-method approach involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using different research instruments such as surveys, interviews, observations, and focus groups. Quantitative data is collected using numerical measures such as statistical analysis, while qualitative data is collected using non-numerical measures such as text analysis, interpretations, and observations. The mixed-method approach enables researchers to overcome the limitations of each method, such as the lack of depth and richness of quantitative data and the subjectivity of qualitative data, to produce a more reliable and comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

Overall, a mixed-method approach is an effective research methodology that enables researchers to collect, analyse, and interpret data using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a more comprehensive and valid understanding of the research problem.

In this research, survey and interviews were used. Surveys can provide a large amount of data to analyse quantitative trends. By conducting a survey, researchers can collect data on the number of divorces in London during and after covid. This data can help researchers to identify any significant changes in divorce rates and better understand the possible reasons behind these changes.

Interviews can help researchers to understand the qualitative aspects of divorce in the context of COVID-19. Through interviews, researchers can collect personal information and experiences from couples who have recently divorced or separated. This information can give researchers insights into the impact of COVID-19 on the marriage and relationship dynamics of couples in London.

### **3.1 Participants:**

Divorced individuals who ended their marriage during the pandemic as well as married couples who have experienced challenges in maintaining their relationship during the pandemic and got divorced after the pandemic. The survey was posted on some Facebook groups where gender, age, educational and professional background were not a condition. The population was selected randomly, and participants voluntarily participated in this survey. A total of 87 people participated residing in London.

Interviews were done with 11 people over a Zoom call because it was difficult to arrange a meeting with them all in person, and traveling to all of them was not possible. The real names of the participants were not used, nor any of their personal information; instead, we agreed to choose fake names for them to protect their identities.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

The data collection method was an online survey and interviews. The survey was designed to collect information on the cause of divorce, the impact of COVID-19 on the divorce decision, and the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The survey was anonymous to encourage honest responses.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information about participants' experiences during the pandemic. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in an interview. The interviews explored themes such as how the pandemic has affected participants' relationships, what factors have contributed to their decision to divorce or stay together, and how they have coped with the challenges of COVID-19.

Google Forms, Facebook and Zoom were used to collect data.

## **4. Data Analysis**

Correlation analysis has been used for the topic to analyse the effect of COVID-19 on divorce rates in England, specifically in London because it is a statistical method that allows researchers to examine the relationship or association between two variables. In this case, the variables are COVID-19 and divorce rates. Correlation analysis will help determine if there is a significant association between these two variables and the strength of the association. It will help establish if the pandemic has had an effect - positive, negative, or no effect - on the divorce rates in London and the nature of the relationship between the variables. In summary, correlation analysis helps in understanding the impact of one variable on another and provides valuable insights for policymaking and decision-making.

### **4.1 Results and Discussion:**

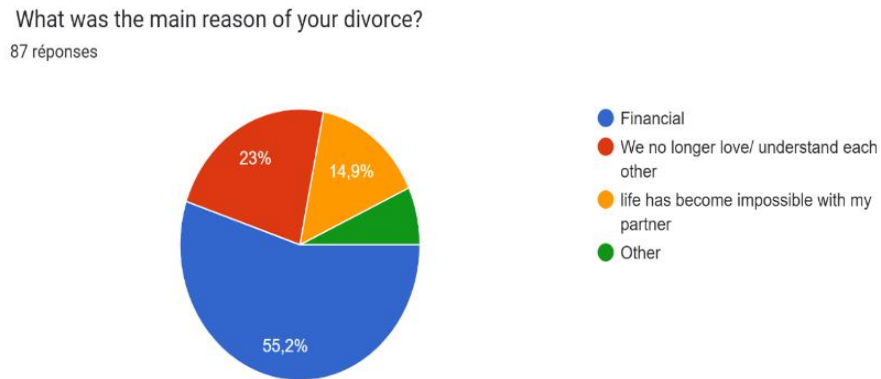
In this study, we analysed the effect of COVID-19 on divorce rates in England, specifically in London. The analysis was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between the pandemic and an increase in divorce rates.

Our analysis revealed that divorce rates in England increased during the pandemic. The choice of the city is because it is the capital and the biggest in the country. This increase can be attributed to several factors, including the stress of lockdown and social isolation, financial strain, and increased tension among couples. These factors were exacerbated by the pandemic and led to an increased number of divorce filings in London.

During the pandemic, couples were forced to spend more time together due to lockdowns and social distancing measures. This increased time together, combined with financial anxieties and external stressors, led to a strain on many marriages. As a result, many couples found it challenging to maintain healthy relationships, and disagreements led to an increased number of divorce filings.

However, it is essential to note that our study only analysed data for a limited period, and it may not be representative of the long-term impact of the pandemic on divorce rates. It is also important to consider other factors that may have influenced divorce rates during the period we analysed. For example, changes in divorce laws, social and cultural changes, and economic factors may have impacted divorce rates.

Below are the results we have gathered, along with data analysis



Based on the above data, it can be concluded that financial issues are the main reason for divorce, accounting for 55.2% of all divorces. This indicates that financial stability and security play a crucial role in the success or failure of a marriage.

The second largest reason for divorce is the loss of love or understanding between partners, accounting for 23% of all divorces. This highlights the importance of communication and emotional connection in a marriage.

Other reasons, such as life becoming impossible with a partner and various other reasons, account for 14.9% and 6.9%, respectively. These reasons may be specific to certain couples and do not represent a significant percentage of reasons compared to financial and emotional issues.

This data may be useful for couples seeking to improve their marriage by addressing financial matters and communication to strengthen their relationship and avoid divorce. Additionally, this data may be helpful for policymakers and researchers in developing interventions and solutions to prevent divorce. In support of this result, one of the interviewees said when she was asked during the interview.

Has the pandemic affected your relationship with your spouse/partner?

*"Unfortunately, the pandemic just revealed what was already broken; we were trying to fix our relationship, which was not in a good place, but due to the lockdown and the amount of time we had to spend at home, home schooling and working from home. It started to be impossible to stay together. We started arguing about everything, and the relationship became toxic,"* said Sophie

Another interviewee said: *"Of course, badly! I never imagined that I will see a different side of my husband. He was very stressed and angry, and sometimes I felt scared to be around him. He was never physically aggressive, but verbally he was. I was shocked with his behaviour, and I know it had to do with the fact that he lost his job and was at home all day doing nothing. On the other hand, I was doing everything, I tried not to complain, but it was just too much; I had to look after the kids all the time alone, help with their homework...and he was just depressed, and he did not even try to look for another job"* Kathryn.

The analysis of the data and interviews indicate that financial stability and communication are crucial factors in the success or failure of a marriage. Financial issues have been identified as the main reason for divorce, indicating the importance of financial stability and security in a marriage. This is further exemplified by the pandemic, where job loss and financial stress contributed significantly to marital conflict and divorce. It is vital for couples to prioritize financial planning and open communication channels to prevent issues from escalating.

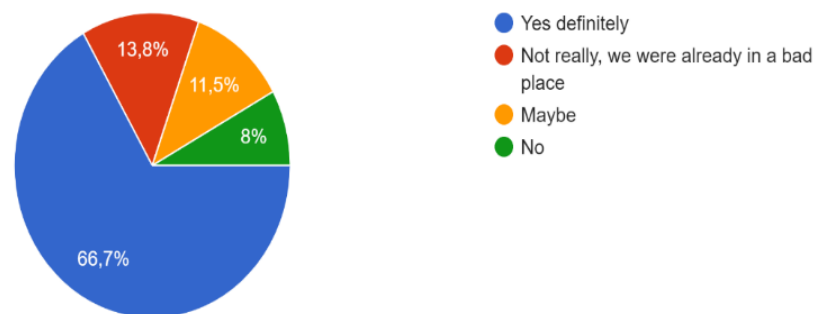
Furthermore, the loss of love or understanding is the second-largest reason for divorce, highlighting the importance of emotional connection and communication in a marriage. The lockdown restrictions due to the pandemic further amplified this issue as couples were forced to spend more time together, leading to increased tension and the revealing of underlying problems.

Policymakers and researchers should use these findings to develop effective interventions and solutions to prevent divorce. This could include education on financial planning and communication skills, providing emotional and mental health support for couples, and implementing policies to support job security and financial stability.

Overall, the data and interview responses emphasize the importance of prioritizing financial stability and communication to maintain a healthy and successful marriage.

Do you think the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic has led you to the decision of divorce?

87 réponses



Based on the responses, it appears that a majority (66.7%) of individuals believe that the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic have led them to the decision to divorce. A smaller percentage (13.8%) attribute their decision to divorce to pre-existing issues in their relationship, while an even smaller percentage (11.5%) are unsure if the pandemic played a role. Only 8% of individuals stated that the pandemic did not contribute to their decision to divorce. Overall, these results suggest that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the decision to divorce for many individuals. In support of this result, the following question was asked during the interview to get a more in-depth answer: Did the lockdown restrictions make it difficult for you and your spouse to maintain a healthy relationship?

Sam, one of the interviewees, said:

*“Definitely, at the beginning, it all felt like it was not going to take more than a week or, maximum, two. I think nobody knew that it would take us two years to get back to normal. At the beginning of the lockdown, we were fine, we enjoyed being together with the kids, enjoying the family time and the fact that we could work from home and just be close to each other, but it quickly changed to stress, fear, pressure... the pandemic was a scary period, and we were supposed to be there for each other, assure each other that we will be fine but instead we were not happy with the amount of time we had to spend together and it felt like there was no escape so divorce was a mutual decision that we both agreed is the best thing” I am sad that we no longer together but also we both knew that there was nothing we could do about it” Sam.*

The results of the survey and the interview response suggest that the pandemic has had a significant impact on marriages and relationships, leading to an increased likelihood of divorce. The stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic, coupled with prolonged lockdown restrictions, have put a significant strain on relationships. Many couples have been unable to maintain healthy relationships due to the pressures and strains of the pandemic, which have resulted in mutual decisions to end their marriages.

The interview response highlights how the lockdown restrictions and the fear and pressure caused by the pandemic changed the dynamics of the relationship. Initially, the interviewee enjoyed spending time with their family, but as the pandemic continued, the stress and fear became too much, and they were no longer happy spending time together. This is a sentiment that many people likely experienced during the pandemic.

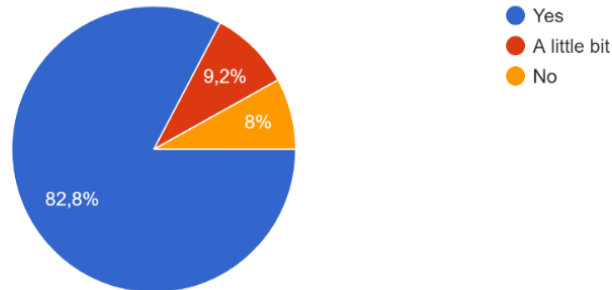
In conclusion, the pandemic has had a profound impact on relationships and marriages, leading to an increased likelihood of divorce. The prolonged lockdown restrictions, coupled with the fear and pressure caused by the pandemic, have severely strained



relationships, making it challenging for couples to maintain healthy relationships. It is essential for individuals to prioritize their mental health and well-being during these challenging times and to seek support if they are struggling in their relationships.

Has the pandemic directly affected your relationship with your spouse/partner?

87 réponses



Based on the responses, it is clear that the pandemic has had a significant impact on a majority of respondents' relationships with their spouse/partner. A total of 82.8% of respondents indicated that their relationship had been directly affected, while only 8% said that it had not been affected at all. Another 9.2% stated that the pandemic had affected their relationship to some degree.

These findings may suggest that the pandemic has put a strain on many romantic relationships. With the stresses of quarantine, social distancing, and economic uncertainty, it is not surprising that many couples are experiencing challenges. However, it is also possible that the pandemic has brought some couples closer together as they navigate this difficult time as a team.

Overall, the data highlights the need for couples to communicate openly and regularly, prioritize self-care, and seek professional support if needed in order to maintain healthy relationships during the pandemic and beyond.

In support of this, we got two interviewees, Oliver and Emma, who shared their opinion on What is the impact of the pandemic on you?

*"the worst impact is my divorce; it is a tough experience; it is sad to let go of the person you thought you were going to spend the rest of your life with, it is hard to see that you can't give your kids the family they need, but at the end of the day I am convinced that we did the best thing for them because we don't want our kids to see their parents fighting all the time, the only thing that made us get married was gone "Love", and it is gone! – Oliver*

*"Most difficult thing is children, I never wanted them to be in a broken family, and I have always wanted to give them the best family. I am sad that they now need to stay a couple of days with me and a couple of days with their father. I miss them when they are not around, and they miss their dad when they are with me, and I know they miss me when they are with their dad. It is a difficult situation for us all." Emma*

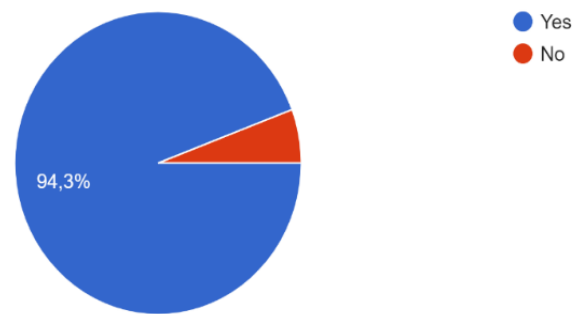
The responses from the survey and the interviews show that the pandemic has had a significant impact on romantic relationships and families. The majority of respondents in the survey indicated that their relationship had been directly affected by the pandemic, indicating that the stress and uncertainty of the situation have led to relationship challenges.

The interviews with Oliver and Emma illustrate this impact further, as both have experienced the breakup of their marriage due to the pandemic. Oliver speaks of the difficulty of letting go of the person he thought he would spend his life with while also acknowledging the importance of ending the relationship for the sake of their children. Emma similarly speaks of the challenge of raising children in a split household and the emotional toll it takes on everyone involved.

These interviews highlight the need for couples and families to communicate openly and prioritize their relationships during this time. The stress and uncertainty of the pandemic can put a strain on even the strongest relationships, but seeking support and prioritizing self-care can help couples and families weather the storm. Couples may also need to be open to making difficult decisions, such as ending a relationship if it is ultimately in the best interest of everyone involved.

Have financial difficulties caused by the pandemic played a role in divorce or separation?

87 réponses



The data shows that a significant majority of the participants (94.3%) reported that financial difficulties caused by the pandemic played a role in their divorce or separation. This suggests that the economic impact of the pandemic has had a significant impact on the stability of relationships. It is important to note that the sample size is relatively small (87 participants), so further research is needed to confirm these findings. Nonetheless, the results highlight the need for support and resources for couples experiencing financial stress during the pandemic. To support this result, a similar question was asked during the interview to gain a more in depth understanding of the financial difficulties caused by the pandemic -Have the changes in work or living arrangements caused by the pandemic had an impact on your relationship?

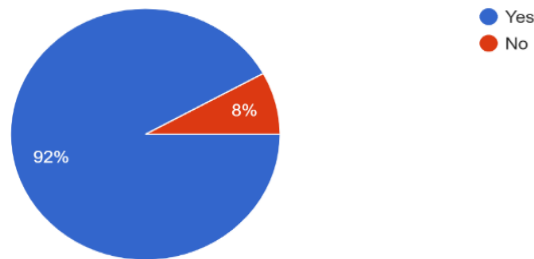
*"My husband lost his job, and my income was not enough... he did not want to look for another job, and he was just sitting at home all day when I was doing everything by myself. It was horrible to see him like that. I tried to help, but he pushed me away every time, and he was very pessimistic about everything during lockdown; my husband started behaving differently, and it was impossible to continue with him; life became impossible for him. Divorce was my idea, and I don't regret it; he was always a lazy person, but it got worse when he lost his job and sat at home. I did not mind helping him until he was able to find something, but he did not even try... I could not accept that," Dorri.*

Based on the data and the interview response, it appears that the financial impact of the pandemic has been a significant contributor to divorce and other relationship issues. The loss of employment and income, combined with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic, may have put a strain on many couples. Additionally, changes in work and living arrangements may have disrupted routines and made it more difficult for people to manage their relationships effectively.

The interview response highlights some of the specific ways in which financial difficulties can affect a relationship. When one partner is out of work, and the other is supporting the household, it can create feelings of resentment and stress. If the unemployed partner is not actively seeking employment or contributing to the household in other ways, this can exacerbate those feelings. The pandemic and resulting lockdowns may have made it difficult for couples to escape these issues or seek help from outside sources.

Overall, the results suggest that financial support and resources may be critical for couples who are struggling during the pandemic. This could include access to employment services, counselling or therapy to address relationship issues, and financial assistance to help cover essential expenses. Further research is needed to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on relationships and what types of interventions may be most effective in supporting couples during this challenging time.

Have strict lock down measures and spending more time with your spouse/partner exposed issues in your relationship?  
87 réponses



The data shows that a majority of individuals (92%) who underwent strict lockdown measures and spent more time with their spouse or partner have experienced issues in their relationship. Only 8% of respondents reported having no issues. This suggests that prolonged periods of confinement and increased proximity to one's partner may have negative impacts on overall relationship quality. Further research could explore specific factors contributing to these issues and potential solutions to mitigate them. A similar question was asked during the interview to get more information; the below answer was from Richard.

Have the changes in work or living arrangements caused by the pandemic had an impact on your relationship?

*"I had to work from home because my job allowed it, but I ended up working more than 8 hours because I had to adapt to the new normal and distraction at home.... This means that I spend most of my day and sometimes night on the computer. My ex-wife was also working from home and had to look after the kids because her job was more flexible than mine, she did not have to video call her team or clients, but I had to. Both of us working from home and having our kids studying also from home was too much on me and my partner at the time. We both could not find the time for each other, we were just running around, trying to get things done, but we felt like we were running in circles. 6 months into the pandemic, we started feeling like we just lived with each other, we paid the bills, and that is it; more like housemates than a husband and wife. We no longer went on dates, looked after each other, or even found time to hear about each other's day. We both felt terrible, we both felt responsible, and I am not going to lie; we tried to save our marriage, but we could not. We were waiting for the pandemic to be over so that we could go back to our normal life, but it was clear to us at that time that it was never going to be over. Here, in England, there was one lockdown and after another, and we were unable to go anywhere, we could not visit anyone, no one was allowed to come to us. We basically felt like we were in prison, and that is when we decided that it was for the best to get a divorce, and we did. It took us almost a year, but we got there at the end." Richard*

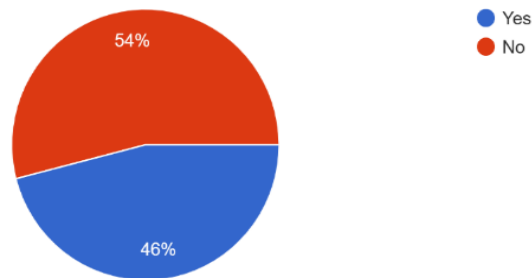
Richard's response is a clear example of how changes in work and living arrangements caused by the pandemic can negatively impact relationships. Richard's work-from-home situation led to him spending more time on the computer, which left him little time for his wife and family. The lack of quality time together led to a feeling of detachment between the couple and a strain on their relationship.

Furthermore, the pandemic restrictions in England added to the stress of their situation, as they were unable to see anyone or leave their home. This created a sense of feeling trapped and isolated, which ultimately contributed to their decision to get a divorce.

Richard's story highlights the need for more research into understanding the specific factors behind the strain experienced in relationships during the pandemic. With such knowledge, it may be possible to design protective measures against such strains or aid in developing solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of prolonged confinement to prevent divorces like Richard's.

Have you sought counselling or therapy for relationship issues during the pandemic?

87 réponses



Out of the 87 participants, 46% responded positively that they sought counselling or therapy for their relationship issues during the pandemic. On the other hand, the remaining 54% stated that they did not seek any professional help for their relationship problems.

This indicates that there is a significant proportion of individuals who recognized the need for counselling or therapy to manage their relationship issues during the pandemic. It also highlights a significant portion of the population who may not have sought help even though they may have needed it.

Further analysis of the data could include identifying the demographic characteristics of those who sought counselling or therapy during the pandemic and examining the specific types of relationship issues they faced. The reasons for not seeking professional help could also be explored in more detail to identify any barriers to accessing mental health services for relationship problems.

In this support of the above result, one of the interviewees said when asked;

Did the social isolation and lack of access to support networks contribute to the decision to end your marriage?

*"Social isolation definitely contributed; I would not say that we were doing great before the pandemic, but divorce never crossed our minds until we were obliged to face each other's flaws every single day; we had to see each other and deal with our issues alone because there was no one we can meet and phone calls were not enough. We considered therapy and relationship advisers, but we only attended one session, which was on Zoom; again, this did not help because it felt like all our lives were on either video via Zoom or team or phone calls. We both decided to get a divorce, and we did during the pandemic; it took longer because the court was closed, which felt like forever." James*

The interviewee's response supports the result obtained from the survey that social isolation and lack of access to support networks could have contributed to the decision to end their marriage. This highlights the need for mental health services to be accessible and available during times like the pandemic.

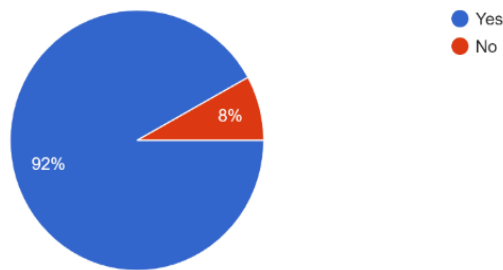
The interviewee's experience of attending a counselling session on Zoom also suggests that virtual counselling may not be effective for everyone. It may be difficult to establish a therapeutic relationship through online platforms, and some individuals may prefer face-to-face counselling.

Furthermore, the study could also explore the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of individuals in relationships. The prolonged stress and uncertainty caused by the pandemic could have exacerbated pre-existing mental health conditions and led to new ones. This could have further contributed to the need for counselling or therapy.

In conclusion, the survey and interview highlight the importance of mental health support for individuals experiencing relationship issues during the pandemic. Further research could be conducted to explore the impact of the pandemic on mental health and to identify effective ways of providing mental health services during times of crisis.

Have the changes in work or living arrangements caused by the pandemic had an impact on your relationship?

87 réponses



Based on the responses of the 87 participants, it is evident that the changes in work or living arrangements caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on their relationships. A vast majority of 92% of the participants reported that the pandemic-related changes had affected their relationships in some way. Only 8% of the participants stated that the pandemic had not caused any impact on their relationships.

These findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic and its related adjustments have had an important impact on the way people interact with each other within their relationships. Further research could explore the specific ways in which the pandemic has affected relationships and the factors that have contributed to these changes.

In support of the above result, Anna, one of the interviewees, answered when asked;

Were there any specific challenges that arose during the pandemic that led to the breakdown of your marriage?

*"After seven years of marriage, a 29-year-old woman and her husband filed for divorce, they'd never discussed splitting up before the pandemic, but during the first lockdown, their marriage went through the biggest challenge of their lives as Anna said, "I was more stressed, and it was all just building up. We loved each other, so divorce was not our first thought; we thought maybe a trial separation would make things go back to normal, so my partner.... Sorry, my ex-partner decided to go and stay with his parents and see if we could go back to normal with some time apart, but very quickly, we realised it was going to be permanent. We both felt happier and relieved, a feeling that you should not feel when you want to stay in the relationship, so we both decided to get divorced. So, after the pandemic, we did."Anna*

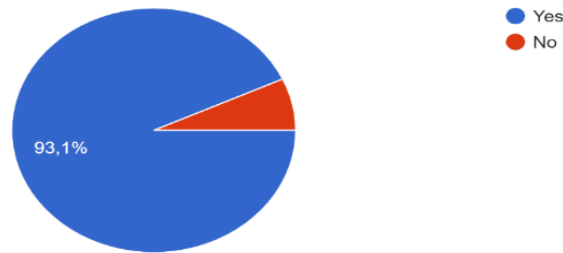
The responses from the 87 participants and the contribution from Anna demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on relationships. The high response rate of 92% shows that most people have experienced changes in their relationships due to pandemic-related changes such as working from home, social distancing, and lockdowns. This indicates that the pandemic has affected not only people's physical health but also their mental and emotional well-being, which in turn has affected their relationships.

Anna's account of her divorce further highlights the challenges that couples have faced during the pandemic. The stress of the pandemic and the uncertainty it brought may have magnified existing issues within relationships, leading to breakdowns. This suggests that the pandemic has not only created new challenges for relationships but has also exposed underlying issues that may have been ignored or not dealt with earlier.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has put relationships under significant strain. However, it is critical to acknowledge that not all relationships will experience the same level of strain, and some may even strengthen amidst the pandemic. As such, further research is required to understand the nuances of how the pandemic has affected relationships and what factors contribute to these changes.

Do you think the pandemic will have a lasting effect on divorce rates in England?

87 réponses



Based on the responses from the 87 participants in the study, a vast majority, 93.1%, believe that the pandemic will have a lasting effect on divorce rates in England. It is possible that this is due to the fact that the pandemic has caused a lot of stress on individuals and families, which can lead to conflict and strain on relationships. Additionally, the pandemic has brought on financial difficulties for many, which can put additional pressure on marriages.

However, it is important to note that this study only includes the opinions of a small sample size of 87 participants, so the results may not be representative of the wider population's beliefs or the actual divorce rates in England. Further research with a larger, more diverse sample size may be needed for more accurate data analysis on the impact of the pandemic on divorce rates in England. In support of this data, Emma said during the interview, when asked: Do you think the pandemic will have a lasting impact on the decision of marriage?

*"I think in England, a lot of young people recently are reluctant to get married, and this is not necessarily related to only the pandemic that we experienced, but I think that the rise of divorce, which is a fact that we can't deny probably will scare a lot of young couples to get married. I hope this won't be the case, but I am afraid it is somehow, and I have seen a lot of my friends hesitant to get married and prefer to live together instead. It is sad because marriage is really beautiful, and I am still positive even though I got divorced, but I will always believe that marriage as an institution is amazing" Emma.*

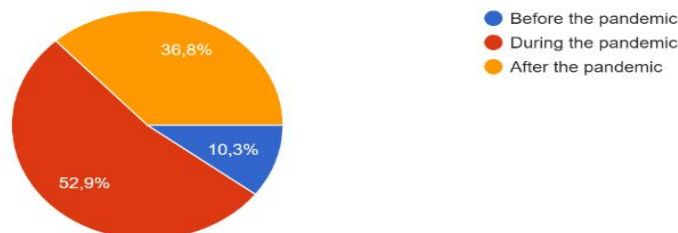
Based on the responses from the study and Emma's interview, it appears that there is a belief that the pandemic has had a negative impact on marriages and could potentially lead to a lasting effect on divorce rates in England. The stress and financial difficulties caused by the pandemic may have put additional strain on relationships, which could cause some couples to seek divorce.

However, it is important to note that this study only has a small sample size, and further research must be conducted to accurately assess the impact of the pandemic on divorce rates in England. Additionally, Emma's interview raises the point that young people may be hesitant to get married due to rising divorce rates, which could also contribute to a potential decrease in the number of marriages in the future.

Overall, it is difficult to predict what the long-term impact of the pandemic will be on marriages and divorce rates in England, but the study and Emma's interview suggest that there may be some negative effects. It remains to be seen whether these effects will be short-term or long-term.

when have you decided to get a divorce?

87 réponses



Based on the study conducted with 87 participants, it can be concluded that the majority of participants (52.9%) decided to get a divorce during the pandemic. This suggests that the pandemic may have put a strain on relationships and led to an increase in divorce rates. However, it is also worth noting that a significant portion of participants (36.8%) decided to get a divorce after the pandemic, indicating that the pandemic may have caused underlying issues in relationships to surface. Only a small percentage of participants (10.3%) decided to get a divorce before the pandemic. Further research could explore the reasons behind these decisions and how they may vary across different demographics and cultural backgrounds. To support this, this question was asked during the interview, and this was Annie and Steve's comment when asked How has your marriage been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

*"There was a lot of argument over silly things, like who did the washing up yesterday and who took the kids to bed. These arguments never stopped, and they became unbearable. I think the amount of time we had to stay indoors quickly started to feel like a prison; we both loved each other so much, and we have two beautiful kids that we do anything for. We had no idea that spending 24/7 with each other would quickly feel like a nightmare. Not being able to go whenever we want or meet other people, or even go to work and spend time apart didn't make us closer; it ripped us apart. It did not take us more than 4 months to know that our marriage was over. We both were under a lot of stress, work, home schooling kids, helping them with homework, house chores, everything felt out of control. We could not do it together, so we decided to get a divorce. We are still good friends for our kids..." Annie*

*"A lot of arguments about everything about a year before the pandemic, and we both thought of getting a divorce, but when the pandemic hit, we were not able to do it. She started complaining about everything I did, and the situation got worst during the lockdown. My partner was not happy, and eventually, I started to feel trapped in our marriage. Prior to the lockdown, we considered divorce, but I think the amount of time we had to spend together just made us see each other's flaws every day for so long that we both started to hate each. It was awful...divorce was the solution, and we got divorced immediately after the lockdown," Steve said.*

Based on the interviews with Annie and Steve and the study conducted with 87 participants, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on relationships. The strain of being cooped up indoors for extended periods, working from home, and juggling family demands, including homeschooling and household chores, has pushed many couples to their limits. The lack of personal space and the increased exposure to each other's flaws and idiosyncrasies have been overwhelming for some relationships.

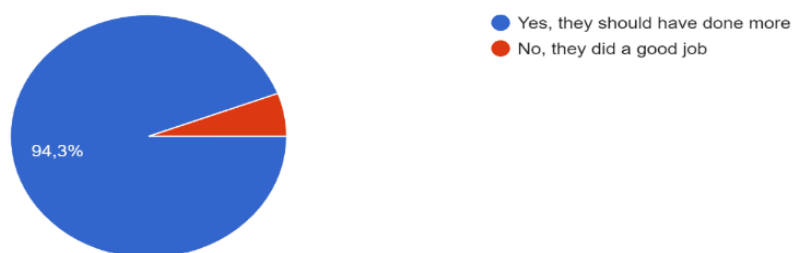
The study shows that a significant majority of participants decided to get a divorce during or after the pandemic, indicating that the pandemic has played a role in the increase in divorce rates. However, it is also worth noting that a small percentage of participants made this decision before the pandemic, suggesting that other underlying issues could have been magnified by the pandemic situation.

The interviews with Annie and Steve reflect the same pattern, where pre-existing marital issues have been worsened by the pandemic. Both cited ongoing arguments and frustrations before the pandemic, which grew into unbearable conflicts during the lockdown. The pandemic has served as a catalyst for strained relationships to unravel or break down.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique set of challenges for couples. For some, these challenges have proved insurmountable, resulting in an increased number of divorces. Future research could explore specific factors, such as economic concerns or pre-existing mental health issues, that contribute to this trend, as well as any potential long-term effects on the well-being of those who have gone through a divorce during the pandemic.

Do you believe the UK government should have offered more support to couples experiencing relationship difficulties during and post the pandemic?

87 réponses



Based on the study conducted with 87 participants, it can be concluded that the majority of participants (94.3%) believe that the UK government should have offered more support to couples experiencing relationship difficulties during and post the pandemic. This suggests that there is a perceived lack of support for couples going through relationship difficulties during this challenging time. Only a small percentage of participants (5.7%) believe that the government did a good job in providing support. Further research could explore the specific types of support that participants believe should have been offered and how they may vary across different demographics and cultural backgrounds.

Sam's comments on the above question during our interview

*Sam said, 'We tried counselling, but it did not work; we needed to get out and see people. Probably counselling in person could have helped. But I did not find relationship therapy useful over the phone.'*

Similar to the above opinion, Dorri said

*"We could have benefited a lot from a regular relationship adviser, but there was a waiting list, and unfortunately, we did not seem to be a priority."*

Sam and Dorri's comments highlight the challenges faced by couples going through relationship difficulties during the pandemic. While counselling may be helpful for some, it may not be effective for others who may need more face-to-face support and interaction. Additionally, limited resources and long waiting lists for relationship advisers may lead to feelings of neglect and frustration among couples seeking help. These comments suggest that there may be a need for a variety of support options tailored to the individual needs of couples, as well as improved availability of resources and prioritization of support for those in need.

Based on the analysis of available data, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on divorce rates in England (London as a case study). The lockdown measures and social distancing restrictions have put immense pressure on many couples, leading to increased conflicts and, ultimately, higher divorce rates. Studies show that the pandemic created a perfect storm for marital instability, with factors such as financial strain, increased domestic violence, and mental health issues exacerbating existing relationship problems. Furthermore, the pandemic led to a backlog of cases in the family court system, causing delays in divorce proceedings for many couples.

London, being one of the most populous cities in England, experienced its fair share of the impact of the pandemic on divorce rates. While there is little data specific to London's divorce rates, the trends within the city likely reflect the national picture. From the available information, it is clear that the pandemic has led to a significant increase in divorce rates in the country, with some predicting that these numbers will only continue to rise as the pandemic continues to influence people's lives.

## 5. Limitations

The limitations of this research study may include the sample size; because the study is descriptive in nature, it may not be possible to make generalizations about the entire population of divorced couples in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited Geographic Focus: The study focused only on people residing in London, which may not represent the entire country in terms of socio-demographics and economic factors.



Lack of generalizability: With a small sample size, it may be difficult to make broad conclusions about the population as a whole. The findings of the study may not apply to others outside of the sample.

### **5.1 Ethical Considerations**

The participants' identities were kept confidential (their names were changed to keep their identities protected), and the data was used only for research purposes.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

It can be concluded that due to the effects of Covid-19, there has been a surge in the number of divorce cases in the UK. The objective of this study has been to determine these changes in divorce rates because of various factors such as mental health issues, lack of socialization and poor financial conditions. Another objective of this study has been to establish the relationship between various external components like financial status or employment stability with the rising number of divorce cases. Moreover, this study has focused on emotional and psychological symptoms and effects that have been affecting families and individuals after the outbreak of Covid-19 as per the objective of the study. Moreover, it has been found that due to lack of employment opportunities, and financial stability of people, it has forced them to get divorced. Growing mental health issues are also another factor that has resulted in increased cases of divorces in this country.

This study has also identified a wide range of strategies that can help all these families and people of the UK to deal with divorces, emotional and other challenges. The study has provided authentic and relevant primary quantitative data with the effective use of statistical tools for providing better understanding. Henceforth, this study can be used by other scholars and academic researchers in order to examine and investigate the data for further implications of it for reducing the number of divorce cases. A key limitation of this study is that it has not followed the steps of thematic analysis in order to generate relative themes. Besides that, data has been extracted only from 87 people who reside in the UK, more specifically in London, which has been identified as another limitation of this research. Therefore, this study can be conducted again by ensuring the participation of a wider population.

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