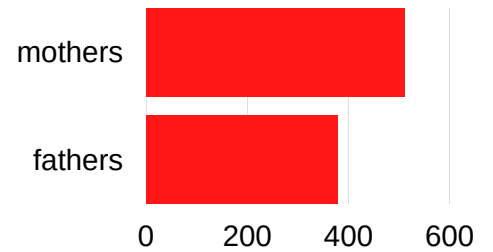


SAFESORRY: Preliminary results of the spring 2022 data collection

During the spring of 2022, a total of **872 parents** participated in the SAFE-SORRY research, who all had at least one adolescent who was in the penultimate or last year of secondary schooling. They were invited to fill out questionnaires on their parenting as well as their perception of the economic and social world. Through the collective effort of these parents, we gathered first insights into the **experiences, challenges and worries** of these parents related to the **upbringing of their teenagers in a changing social world.**

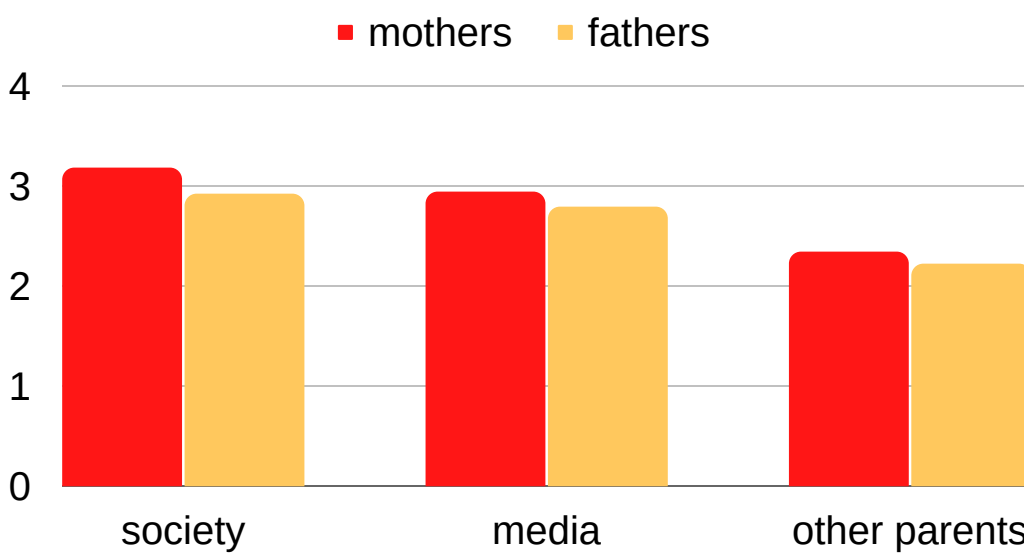
Who participated?



mean age parents **49.5 years**
mean age adolescents **17 years**

Parents under pressure?

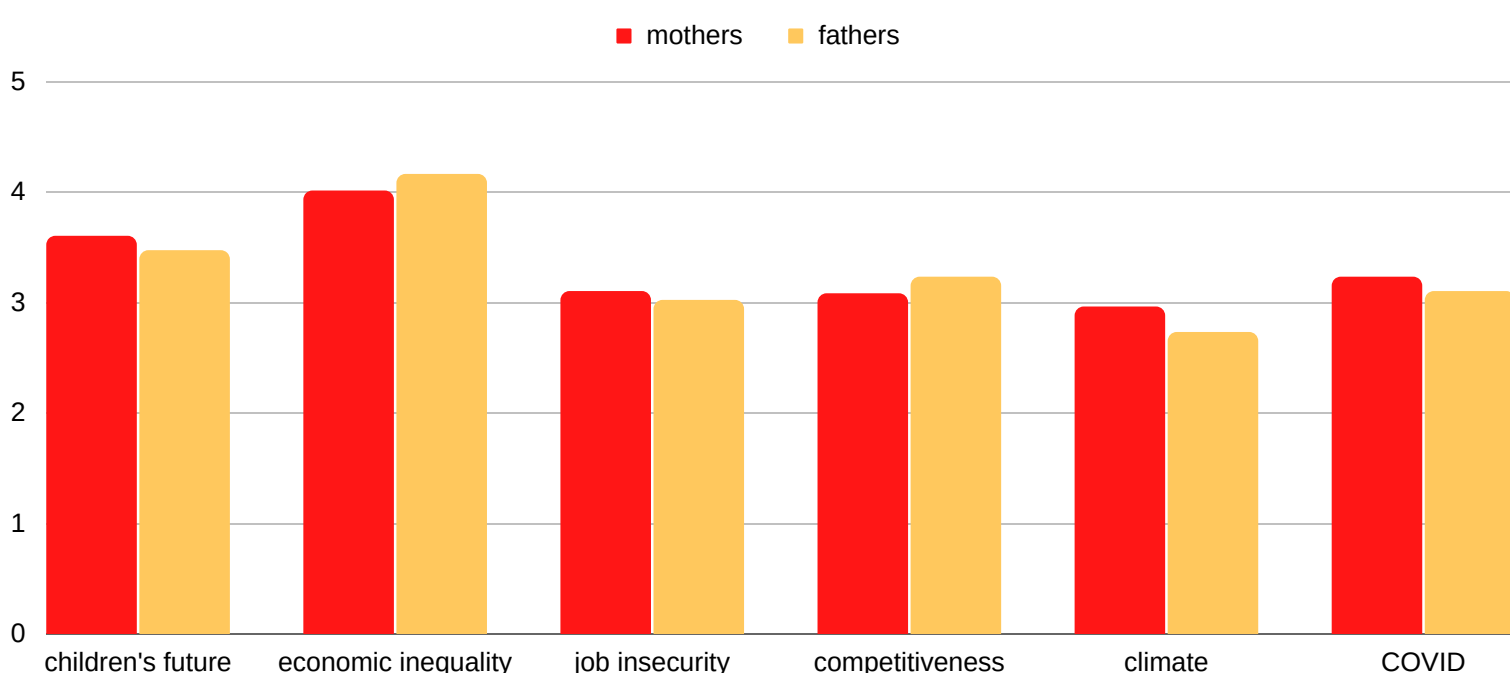
In the media, we read about how parents are nowadays increasingly experiencing pressure to be a perfect parent. In the sociological literature, it is claimed that we are living in an era of intensive parenting, where parents are expected to be highly involved in their children's upbringing. Because of these norms, expectations and judgements, parents may **experience pressure to be the "perfect" parent.** In our research, we assessed parents' perceptions of pressure coming from different sources (society, media, other parents), by inviting them to indicate whether they agree with items such as "society wants me to be perfect as a parent", on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The results of this survey are depicted below:



As can be seen in the figure, the parents in our sample indicate that they especially experience **pressure coming from society** in general as well as from media, and to a lesser degree from other parents. Our results suggest that these parents experience **average amounts of pressure**, as the mean levels are around the middle point of the 1-to-5 scale. However, it is important to note that there is **much variability** in the pressure that parents are experiencing: whereas some parents reported experiencing very high levels of pressure, others reported experiencing almost no pressure at all. Further, **mothers reported on average more pressure than fathers**, illustrating that societal expectations about parenthood are different for mothers and fathers. A next step for us, then, is to investigate how these experiences of pressure translate into their parenting: do parents who experience high levels of pressure raise their children in different ways than those experiencing low levels of pressure? These are questions that we aim to address during the coming months.

Parents' worries about their child's future

Over the past few years, we have been going through several consecutive crises: we first had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the start of the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis in Europe. As a consequence, the economic prospects for the future may seem fairly bleak – and all this is overshadowed by a climate crisis. In other words, there are **many reasons for parents to worry** about their children's future. Parts of our questionnaire also focused on **parents' uncertainties** in order to gain insight into potential reasons why parents may be worried. In the figure below, we present some results on this topic:



All items have been filled out on a scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). As can be seen in the figure, many mothers and fathers indicate being **worried about today's children**, generally agreeing with statements such as “These are troubling times. Parents these days have reasons to be concerned”. Further, parents especially **perceive the Belgian society as highly unequal**, agreeing with statements such as “In Belgium, there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor”. In the economic realm as well, parents seem rather concerned about the **labor market** (e.g., “In Belgium, a lot of people feel insecure about the future of their jobs”) and they see our society as **competitive**.

Apart from these economy-related worries, we also focused on other types of worries. As the study was conducted in spring 2022, many parents were still fairly worried about COVID. Scores for **climate-related worries** were somewhat lower, although still relatively close to the middle point of the scale, indicating that a significant number of parents are concerned about climate change as well.

A subgroup of our sample is being followed up across a period of 3 years, which will allow us to see how these concerns **evolve across time**. Further, we also look forward to examining whether such worries may push parents to educate their children differently, in order to prepare them for a social world that they believe is becoming increasingly challenging.

To be continued!

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