

## New results of VUB time-use study Over-70s embrace video chatting

At the end of March, the VUB research group TOR – with hbits, a VUB spin-off – began a time-use study ([www.everydaylife.eu](http://www.everydaylife.eu))

to investigate people's daily lives during the coronavirus confinement measures. Anais Glorieux: "We analysed how telephone and virtual contact have gained a place in our daily lives. It's noticeable that the over-70s have easily bridged the quarantine through contacts via phone and video chat."

At the beginning of May, 2,675 people filled in a preliminary questionnaire, and 633 respondents completed a diary for at least one full day, resulting in time-use data for a total of 3,352 days. Respondents were asked to register every activity they did over a period of seven days, noting the start and end time. After every registered activity, a number of contextual questions were asked. This gave respondents the opportunity to indicate if they spoke with someone during this activity via telephone or a video conversation (eg Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom...)

### Findings

- There is an average of 4 hours 16 minutes per day of activities during which participants speak to someone via phone or videoconference.
- The more family members in a household, the less time people spend per day on virtual contact (see table 1). People living alone spend the most time on virtual contact (4h 42m). Those living with their parents (3h 48m) and couples with children (3h 56m) spend the least time on this.
- People aged between 51 and 70 communicate on average 40 minutes less via phone or video chat than those under 50 or over 70. It is notable that over-70s are bridging the quarantine through maintaining contact at a distance.
- Contact with colleagues: Working people continue to stick to the regular 9-to-5 work rhythm (see figure 1).
- Contact with colleagues: The working population spends more time on virtual contact than people without paid employment – because they spend much of their day communicating with colleagues: half of the average working day (2h 44m). (The average working day is 5h 24m, because the study includes those working part-time.)
- Contact with colleagues: There is a peak between 9.00 and 11.00. During that time, 40% of working people have telephone or virtual contact with one or more colleagues. The curve falls steeply at midday and there is a second peak in the afternoon. After 18.00, only a small number have contact with colleagues.
- Contact with friends and family: On average we spend 1h 27m a day on the phone or video chatting with friends and 1h 14m with family members – primarily those we don't live with.

- Young people (aged 12 to 30) and those without children spend the most time on contact with friends. Older age categories (51-70 and 70+) spend more time on contact with family members.
- Contact with friends and family is often combined with other activities, primarily watching TV, working and studying, eating and drinking or domestic chores (see table 2).
- The peak is in the evening after 19.00 (see figure 2).
- There is no significant difference between the days of the week: time spent on phone or video contact with friends and family is as high during the week as at the weekend.

**Call for participation: We are still looking for participants for this research. This will allow us to study evolutions in behaviour, including after various exit measures are implemented.**

The TOR research group at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the study bureau hbits are researching the social consequences of the coronavirus crisis. What are the impacts on your daily life? Join the study and tell us how your life has changed, at [www.everydaylife.eu](http://www.everydaylife.eu)

**Contact**

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Table 1: Time spent on contact via telephone or videoconferencing

	Average hours/day
<b>Professional status</b>	
Working	4:50
Not working	3:09
<b>Household composition</b>	
Living alone	4:43
Living with partner, without children	4:25
Single parent	4:20
Living with partner & children	3:57
Living with parents	3:49
Other family situation	4:03
<b>Age</b>	
12-30	4:20
31-50	4:36
51-70	3:48
70+	4:18
<b>Total</b>	4:16

Figure 1: Percentage of working population that has telephone or virtual contact with colleagues during a weekday

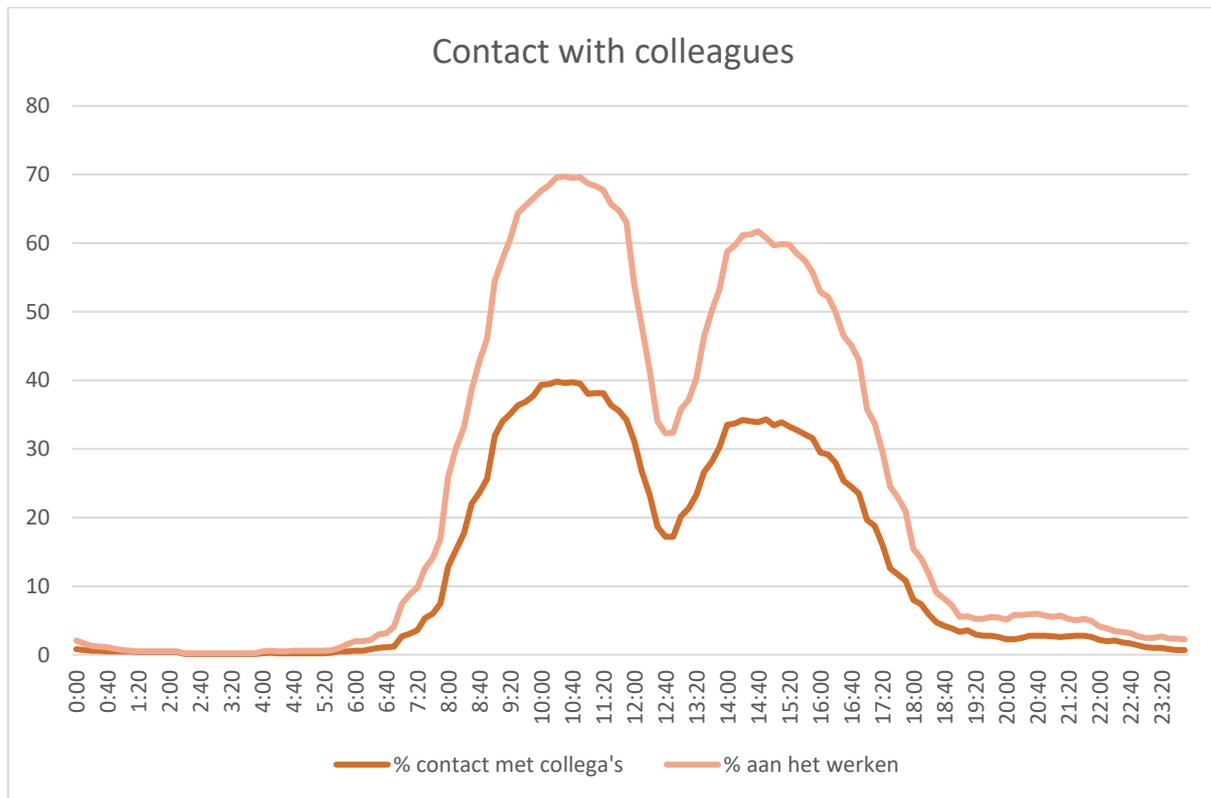


Table 2: Percentage of telephone and video conversations during various activities

	% of communication with friends	% of communication with family
Watching TV (live, online, streaming...)	15.1	11.7
Communication	15.0	19.2
Work & study	13.3	8.2
Eating & drinking	13.3	15.5
Domestic chores	12.8	15.5
Hobbies	11.4	8.7
Sleeping & personal care	3.5	3.3
Having a conversation	3.3	5.1
Playing & gaming	2.9	1.6
Resting	2.5	1.7
Walking & doing sport	2.2	2.0
Caring for children & adults	1.5	3.2
Excursions, cultural & religious activities	1.2	1.1

Shopping & using services	1.0	1.2
Travelling & other activities	0.9	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 2: Percentage of the population that has telephone or virtual contact with friends and families in a day

