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Bereavement
Network

Effects of childhood bereavement on wellbeing

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‘I mean I love my life as it is now and I know it’s been hard and I know I haven’t been the greatest person but I do think I’ve grown and I’m the person that I am now because my dad died, and I’d like to think that he’d be proud of me for who I am’. (13 years on)

‘I mean you experience your lows but once you’ve experienced the lows the happiness is, you sort of appreciate it more’. (11 years on)

(Brewer and Sparkes, 2012)



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What do we want to know?



- How many children?
- What does it mean for their future life? (risks)
- What helps/hinders?
- What does it mean?



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Types of quantitative studies of bereaved children

- Retrospective studies of young people/adults with poor outcomes
- Studies that recruit young people known to be bereaved and match them with controls
- Cohort studies
- Nationwide studies





- Mixed picture – opposite effects
- Long lasting – and emerging
- Increased risk of negative outcomes?
 - Lower self-esteem
 - Lower feelings of being in control of life
 - Higher rates of diagnosable mental health difficulties
 - Increased visits to GP, accidents, somaticisation
 - Increased risky or disruptive behaviour
 - Increased risk of early mortality



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Why cohort studies?

Advantages	Disadvantages
Weren't sampled because of bereavement	Changing mortality patterns?
Diverse variables	Low numbers?
Possibility of complex models	Attrition rates?
Predictors as well as outcomes	
Outcomes over time – life course approach	
The data are there already!	

How to present the data...



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Examples...

- 1970 cohort (Parsons, 2012)
- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (Jones et al 2013)
- CBN proposal



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- Children's Grief Awareness Week
- #MakeTime2Listen
- Difficult emotions – disrupted communication?

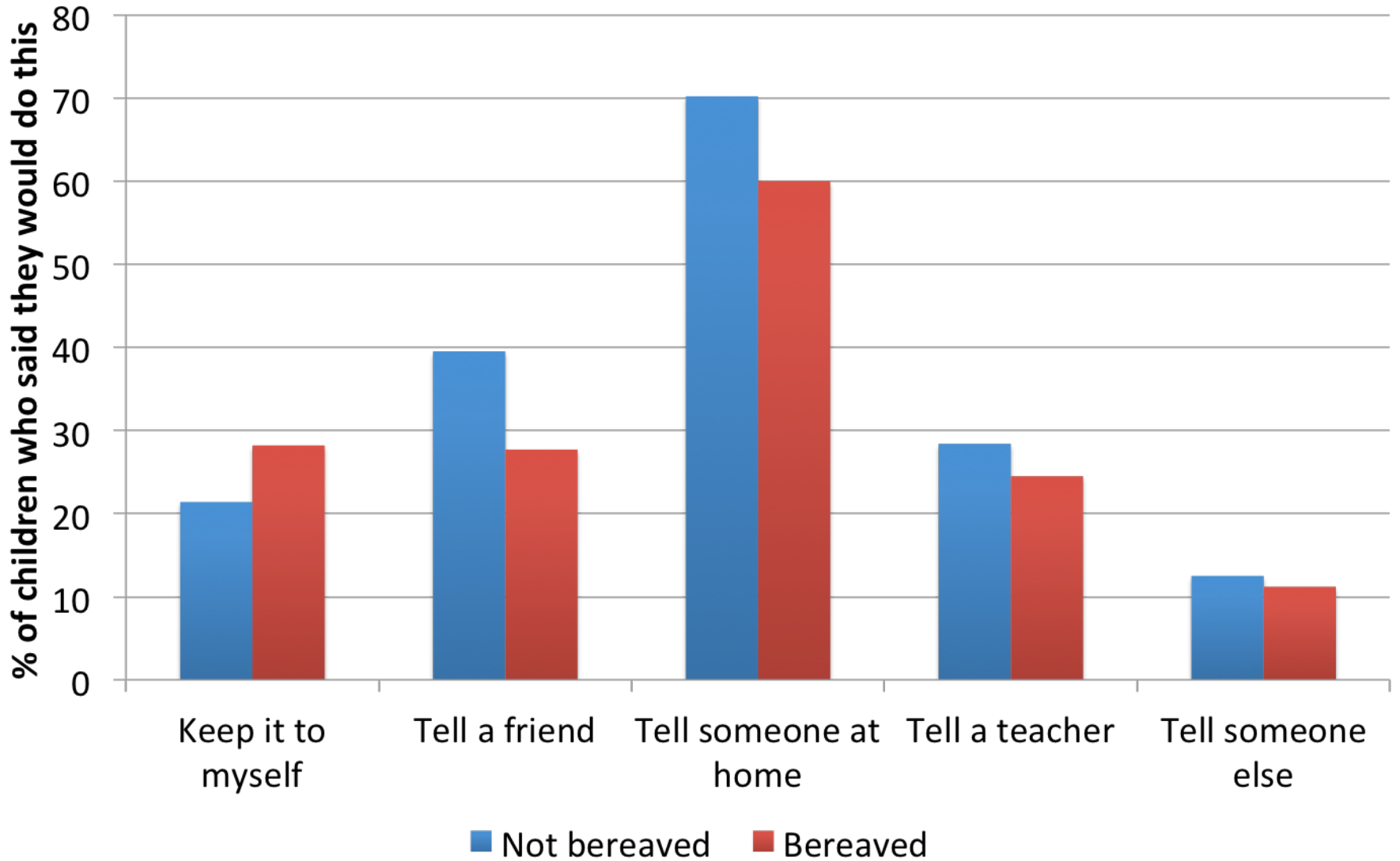
Do parentally bereaved children in the MCS differ from non-bereaved children in the way they communicate worries and feelings?



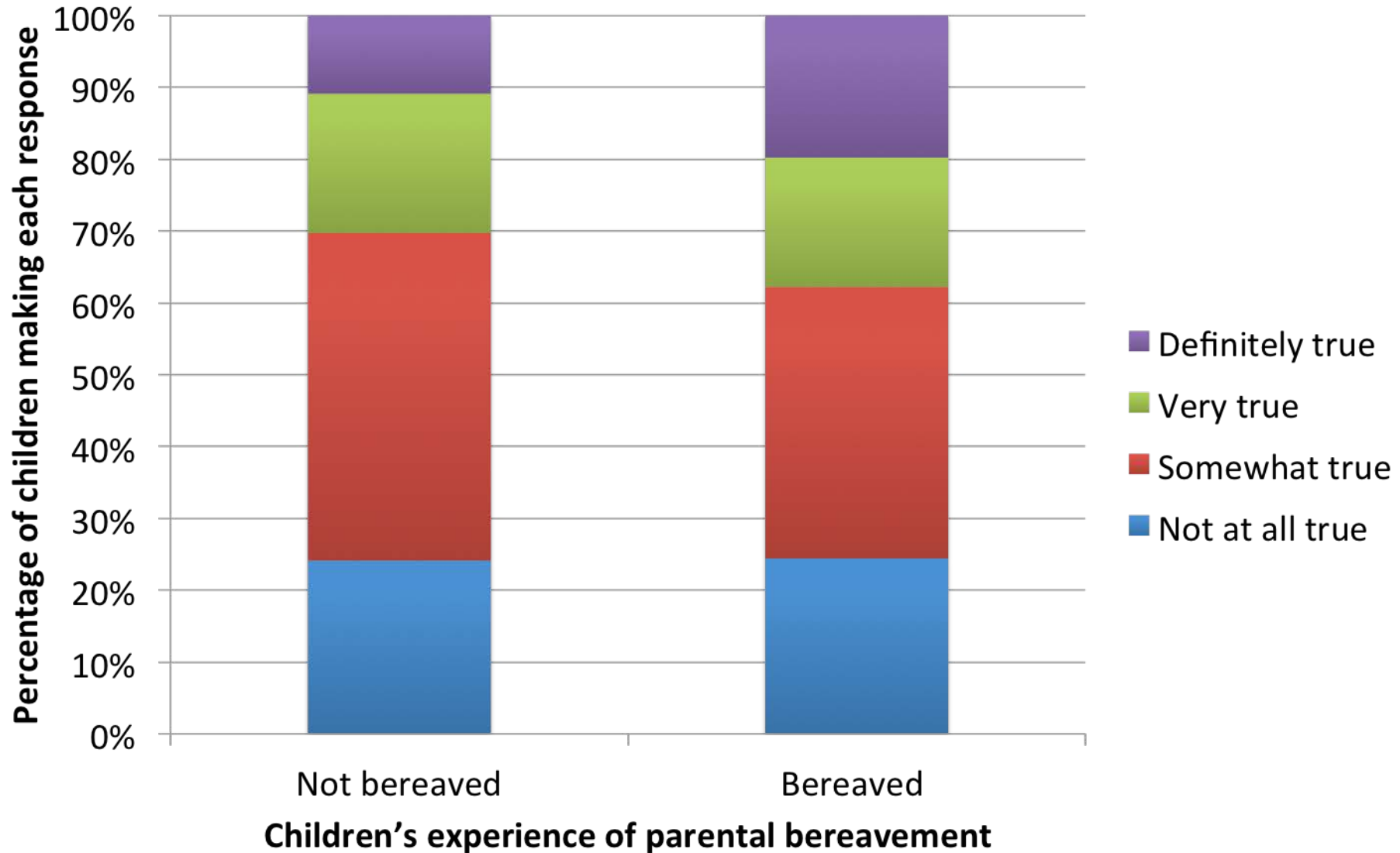
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- N=13,469
- Weighted sample (sampling design & attrition)
- Independent variable: natural mother/father deceased (1.6 % of the sample)
- Dependent variables (child report)
 - I do not show my emotions to others
 - What do you do if you are worried about something?

Children's responses to the question 'What do you do if you are worried about something?'



Children's degree of agreement with the statement 'I do not show my emotions to others'





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- After controlling for gender, the odds of bereaved children
 - not telling a friend about a worry were 1.605 times the odds of non-bereaved children [CI: 1.069-2.409]
 - not telling someone at home about a worry were 1.539 times those of non-bereaved children [CI: 1.049-2.257]
 - saying they definitely don't show their emotions to others were 1.94 times the odds of a non-bereaved child [CI: 1.072-3.510].

Children whose mum or dad has died are

less likely to show their emotions to others



less likely to share a worry with someone at home



and less likely to share a worry with a friend



When they're ready to share, we need to

#MakeTime2Listen

www.childrensgriefawarenessweek.com

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

 **Children's Grief**
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