Children’s views on their lives and well-being in 17 countries:

Key Messages from each country

April, 2016
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Introduction

What is the Children's Worlds survey?

Children’s Worlds, the International Survey of Children’s Well-Being (ISCWeB), is an international study about children’s lives and well-being from their own perspectives, meaning children’s subjective well-being.

The project fills a substantial gap in international comparative research evidence on children’s own views of their lives and well-being. The study aims to collect solid and representative data on children’s lives and daily activities and on their perceptions and evaluations of their lives. The purpose is to improve children's well-being by creating awareness among children, their parents and their communities, opinion leaders, decision makers, professionals and the general public.

History of the Children’s Worlds project

The project began in 2009 when a group of researchers held a meeting hosted by UNICEF Regional Office to discuss the potential need for the survey. One of the products of the meeting was an early version of a survey questionnaire. This first draft questionnaire was tested and piloted in the summer and autumn of 2010 in six countries1.

In December 2010, the findings of these pilot surveys were presented and discussed at a meeting hosted by World Vision, Germany and this led to a second draft version of the questionnaire which was then piloted in the first half of 2011 in five countries2.

In October 2011, members of the research group reviewed the learning from the second pilot and drew up a third set of the survey questionnaires with separate versions for children aged 8, 10 and 12 years. These questionnaires were then used in a range of 14 countries3 for a large-scale deep pilot of the survey. Over 34,000 children participated in this wave of the survey.

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1 Brazil, England, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Spain
2 Germany, Romania, South Africa, Spain and Turkey.
3 Algeria, Canada, Chile, England, Israel, Nepal, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Uganda, United States
The pilot survey was reviewed and learning from this review was used to refine the questionnaires, leading to three versions of the questionnaire for different age groups that have been used in the current wave of the survey.

**The current wave of the survey**

The current wave of the project is funded by the Jacobs Foundation and consists of a survey of children aged 8 to 12 which so far has been completed by just over 54,000 children in 16 countries. The survey is currently under way in a further five countries. A complete listing of the countries is shown in the next table. In some countries, the survey covered the whole country while in other countries the survey covered a specific region.

### Table 1: Countries participating in the current wave of the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey completed</th>
<th>Survey in progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria (Western region)</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina (Buenos Aires Province)</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia (Antioquia state)</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>South Africa (West Cape province)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Spain (Catalonia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Turkey (Istanbul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>UK (England)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK (Wales)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questionnaires**

The study is based on asking children directly and by allowing them to give an assessment of their own well-being. Thus, the survey is based solely on children's own evaluations, perceptions and aspirations.

There were three versions of the questionnaire for the different age groups – for children around 8, 10 and 12 years of age respectively. Paper questionnaires were used in most countries, while in the England and in most cases in Spain (Catalonia) the survey was administered online.
**What did we ask?**

- Questions about frequency of activities
- Satisfaction scales of life in large and specific domains or factors.
- Agreement scales with status and events.
- Socio-demographic characteristics

**The three questionnaires all covered the following key aspects of children’s lives:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic characteristics (age, gender, country of birth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living situation, home and family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money and economic circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and other relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall subjective well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaires for the older two age groups also covered two further topics: recent changes in children's lives and qualities aspired to for the future.

Amongst the items described above, the questionnaires contained versions of psychometric scales of overall subjective well-being. First, there was a context-free scale intended to measure overall cognitive subjective well-being. Second, there were two scales made up of domain satisfaction items. Third, there was one scale for measuring affective subjective well-being which relates to children’s moods and feelings. And finally, a scale for measuring psychological well-being, which focuses on children feeling positive about the future.
The psychometric scales:

- OLS – One question about satisfaction with life as a whole
- SLSS - Short version of Huebner’s Student Life Satisfaction Scale (5 items)
- PWI-SC - Cummins and Lau’s Personal Well-Being Index-School Children (9 items)
- BMSLSS - Seligson & Huebner’s Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (5 items)
- Overall Happiness Scale (OHS) – one question asking how happy children felt during the last two weeks.
- Russell’s Core Affect - Six questions about positive affects in the last two weeks.

Sampling

The aim within each country participating in the survey was to obtain the most representative sample possible of children in the relevant age groups. For practical reasons, it was decided that the only feasible way of conducting a large-scale survey with the resources available was through schools. This evidently places a limitation on representativeness as it excludes children not attending school. It should be noted that for practical (resource-based) reasons in three of the European countries – Spain, Poland, and the UK – the sample only included part of the country.

In all countries some form of stratification was used. A range of stratification variables were used in different countries, depending on the specific context, including economic prosperity, type of school (e.g. private/ public) and population density (e.g. urban/rural).
Table 2: The achieved sample in each European country by age group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>8 years old</th>
<th>10 years old</th>
<th>12 years old</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>3960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>1023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>3081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>1319</td>
<td>3298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>1131</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>3198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1069</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>3063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>2988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>2584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>3219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>977</td>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>3010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1078</td>
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<td>1038</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>1422</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>4407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>1109</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>3283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>2323</td>
<td>2323</td>
<td>2607</td>
<td>7253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>1082</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>3865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>3153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>17598</strong></td>
<td><strong>17762</strong></td>
<td><strong>18691</strong></td>
<td><strong>54051</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current report

The purpose of this report is to provide 17 short reports summarising the most salient and policy relevant findings for each of the countries which took part in the survey. For more detailed additional information about the survey findings you are welcome to read our full reports, which are available on the project website: [www.isciweb.org](http://www.isciweb.org)
Introduction

Children and young people aged 0 to 19 years represent about 37%, while those aged 5 to 14 years constitute 17% of the 39 million inhabitants of Algeria. The country ratified in 1992 the Child Rights Convention (CRC) and has made tangible progress in providing modern health care and education opportunities for its youth. However, more is needed in ensuring quality education; improving quality health services; promoting more effective protection of children from abuse and violence in families; enhancing the quality of schools and public spaces; promoting participation in family and school decision-making, and providing for organised leisure and culture opportunities (Tiliouine & Bousenna 2016).

The Children’s Worlds survey data offer a good opportunity to guide both researchers and policy makers towards a fresh look at the situation of children in the country. The survey was conducted with a representative sample of 3,676 children aged 8, 10 and 12 years from the Western part of the country. Some of the results are briefly highlighted.

Overall well-being

About 10% of the studied children are relatively unhappy and relatively unsatisfied with their lives. This is a substantial number, knowing that more than 11million children are under 15 years old in Algeria. There is a probability that these children will remain unhappy with their lives for extended periods of time, unless appropriate interventions are called in.

The aspects of life that children are most satisfied with tend to relate to children’s feelings about themselves: Satisfaction with self-confidence, appearance, one’s body, own health and own safety. Life as a student and things learned are also among
aspects of life with the lowest proportion of children below the mid-point. As a whole, Algerian children (aged 8, 10 and 12) have the highest rankings in satisfaction with most school aspects compared to the children of the studied countries (Rees & Main 2015: 74; Rees et al. 2016: 43).

Moreover, about one quarter of children score lower than the mid-point concerning the outdoor areas children can use; two children in 10 in relation to doing things away from their home, and a similar rate in satisfaction with the area they live in. These figures reveal that a good proportion of children feel the lack of leisure spaces in their neighbourhoods and lack of opportunities to do ‘things’ away from their homes. Children in Algeria spend most time taking care of siblings and other family members. They play sports, watch television and use computers less often than children in most of the 15 surveyed countries (Rees & Main 2015: 123). However, the most common use of free time is doing homework and watching TV, while taking part in organised leisure time activities is relatively uncommon.

Other related aspects are the relatively low satisfaction with the people they live with in the area, the things children have and the amount of freedom they are allowed. These results lead to questions about the socialisation practices and opportunities of active participation which are followed by Algerian families and other related institutions, such as schools. In-depth exploration of these matters is needed, knowing also that MICS4 results reveal that only 9% of children aged 2-14 are not subject to violent disciplinary methods in their families (UNICEF 2015: 188).

Furthermore, about two children in 10 are not much satisfied with other children in their classes. This may also be related to the high prevalence of bullying in Algerian schools, though comparatively lower than in many advanced countries (Rees & Main 2015: 79; Rees et al. 2016: 45). About 30% of children had experienced being hit by other children at school and 34% had experienced being left out by other children in the class. These figures are even higher in the 8-year-old group (Rees et al. 2016: 45).

**Gender and age differences in subjective well-being**

The most substantial and significant variations by age relate to having fun together and learning together in their families in favour of the youngest ones, while these are less satisfied with the people they live with and all other people in their families.
Also, with age the frequency of talking, having fun and meeting to study with friends increases. The 12-year-olds are less satisfied with safety, doing things away from home, what may happen to them later in life, and also marginally lower with appearance. Furthermore, forms of bullying - being hit and being left out - significantly decrease with age. In addition, older children were more likely to say that they knew about the children’s rights convention and what rights children have. But, they were less likely to think that adults respect children.

As far as gender differences are concerned the domains where the largest gender differences exist relate to aspects of relationships with family and friends in favour of girls, although boys tended a little more frequently to talk and have fun with friends than girls. It is interesting also that girls are more satisfied than boys with all aspects of school and with ‘The way that you look’. However, girls scored lower in having enough places to play or to have a good time, and feelings of safety when they walk in the area where they live. Boys are much more likely to have experienced being hit by other children at school. Furthermore, girls are more satisfied than boys with how they use their time in the older age groups, but they are more likely to read for fun, help with housework, do homework and watch TV. Boys are more likely to take classes outside school, take part in organised leisure activities, do sports or exercise and use a computer.

**Differences by region (Wilaya)**

The Survey took place in three provinces which have no common borders and are quite different in urbanisation and modernisation levels: El-Bayadh, Tlemcen and Oran. Generally, children from the less modern area of El-Bayadh have higher material deprivation, are more likely to worry about money, think their areas do not have enough places to play and have fun, are the least satisfied with the outdoor areas, and have the lowest satisfaction with the areas where they live in general. Children in Oran are more positive in their responses to questions about their schools including school marks, things they learn, school experience and relationship with teachers. Nevertheless, children living in El-Bayadh were significantly less likely to be hit and to be left out by schoolmates compared to the other two provinces.
Conclusions

This is the first time that such rich data on subjective well-being have been ever collected with children in Algeria (Tiliouine 2015). The results should be taken seriously by decision makers in addressing issues of equality in development and modernisation efforts. They show that a good number of children are not happy with their lives, and not satisfied with the facilities allocated to them. Though Algerian children generally like going to school, the majority lack organised leisure and culture opportunities and the social climate in which children are educated in schools and families raises many questions.

Also, important to study are the regional disparities and the cultural models regarding children’s upbringing and socialisation practices. Also, there are indications that in Algeria boys and girls are treated differently, which may have an effect on their adult life and the roles they should play in a democratic, modern and emancipated society.

The challenge for Algeria now is also in how to create the necessary synergy between policy makers, researchers, media and other institutions to work together and raise awareness among ordinary citizens on the importance of youth experiences and the value of protecting and investing in childhood.
Introduction

The sample collected for this study was composed of boys and girls, of 8 and 10 years old, in public and private educational institutions from the Buenos Aires Province (Greater Buenos Aires and Interior of Buenos Aires province). The reasons for the selection of Buenos Aires province as a work field, is the fact that it is the most densely populated in the country – its total population being approximately 40% (15,625,084) of the total general population of the country (40,117,096) (Argentina National Census, INDEC).

Based on general data, the definite sample release is composed of a total number of 1,062 cases, 590 in the 8-year-old group and 472 in the 10-year-old group. In the 8-year-old group there are 298 females (49.5 %) and 292 males (50.5 %); while in the 10-year-old group there are 237 females (50.2 %) and 235 males (48.8 %). On the other hand, in Greater Buenos Aires, 204 10-year-old boy/girl cases were released and 236 8-year-old boy/girl cases; while in the Interior of the province of Buenos Aires are 268 10-year-old boy/girl cases and 354 8-year-old boy/girl cases.

Main findings

The application of the questionnaire in different districts, both urban and rural, has shown significant results.

Regarding their families and their dwelling places, we have observed that the characteristics of the children’s homes play a fundamental role in their possible self-fulfillment and development of their daily duties, since it is one of the spaces – together with school – where they spend most of their time; thus the quality of their homes is essential to their well-being. We should highlight that a lower proportion of boys and girls consider that they have a peaceful place in which to study at home and,
in the case of the 10-year-olds, only 66.7% have their own bedroom. Considering their degree of satisfaction by gender, it is the boys who show higher satisfaction with the homes they live in and their family lives. The girls, on the other hand, show higher percentages of satisfaction regarding their possibility to hold conversations with their families, learn together, and have family outings. Sixty-four percent of the children state that they help with the household chores, the girls in a higher proportion.

As to the **neighbourhood** in which they live – particularly the available places to play and have fun - as well as their sense of safety on their neighbourhood streets, only 59.1% of the 8-year-old boys and girls considered themselves completely satisfied and in the case of girls and boys of 10 years old, only 48.7% stated that they completely agreed with the security of public places.

With regard to the **schools** they attend, 70% of the boys and girls declare that they completely agreed that they are heard and taken into account by their teachers, this percentage being higher in the case of the girls. When consulted about whether they like going to school, the general proportions show that half the subjects under study completely agree, with a slightly higher percentage in favour of the girls. On the other hand, 80% of the children express agreement with the treatment they receive from their teachers, the percentage being higher in the case of the boys. Finally, regarding security at school, over 80% state that they feel safe in their educational institutions. We should point out that all citizens have a right to education in Argentina and that it is free of charge at all levels (initial, primary, secondary, and university).

In relation to **leisure-time use**, half the 8-year-old boys and girls carry out after school activities nearly every day, and a quarter of them once or twice a week. Fifty-five percent say that they read books (other than their textbooks), though the girls do so in a higher proportion than the boys. Around 80% state that they do their homework and watch TV, in similar proportions according to gender. Regarding sports practice and computer use, around 60% of the subjects point out that they indulge in them nearly every day.

With reference to **their lives, facts of life, and the future**, 80% of the 8-year-old boys and girls totally agree with the lives they lead, while 64.44% report that their lives are completely in accordance with what they want them to be. On the other
hand, 86% completely agree with the statement that they have a good life. As to the question of having what they want from life, the percentage is 68%, while 77% assert that their lives are excellent. The girls show a few more positive points than the boys. Regarding their degree of happiness, 80% of the 8-year-old boys and girls asserted that they were completely happy. In the case of 10-year-old boys and girls, 66.3% stated that they had been completely happy during the last two weeks, previous to the survey release.

**Boys’ and girls’ rights** was the topic of the last questionnaire of the survey release and it referred to their knowledge about legal instruments. In that respect, 62.7% of the 8-year-old boys and girls claimed to know about children’s rights; while 42.8% had heard about the Convention on the rights of the child; and 74.3% considered that adults in Argentina respect children’s rights. On the other hand, 64.6% of the 10-year-old group of boys and girls stated that they knew about children’s rights; 47.8% had heard about the Convention on the rights of the child; and 56.3% considered that adults in Argentina are respectful of children’s rights.
In 2013 Colombia participated in the second wave of the International Survey of Children’s Well-Being. The results from the general survey at the global level show that the country appears as one with the highest levels of satisfaction among children. This is an intriguing but also encouraging outcome, considering the difficult conditions that many of the children in Colombia, and specifically in the region of Antioquia, have to face. In this paper we will present the principal results from the survey in the country.

The study of children’s well-being was carry out in a region that, for its particular conditions, resembles some of the principal contexts of Colombia. It has territories on the coast and adjoins the Pacific and the central zone. It is a multicultural, multiethnic and multi diverse region, both rural and urban, with important industrialized cities as well as agricultural economies. Economic prosperity, especially in some urban areas, contrasts with difficult conditions of poverty and inequality and with the hard consequences of a long-lasting armed conflict.

In this context, the survey was applied to 3,000 children, boys and girls, 8, 10 and 12 years old, who studied in schools from different municipalities and socio-economic strata. The final sample was of 2,792. Most of the children live with their family and more than 80% live in one home. As said before, children are highly satisfied with life as a whole. On a scale from 0 to 10 for 10 and 12 years old and 0 to 4 (in emoticons) for 8 years old, mean scores are 9.4 and 3.7 respectively. There are no important differences by gender, but there are some variations for age and socioeconomic status. Older and more deprived children (measured by lacking items) have lower scores in satisfaction with life as a whole. This trend in age and deprivation will repeat in many of the areas of the study.

The survey measures satisfaction or happiness in different domains of life. Children report being more satisfied with domains such as self, the things or money they have,
their family life, their view about the future and the school and less satisfied with how they use time, their local area, the attention paid by adults and their friends. There are small differences by gender but evident variations by age, where older children express less satisfaction in almost all domains. Change by deprivation shows that children that are more deprived have lower satisfaction means for almost all areas.

Self is the domain where children express the highest satisfaction. Mean scores in this respect are 3.7 out of 5 and 9.5 out of 10 of satisfaction with health, 3.8 and 9.4 with their bodies, 3.7 and 9.3 with their appearance and 9.3 with self-confidence. However, children seem to be less satisfied with what they do and with their expectations about the future. It is to be noted that they spend a lot of time watching TV and doing homework, rather than being outside or becoming part of an organized activity.

Family life is highly valued by children in all ages. Satisfaction in this respect has mean scores of 3.6 out of 5 for those aged 8 and 9.4 out of ten for those of 10 and 12 years. Seventy-nine percent of children of all ages totally agree that they are treated fairly by their parents and around 70% state that they learn and have fun with family most days or every day. There are small differences by gender, where girls have higher mean scores for family satisfaction than boys. Older children report less satisfaction in this domain and also in the time they spend with their family. It is then not surprising that children would like to be appreciated in the future by their family values, along with their kindness.

While children are more satisfied with their home and feel this space as a safe one, the outside is not appreciated in the same way. More than 80% of children say they are very satisfied with the house where they live and 79% totally agree with feeling safe at home. This contrasts with 55% who feel safe when they walk in the local area and 69% in the school. Mean scores for satisfaction with the local area are 3.6 out of 5 and 8.9 out of ten. Children also show less satisfaction with the places they can use to play and do other activities, both at home and outside. Sixty-three percent of children totally agree that they have enough places to play and 58% that they have a quiet place to study at home.
In the domain of money children say they are highly satisfied with the things they have, with a mean score of 3.7 out of five and 9.4 out of ten. Ninety-five percent of the children of all ages have clothes and television, while around 78% have access to a computer and 73% to internet. Thirteen percent lack more than five items out of nine. It is noteworthy that 30% of children are worried about family money, especially the youngest ones.

In the school, children express satisfaction with what they learn (mean of 9.3 out of ten); however, satisfaction with their teachers, classmates and their friends is much lower (8.5, 8.1 and 8.7). Just 46% think that their friends are nice. Almost 20% report that they are hit two or more times a month. Although girls are less satisfied with their classmates they report less bullying.

Finally, although satisfaction is quite high in almost all domains and children report in a high percentage to know about their rights (more than 70%), there is a striking result about how children feel about being heard by adults. About just 46% of children aged 10 and 12 say adults respect children’s rights (65% of 8-year-olds say the same). Sixty-nine percent of all children totally agree that parents listen to them and take them into account, while 51% agree the same about teachers. This is also reflected in the lower mean scores on satisfaction about being heard by adults (3.5 and 8.8).
England

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Introduction

The Children’s Worlds survey in England took place within the context of an ongoing research programme on children’s subjective well-being (SWB), undertaken jointly by The Children’s Society and the University of York, which was initiated in 2005. This programme had already developed a framework for measuring children’s SWB (The Children’s Society, 2008; Rees, Goswami & Bradshaw, 2010) and had accumulated a substantial body of evidence on levels of SWB and factors associated with it in England (see The Children’s Society, 2015 for a summary). This chapter highlights some of the key findings (from Rees & Main, 2015) for England in a comparative context and discusses their implications.

Overall well-being

England ranked 14th out of the 15 countries for life satisfaction and 11th for the extent of feeling happy in the past two weeks and of feeling positive about the future. These results are consistent with other international comparative research. It is notable that England ranked third highest for GDP per capita and third highest on the Human Development Index (Rees & Main, 2015, p.11). Ongoing analysis of the Children’s Worlds data (Bradshaw & Rees, 2016) confirms that these types of macro indicators are not strongly associated at a country level with mean levels of child SWB. So an important next step is to understand the factors that contribute to these international variations.

Satisfaction with different aspects of life

Out of 30 aspects, England ranked in the top five countries for only one – satisfaction with local police. Overall England ranked lower than eighth for 24 out of the 30 aspects of life.
This picture suggests considerable room for improvement. Beyond this broad conclusion, the initial comparative report calculates ‘relative scores’ for each aspect of life in each country. These scores take into account both the overall mean responses to the set of satisfaction questions within each country and the mean responses to each aspect of life across countries; and serve to indicate aspects of life where each country is faring relatively well and relatively poorly. For England, relatively positive aspects of life were satisfaction with the local police, with money and possessions, with friendships and with extended family. The aspects where they scored particularly low were satisfaction with self-confidence, one’s body, one’s appearance and relationships with teachers.

These findings suggest two important priorities for improving children’s SWB. First, there is a need to tackle the issue of why children have such low satisfaction with aspects of ‘self’. Second, it would be helpful to understand more about evaluations of their relationships with teachers in order to identify practical actions.

**Gender and age differences in subjective well-being**

Rees & Main (2015) also explores patterns of gender and age group variations in satisfaction across countries. First, England had the largest gender difference in children’s satisfaction with their body. The survey confirms earlier findings for England of a growing gender gap in children’s satisfaction with their appearance from the age of 10 onwards – with girls being increasingly more likely to have low satisfaction with this aspect. Importantly it also shows that this gender pattern is not replicated in a number of countries where there was no difference between girls and boys in the 10-years-old to 12-years-old age range.

Second, in England, along with a number of other (mostly European) countries, children had a decreasing sense of satisfaction with aspects of their school life between the ages of 10 and 12. This pattern contrasted with relatively stable levels of satisfaction in some other countries. These types of international comparisons are valuable in illustrating that the gender and age patterns observed in children’s satisfaction with particular aspects of life are not inevitable and can therefore challenge complacency in seeking to improve children’s quality of life.
**Experiences of bullying**

Our previous research had highlighted a significant association between recent experiences of being bullied and children’s SWB. Children who had been bullied four or more times at school in the past three months were over six times as likely to have low SWB as children who had not been bullied at all (The Children’s Society, 2015, p.25). It was therefore of particular interest to see international comparisons of the frequency of being bullied.

The survey asked two questions about this topic. England was ranked 7th highest for the frequency of being hit by other children at school; but ranked highest for the frequency of being left out by classmates, which was experienced by 50% in the 10- and 12-years-old age groups.

This new evidence emphasises the importance of tackling bullying as a means of improving children’s quality of life.

**Knowledge of children’s rights**

England fared relatively well on a question about whether children felt adults respected their rights with 56% answering ‘yes’, the fourth highest ranking. However this positive message was undermined by the fact that England ranked lowest for children’s knowledge of their rights. Only 36% answered ‘yes’ to ‘I know what rights children have’.

This finding presents a challenge to policy makers and others responsible for and concerned with children’s rights in England. Clearly more effort is needed to promote children’s knowledge of their rights; and it may be helpful to learn more about the initiatives that have been taken in countries with high rankings in this respect.

**Conclusions**

The comparative evidence has already made a substantial contribution to understanding children’s SWB. Overall, despite ranking relatively high among the countries involved in the survey on objective economic and social indicators, England fares relatively poorly with respect to children’s own evaluations of their
lives. This finding is consistent with the broader idea of moving beyond indicators such as GDP in measuring quality of life. The challenge for England now is to understand more about the underlying factors that contribute to the relatively low levels of child SWB.

Although more research needs to be done to fully understand these factors, the survey does provide some indications. It suggests that children in England are faring relatively well in terms of their satisfaction with family relationships, friendships and material circumstances. On the other hand, it indicates that attention should be paid to a number of key areas including how children feel about their appearance, body and confidence; their relationships with teachers and broader experiences of school; and the extent of bullying amongst children and the impact this has on children’s quality of life.

In addition, it suggests that much more work needs to be done to improve children’s knowledge and understanding of their rights.
Estonia

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Children in Estonia are politically highly valued as a resource of physical reproduction of the society and guarantee for the nation’s survival. The latter is keeping children permanently on the agenda of pronatalist politics, but interest in children’s well-being is only emerging.

The most general indicator of their well-being is how much children perceive they are happy. Compared to those from other ISCWeB countries they take a middle position when scoring their overall happiness. It is more prevalent among younger children and decreases with age: 76% of 8-year-olds, 68% of 10-year-olds and 50% of 12-year-olds are totally satisfied with life. Two most important domains that affect their well-being are family and school. Most (94%) live in one-family households (about 73% with two parents and 21% with one). The proportion of children living with cohabiting parents is increasing and of those living with married parents is decreasing. Living with two biological parents is best for children, while living with a lone parent is subjectively perceived by a child as a more favourable situation than living with a step-parent in a two parent family. In general home is a safe place according to children and they enjoy time spent together. However, they are rather critical about how much parents listen to them and consider their opinions. Good parenting has become a policy issue: the Ministry of Social Affairs in their 2015 Green Paper of children and families has set targets for improving parental education.

Education as a tool for building one’s success has been highly valued by Estonians over centuries. Evidence from the ISCWeB Study demonstrates that almost all children have clothes in good condition to go to school and access to IT devices. Also they have books to read for fun and own equipment to listen to music. They are most active in extracurricular activities: 83% agree that they take classes outside school time at least once or twice a week and only 12% agree that they take classes rarely or
never. Being very active in sports or doing exercise occurs among about a half of them. In general they are satisfied how they spend their out-of-school time. However, the most common activity is doing school homework: over 90% do it daily because in the school system children receive home tasks from school every day. Being busy with extracurricular activities and with homework leaves little time for self-organised time: they sacrifice some of their reading for fun and also spending time with friends (only about a half can take time to talk to friends daily and about a third to have fun together).

Children in Estonia are good at the PISA test (among the top 10 in the world and absolute top in Europe). They are determined and believe that their study results depend primarily on themselves. However, they have relatively low self-esteem and their happiness and study outcomes are not statistically related. The ISCWeB Study revealed that they are among the most critical. The most indicative is that 61% (10- and 12-years-old) admit that they like going to school and 12% say they do not. Liking going to school is the highest among the 8-year-olds and decreases with age. School marks are the main source of dissatisfaction (the domain that is not totally controlled by children but dependent also on teachers’ professional skills, or even their mood). The next domain affecting liking school is relationships and school atmosphere. Friends are important and almost 80% report having enough friends; however, only half totally agree that friends are usually nice to them. School atmosphere as a source of well-being is created in the classroom – in an interaction between teacher and the students and among students themselves. Less than half of 10-year-olds and a third of 12-year-olds are totally satisfied with classmates. Every fourth child is critical of teachers regarding much they felt they’d been listened to and their opinions taken into account. Girls are less critical than boys, and critical attitudes increase with age.

Next, let’s make an attempt to assess school as the source of well-being by looking at those who like going to school in relation to different sources of well-being: success in learning, relations and schooling as a value. In the graph below, children aged 10 and 12 are compared. We can observe a noticeable decrease of those who report liking going to school and being satisfied with different aspects, meaning that school as a source of well-being is losing its resources for creating well-being when children grow older. The highest ’loss’ can be seen in children’s perceptions about teachers,
both in relationships with teachers (difference 16 percentage points) and how fair they are (difference in 17 percentage points). In the school system 10-year-olds are instructed mostly by the class teacher and the relationships are probably more personalised than in the case of 12-year-olds who meet several subject teachers every day.

Figure 1: Children who like going to school and also are very positive with different aspects of school (10 and 12 years old)

Teachers play a crucial role not only as the sources of knowledge but also in creating a positive atmosphere in a classroom. A qualitative study that was carried out in Estonia among 12-year-olds a few years ago gave a powerful message: too often teachers are the first to launch bullying in the classroom when not behaving ethically. Even a small mistake in a teacher’s behaviour can be taken as an excuse by children to behave badly towards the same classmate or collect negative feelings if they have been the object of the teacher’s misconduct. This message is hard for teachers to accept because they believe in doing the best for children. However, schools in Estonia are too much aimed at success, thereby at the expense of children’s well-being. Support personnel are not sufficiently available and school atmosphere as a source of child well-being is not a priority in educational policies. Moreover, teachers
may also need support. Evidence from the ISCWeB Study confirms that children should be spoken to, heard and understood, and their messages should prompt actions to improve their lives as a foundation for a better future for all.
Ethiopia
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Introduction

Children have a prominent place in Ethiopian culture and society. Demographically, children are major constituents who account for nearly half of the Ethiopian population. Significant effort has been made over the last decades, both by government and non-government organizations, to improve the well-being of children. These efforts have led towards reduced child morbidity and mortality and a remarkable increase in access to essential services such as education and healthcare and other basic needs. However, the state of child well-being in Ethiopia, as measured through deprivation of children’s fundamental rights to access to nutrition, healthcare, education and protection services, is far from satisfactory. Children are often victims of severe violent disciplinary measures.

The subjective well-being study in Ethiopia carried out under the Children’s World project, a global multi-country survey on children’s subjective well-being supported by the Jacobs Foundation, was instrumental in understanding children’s feelings, concerns and perceptions on various issues in their life. This nationally representative survey revealed interesting findings on material, relational and personal satisfaction aspects in the life course. It also shed light on some key aspects of the environment within which children live.

Main findings

Home, as its name signifies, is a critical living space with immense effect on the physical and emotional well-being of children. Sense of safety within the home setting was one of the areas of assessment in the survey. While it was encouraging to note that more than three-quarters of children feel safe at home, the fact that about 23 percent of them do not feel safe in an environment where they should feel most safe is a cause of concern.
Interaction among family members, particularly with parents, facilitates discussion and exchange of views and perspectives which in turn contributes to better relationships between parents and children. Good parent-child relationships are manifested in children’s active engagement in decisions affecting them and an enhanced sense of safety and security. It was within these realities that children were asked whether or not they feel that their voices are heard at home and taken into account when decisions are made on matters affecting them. In the survey, it was noted that about 39 percent of children were not listened to by their parents or guardians, signalling the limited value that their voices have at home.

The majority of children live in rural settings where the housing conditions are characterised by a single family room without electricity and adequate sanitary facilities. Therefore children carry out their routine daily activities within these shared rooms and are often deprived of privacy. This is partly the reason why nearly one in three children said that they don’t have a quiet place to study at home.

When looking at some of these aspects from a gender perspective, there were no significant statistical differences for most of the issues relating to safety, having a quiet place to study and spending a good time with the family. But a statistically significant difference was observed by gender with regards to fair treatment and listening to their views, where girls were more likely to be listened to and perceive that they get fair treatment from their parents. Age was also noted to be one of the main factors when it comes to spending a good time with the family and having a quiet place to study where younger children seem to have appeared to agree more on these aspects.

Material deprivation is also common among children in Ethiopia both for boys and girls. An almost negligible proportion of children have access to a computer at home or internet. Only 36 percent of children among the groups aged 10 and 12 have books to read for fun and 17 percent of them owned some kind of equipment to listen to music. Despite the observable deprivation, most children on the whole expressed their satisfaction with the things they have and girls in particular were noted to be more likely to be satisfied with the things they have than boys.

Household income was an important consideration in the survey where one in three children mentioned that they always or often worry about the amount of money their
families had. Although to a lesser extent, about 36 percent also said that they sometimes worry about such issues, showing how children are concerned about the income of their family and that it is an issue that they think about a lot. Boys were more likely to worry more about the household income than girls and younger children, generally, worry less about such issues.

It was also noted that how children use their time varies by age and gender. Generally, a considerable proportion of children had not spent time with their friends in the past week to either have fun or study together. But boys were more likely to have fun with friends and study together than girls. Younger children who often are not engaged in household chores have the time to spend with friends or sit with them to study.

Schools can be places of happiness for children when designed and managed to be so or could be locations for abuse and exploitation with lasting effects on their life and well-being. Their relationship with teachers and peers, satisfaction with their academic performance and their sense of safety and security, among other things, contribute to their subjective well-being. The survey showed that about 27 percent of children feel, to a varying degree, unsafe in school. This is a signal for school authorities to examine further and identify factors that contribute to insecurity and take appropriate measures to address them.

At community level, the survey showed that children do not have adequate places to play or have a good time with their friends. Absence of such playgrounds inhibits children’s social, emotional and life skills development. Municipalities and local administrations need to consider these realities in their planning and take measures to ensure that children are catered for and have access to spaces for play and pass their leisure time. As the study has shown, local authorities, in most cases, do not consult children in decisions that affect their lives, so this needs to be improved.

In general, children’s overall life satisfaction level was noted to be relatively higher, although there are differences by gender and age. Girls were more likely to express satisfaction in various aspects of their life, despite various constraints and challenges they encounter at home, the community and at school.
What needs to be done?

The findings from the survey have policy implications, among other things, on issues relating to education, urban planning, local governance and family support programmes. They signal that measures need to be taken at all levels of administration to improve sense of safety among children at home, in school and within the community. There is also more work to be done to enhance pupil-teacher relationships within school and engage children in community decisions that affect them. Urban planning and housing programmes should also take into account children’s need for play and privacy.
Germany

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Introduction

The Federal Republic of Germany covers about 360,000 km² and is divided into 16 federal states. The national census of 2011 reports that Germany has currently a population of 80.2 million and is therefore the most populous country of the European Union with a population density of 226 inhabitants per km².

The survey was held in the new as well as in the old federal states of Germany, because these two regions differ demographically from each other in population and living standards. In the new federal states, which lie in the Eastern part of Germany, live 19.8% of the total population (including Berlin). Accordingly, 80.2% live in the old federal states.

Germany’s population is of relatively old age: 16.4% are under 18 years, 14.2% are between 18 and 29. About half of the population (48.8%) is between 30 and 64, and 20.6% are senior citizens above 64 years. The average age is 43.3 years old. Comparing the federal states, it is apparent that the average age in the new federal states is considerably older (45.7 years) than in the old states as well as all Germany. Besides this, it is noticeable that in all the federal states senior citizens outnumber children.

Schooling is compulsory in Germany. Generally, children will go to school at the age of 6 or 7. After attending primary school for four years, they have to choose among three different types of school, mostly depending on their previous school performance and recommendations of teachers. These types of schools are either found in particular schools (Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium) or in schools that combine two or three types. These combined schools have different names in federal states. The only common label is the Gymnasium, which is the highest type of school. Depending on the federal state’s regulations, it is mandatory to attend school for 9 to
10 years. The type of graduation depends on the completed grades. It is possible to change school types after primary school at any time. Within recent years, major efforts have been made to establish inclusive schools. Diversity is perceived as an enrichment that enables inclusion of all children independently of impairments or disabilities and to provide them the individual support they need. In our survey, we did not label or differentiate between inclusive or non-inclusive schools, where only students without physical or mental impairments are taught.

This article will focus on two dimensions of the Children’s Worlds Survey because of the relevance for children in Germany and the perspective for policy strategies: Schools and neighbourhoods:

- Compared to other countries the level of satisfaction with schools measured in this paper with the item ‘I like going to school’ is low. This fact needs more analysis about the relation with school climate, classroom management or other issues of the learning environment from the children’s point of view.

- The neighbourhood and the experiences of children in different age groups seem to be important for their well-being. The data show differences of satisfaction with the area of living, and the analyses could be important for policy strategies at the community level.

**Like going to school? An important question**

Generally, the data show that the children of the sample are not as satisfied with school as with other dimensions we have asked about. Figure 2 summarizes this and shows that only 55.7% agreed a lot or totally with the statement ‘I like going to school’. More information is needed about children’s perceptions of school and their own measurements of liking going to school. This item matters greatly and there are some analytical perspectives about experiences with teachers such as their fairness and respect.
Figure 2: School (All age groups) (%)

My neighbourhood: Children and their views on area of living

Figure 3 shows that 24.3% do not think that in the area they live there are enough places to play or to have a good time and about one fourth (25.1%) do not feel safe walking in their neighbourhood. There are no significant differences between gender, age groups, or settlement structures (rural, urbanized or agglomeration).

Figure 3: Local area (All age groups) (%)
Conclusion

The majority of children in Germany show a high level of satisfaction and well-being in all dimensions. We can show that the socio-economic status of children, experiences with material deprivation, unemployed parents and less social support at the community level have the effect of lower levels of satisfaction (see country report website). What I figured out here is the importance of the dimensions school and neighbourhood for children’s worlds in Germany. The average means by dimension (Figure 4) gives an overview about all aspects and it shows that the older children are most satisfied with the things they have and their home and family. The children are least satisfied with the area they live in and their school. It points out that in particular age group 12 is negative about their school experience and generally in all of the items. The most striking differences between the two older age groups are in school matters as well as their feelings about themselves – the way they look, their health, body and self-confidence.
This country-based brief paper is intentionally descriptive. But clearly the data hold potential for further analysis. There is especially a need for deeper analysis of the children’s relationship with schools and neighbourhoods as learning environments and as a space without a variety of choice and freedom.
Israel

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Introduction

The rate of the child population in Israel is relatively high, out of approximately 8.2 million residents 33% are children (aged 0 to 18), a total of 2.7 million children. The child population in Israel is highly heterogenic, as 70.8% are Jewish, 23.1% are Muslims, 1.5% are Christian, 1.7% Druze, and approximately 3% have no religious affiliation.

Probably the most influential factor on children’s life in Israel is the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ongoing conflict and the outbursts of violence have a major impact on both Jewish and Arab children as well as on the entire society.

Israel has witnessed a growing economic inequality to a level in which 1 in every 3 children in Israel is poor. Inequality in Israel (as measured by the Gini Coefficient) is one of the highest among OECD countries. Poverty rates are also high – 19.9% of households are considered poor, a rate which is one of the highest among OECD countries. Poverty rates among children are also high – 31% in 2014. The rates of poverty among Arab children are substantially higher than among Jewish citizens (63.5%).

The ISCWeB survey in Israel was held during 2013-2014 among a nationally representative sample of 2,977 children in grades 2 (1,004 children), 4 (1,023 children) and 6 (950 children). The sample included both Jewish and Arab children. This is the first vast survey of children’s subjective well-being that has ever been carried out in Israel. The current report presents some of the most prominent findings of the survey in Israel, from both a national and an international perspective.
Overall well-being

Most children aged 8 to 12 years in Israel are relatively satisfied and happy with their lives. In regard to their satisfaction with life as a whole, 73.1% of the children aged 10 and 12 scored the highest level of satisfaction, and 80.8% of the children aged 8 years scored the highest level of happiness in their lives. However, 3.5% of the 10- and 12-year-olds and 2.8% of the 8-year-olds reported they are very unsatisfied and unhappy with their lives.

When comparing Jewish and Arab children an interesting trend emerges (as presented in the following figure): While the Arab children aged 10 and 12 are more satisfied with their lives in comparison to the Jewish children, Arab children aged 8 years are less happy with their lives in comparison to Jewish children of the same age. Of the Jewish children aged 8 81.1% scored the highest level of happiness in comparison to 78.0% of the 8-year-old Arab children, while 70.5% of the 10- and 12-year-old Jewish children scored the highest level of satisfaction in comparison to 80.4% of Arab children in the same age groups.

From an international point of view, Israel ranked fourth out of the 16 countries, relatively high in the overall satisfaction scale for children aged 10 and 12, lower than Romania, Colombia and Turkey, and higher than most of the European countries such as Norway, Germany, Poland and Spain. For children aged 8, Israeli children ranked sixth in overall happiness (out of 16 countries).

Children aged 10 and 12 were also asked about the frequency of feeling happy in the past two weeks: 65.5% of the children reported they felt extremely happy in the last two weeks. Those rates were higher among Arab children (79.9%) in comparison to Jewish children (61.4%). From an international point of view, Israel ranked relatively high, third out of the 16 countries, lower than Romania and Colombia, and higher than most of the European countries, such as Norway, UK, Germany, Poland and Spain.

Satisfaction with different aspects of life (children aged 10 and 12 years)

In addition to questions about overall subjective well-being, children were also asked about their satisfaction with different aspects of their lives. Out of six life domains that were examined - family, friends, school, area, self and thing you have - Israel
ranked in the top five countries for half of these life domains: family (ranked fourth),
things you have (ranked fourth) and friends (ranked fifth), and ranked in the bottom
in regard to school (ranked 12th) and the self (ranked 12th).

As is shown in the following figure, children aged 10-12 in Israel are most satisfied
with the things they have, followed by satisfaction with their family, followed by their
friends, after that with the local area they live in, and they are the least satisfied with
the self and their school.

*Figure 5: Mean score of level of satisfaction and happiness and percentages of
low level satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean score of level of satisfaction</th>
<th>Low level satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things I have</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local area</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*What do children in Israel think about their school lives?*

Children spend a significant portion of their time in school, and we know today that
the school environment has a significant effect on children’s subjective well-being. As
noted above, school is the life domain in which children in Israel have the lowest
satisfaction. Only 55.2% of the children in Israel agreed that they like going to school.
Children were most satisfied with the things they learned and the least satisfied with
the other children in their class.
Figure 6: Mean scores of level of satisfaction and agreement with different life domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much are you satisfied with:</th>
<th>How much do you agree with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>age 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things you have learned</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School marks</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School experience</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life as a student</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with teachers</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other children in your class</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing Jewish and Arab children, significant differences are evident. The following figure presents the percentages of children that scored the highest level of satisfaction with various aspects of school life by ethnicity. We can see that Arab children are more satisfied with all aspects of school life in comparison to Jewish children. This gap is especially evident in regard to children's satisfaction with their lives as students. Those gaps are interesting, giving considerable differences between the Jewish education system and the Arab one, in favour of the first one.
Money and possessions

Children were asked about things they have and how much they are satisfied with them. Israeli children aged 10 and 12 were satisfied to a high degree with the things they have (Israel ranked in the fourth place in the international ranking scores): 74.6% of the children aged 10 and 12 reported the highest level of satisfaction with the things they have. No significant difference was found between Arab and Jewish children.

Children were also asked about how often they worry about how much money their family had. A significant gap between Jewish and Arab children was evident as presented in the following figure. While 9% of the Jewish children said that they are always worried about how much money their family has, 20% of the Arab children said the same. This gap is not surprising given the fact the Arab population in Israel suffers from deep economic deprivation. For example, the poverty rate is double among Arab children in comparison to Jewish children (63.5% in compare to 31.5%).

Figure 7: Percentages of children who scored the highest level of satisfaction with various aspects of school life by ethnicity
Figure 8: How often do you worry about how much money your family has?

Children were also asked to mark which things they have out of a list of nine items. There were significant variations in the number of items lacking between Jewish and Arab children and also in comparison to immigrant children. Arab children lacked significantly more items than Jewish children. For example, 0.9% of the Jewish children reported that they do not have clothes in good condition compared to 2.9% of the Arab children. Or for example, 3.0% of the Jewish children reported they do not have access to the internet in comparison to 13.1% of the Arab children.

Conclusions

ISCWeB is the first survey in Israel which evaluates children's own point of view about their well-being and lives. The subjective indicators that were used in this survey have revealed new insights into children's well-being in Israel. Although from an objective point of view Israel ranks high with regard to poverty and inequality and low in regard to GDP, children's subjective point of view regarding their well-being (satisfaction from life as a whole) ranks relatively high - fourth out of the 16 countries. This implies that we should evaluate children's well-being based on their own perspective.

Despite the high rank of Israeli children in regard to their overall life satisfaction, we can see that children in Israel ranked very low in regard to their satisfaction with school (place 12). School is the area of life where children have had the lowest satisfaction. These results indicate that attention should be paid to the school life of children in Israel.
Another point concerns the gap between Jewish and Arab children with regard to their well-being. In general, the findings of this survey indicate that Arab children are more satisfied with their lives compared to Jewish children. This is surprising, given that Arab children in Israel are socially and economically deprived. This is even more interesting, since Arab children in the survey reported in higher percentages that they are missing things and also that they worry more frequently about how much money their family has. These results provide a substantial contribution to our understanding of Arab children’s subjective well-being in Israel. It indicates that Arab children are not only a deprived group in the society, but also that there are some aspects of their life that are positive from their point of view. The results should indicate to decision-makers and policy designers how to strengthen Arab children’s positive aspects of life. The findings about children’s perspectives on the things they have and their economic status give weight to the objective data in Israel on the economic deprivation of Arab children, and that should be taken seriously by policy makers.
Economic situation

On the whole Maltese children feel quite cared for economically and happy with the things they have, with the great majority having such items as books, music players, clothes, access to home computer and internet, television, family car and own room. Eighty percent of eight-year-olds and 50% of 10/12-year-olds do not lack any item, while 14% and 30% of 8 and 10/12-year-olds lack one item respectively. 95% are satisfied or very satisfied with the things they have. Boys and older children lack more items than girls and younger children respectively. 20% of 10/12-year-olds do not have their own room, while 30% have no use of mobile. Twenty percent of participants do not have a quiet space to study at home.

Home and family

The majority of participants have a stable and happy life, feel safe and happy at home, having close relationships with their parents, talking, learning and having fun together most days of the week. Girls appear to have a better family life than boys, having more quiet places to study, parents/carers listening more, and spending more good time together. The older children appear to be more satisfied with their families than younger ones, including feeling safer, having more quiet spaces to study, having parents/carers listening more, and being treated better by parents. A minority of children, however, would like a better life at home, with 20% wanting more space to study at home, 10% more attention from parents, and 5% not feeling safe at home.

Friends

The great majority of the participants are happy and satisfied with their friends, with more than 80% having enough friends and feeling that their friends are nice to them, while more than 90% are happy with their friends. On the whole more 12-year-olds
have enough friends and think that friends are nice to them than the younger participants.

**Area where they live**

Almost two-thirds of the participants feel safe in their area they live (63%) and think there are enough places to play or have a good time (60%), with boys and older children agreeing more than girls and 8-year-olds respectively. About 80% of 8-year-olds are satisfied with their area, while 75% are satisfied the outdoor areas for children with similar patterns but higher percentages for 10/12-year-olds. Despite the overall positive picture, a considerable number of participants are not happy with the area they live in and the places where they can play and have a good time.

**Use of time**

Participants spend most of their time doing homework, watching TV, and using computers (no gender differences); helping with housework, reading for fun and sports and exercise are also quite popular, but taking part in organised leisure time activities is not so common. The great majority (80% and over) are satisfied with their use of time.

**School**

The great majority of participants like going to school (74%), feel safe at school (84%) and believe that teachers treat them fairly (85%) and listen to them (84%). Girls feel safer and like going to school more than boys, while primary school students (8 and 10-year-olds) have better views of their teachers than the older participants. The vast majority (about 85%) of 8-year-olds are satisfied with school, including other children in their class (88%), school grades (83%), relationship with teachers (89%) and school experience (77%); girls are more satisfied than boys with their school experience and relationship with the teachers. Higher figures are found with the older students (10/12-year-olds) with over 90% being satisfied with the other children in their class, their school grades, their school experience, the things they have learnt and relationship with the teachers. Girls are more satisfied with their school experience and relationship with teachers than boys, but boys are more satisfied with other children in their class. Twelve-year-olds are less satisfied than
10-year-olds with other children in their class, the things they have learnt and relationship with teachers.

Despite this positive picture however, more than one fourth of students reported frequent physical or relational bullying (more than once in a month). Boys appear to experience higher levels of physical victimisation than girls, while girls reported higher levels of relational bullying. Primary school children experience more victimisation, both physical and relational, than middle school students (12-year-olds).

**Life and self satisfaction**

The great majority of participants are satisfied or very satisfied with themselves (their health, the way they look and their own bodies, and their self-confidence (10/12-year-olds). Amongst 8-year-olds, boys are more satisfied with their bodies than girls, while amongst 10-year-olds, girls are more satisfied with their self-confidence. Twelve-year-olds are more satisfied with themselves than 10-year-olds. Almost 90% of 8-year-olds are happy their overall life (no gender differences), while 86% of 10/12-year-olds feel happy. The great majority of 12-year-olds are satisfied to very satisfied with their lives in areas such as the way they are, managing daily responsibilities, having enough choice in how to spend time, knowing where their life is going and feeling positive about their future. On the whole boys feel more positive than girls on these aspects. More than three-fourths of participants feel that their life is going well and they are having a good life, with excellent things happening in their life. A considerable minority of 8-year-olds, however, appear to be less satisfied with their lives, particularly disagreeing that they have what they want in life and that the things in their lives are excellent.
Nepal

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Introduction

The survey on children's well-being entitled International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB) is a world-wide research on children's subjective well-being. ISCWeB recognizes that children's rights are fundamental to them for ensuring good childhood and future life chances. It stresses the great need for providing children with an environment in which they can fully grow and attain their highest potential. In order to create such an environment, assessing their subjective well-being is the initial step. In this context, the survey of children's subjective well-being was conducted in Nepal which was one of the participating nations of ISCWeB.

Nepal is divided into five development regions and three geographical regions. Six districts were selected from two development regions representing three geographical regions. In this survey, the previous political division of the country was used because the survey was carried out before the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal 2072 (2015), in which provinces were created instead of development regions.

The major findings of survey are presented in the following headings.

Country of birth of sample children

According to the survey data, 97.5% of the total sample of children were born in Nepal and 2.5% of them were born in a neighbouring country, India.

Family members children live with

Almost all children always live in the same home with their own families/parents. The survey revealed that 92.1% of 10-year-olds and 97% of 12-year-olds live with
their mother. Similarly, 94.1% of 10-year-olds and 90.0% of 12-year-olds live with their father.

**Home condition**

An almost equal percentage of girls and boys of the three age groups felt that their home was safe for them as the mean value of responses of the boys is 3.23 and that of girls is 3.24 on a 0-4 point scale. The next favourable response of the children is fair treatment by parents/carers. However, a variation of 0.09 percent was found in mean values of their responses, which is in favour of girls (mean value 3.20).

In addition, 10 and 12-year-old children were happy with 'the house or flat they live in and their family' as their responses clustered around the happier side of the scale. The percentage of unhappy children with these items was negligible.

**Things children possess**

Almost all the children of the three age groups have good school dress. Interestingly, 75% of 10 and 12-year-olds have mobile phones at their home and they can play with them. Similarly, 64% of 8-year-olds and 69% of 10 and 12-year-olds have television which they can use.

Most of the children are living with adults who are involved in an income generating job/activity as the survey shows that 43.5%, 30.4% and 17.3% of the children have one, two and more than two adults who earn money in their family respectively.

**Children's friends**

A high percentage of children of the three age groups were found to have responded ‘totally agree’ (38.3%) and ‘agree a lot’ (41.9%) for the item ‘my friends are usually nice to me’. The survey also indicated that the percentage of children of the three age groups who responded that they have enough friends was high, i.e. ‘totally agree’ (40.6%) and ‘agree a lot’ (35.8%). It shows that children of three age groups have enough and nice friends.

Considering the percentage of responses of the children of the three age groups for ‘totally agree’ and ‘agree a lot’ on a five-point scale, three-fourths of them felt that
there are enough places to play or to have a good time in their areas and that they are safe in their areas.

School

The results of students' responses on school-related items are very encouraging as 63% of the children 'totally agreed' and 31% of them 'agreed a lot' with the statement ‘I like going to school’. Similarly, most of the children of all age groups agreed that their teachers treated them fairly, they felt safe at their schools and their teachers listened to them and took their views into account. These items have been listed in sequential order on the basis of percentage of responses given to them.

Considering the mean values of the responses given by the children, cases of children hit and left out by other children in the class were low. Cases of girls hit by other children were comparatively less than that of boys.

Time use outside school

Most of the 8 and 10-year-old children spent their time every day or almost every day in doing homework and helping the parents and guardians in their housework. Twelve-year-old children spent more time in doing homework and helping in housework than 8 and 10-year-olds. Contrary to this, most of the children of the three age groups used little time to work with computers. Taking classes outside school are the activities which received less time.

Children of the three age groups were happy/satisfied with the way they use their time, their health, their own body, use of free time and their self-confidence. Particularly, girls were more satisfied with these aspects than boys.

Most of the children are living with the same parents or carers with whom they were living one year ago. This is an indication of the long affinity the children have with the family.

Psychometric scales

The distribution of scores in the upper part of the six psychometric scales: Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS), Student Life Satisfaction Scale, Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale, Personal Well-Being Index- School Children (7
items), Adapted Personal Well-Being Index – School Children (9 items), and Positive Affect Scale indicates the positive aspects of subjective well-being of children.

The key conclusion of the survey is that most of the 8, 10 and 12-year-old children, though not all, are happy/satisfied with their life. This conclusion implies that most of the children in Nepal, despite not being of high socio-economic status, are happy/satisfied with their life. Interestingly, girls are more happy/satisfied than boys in many respects. The survey indicates more positive aspects of children’s subjective well-being in Nepal.
By the end of 2013, Norway’s population was 5.1 million. Those aged 0 to 19 numbered 1.26 million or 24.6 percent. Children aged 6 to 12 numbered 8.4 percent.

At the same time, 14.9 percent of the population were immigrants or Norwegian-born with immigrant parents, primarily the former. The largest group came from Asia and Turkey, while the second largest group is from EU-countries in former Eastern Europe. In our sample 7.3 percent of the children (211 in all) were born in other countries than Norway. As expected, more parents were born in other countries: 15 percent of the mothers (436 in all) and 14.4 percent of the fathers (417 in all). This corresponds to the national proportion.

Children start school at the age of six, and schooling is compulsory for ten years: seven years in primary school and three in junior high (secondary) school. Thus the children participating in the study were in their 3rd, 5th and 7th years in primary school. In addition, everybody has the right to three years’ education in senior high school, academic or vocational. By age 24 around 80 percent will have passed this educational level. Access to education is good, as schooling is free unless parents choose to send their child to the relatively few private schools. Children with special needs are entitled to easy access education, although not universally. In addition, there are grants available for young people from economically disadvantaged families. However, the same class differences exist in Norway as in other Western countries with regard to who enters and completes higher education.

This article will focus on the children’s views of their school experiences, and their responses to questions about how parents and teachers respect their rights.
Children’s views of their school experiences

The majority were positive towards their teachers and their school. The least positive response was to the statement ‘I like going to school’, but seven out of ten agreed a lot or totally. Still, the difference is marked compared to responses to the other three statements.

Figure 9: Views about school (all age groups), percent

There were several significant gender differences, all in favour of the girls. In all age groups, more girls than boys answered that they like going to school (p=.01). In addition, more 8- and 10-year-old girls answered that they are listened to by their teachers (p=.01 and .05 respectively), and more 10-year-old girls answered that they are treated fairly by their teachers (p=.01).

The only significant difference with regard to country of birth was among the 10-year-olds, as those born in Norway were more likely to give a very positive answer to the question of being listened to by their teachers (p=.01).

We computed mean scores for the children and analyzed the results by age. This analysis highlighted the significance of age, as the responses became markedly less positive over time, with an approximately 0.5 point reduction of the mean score. The only exception was feeling safe at school, where the mean score remained high and quite stable for all age groups.
Not surprisingly, children who reported that they had been hit by other children in their school, or excluded by other children in their class during the last month, gave less positive responses to all four questions. This association was systematic across items and age groups (p=.01). Around two-thirds had never been hit or excluded, and 7-8 percent had experienced this more than three times during the last month. Girls were more likely to have been excluded, while boys were more likely to have been hit. Again, the age dimension became important, as the likelihood of having been either hit or excluded was significantly reduced over time.

Children’s rights

In Norway, children’s rights are supposed to play an integral role in the way society and parents organize the daily life of children. Thus it was interesting to ask the participants about their knowledge of children’s rights.

Figure 10: Knowledge about children’s rights (all age groups), percent.

The item receiving the largest proportion of positive answers was the first: that adults in general respect children’s rights in Norway. Although the majority of the children answered that they know about the CRC, as well as what rights children have, knowledge about the CRC was definitely less extensive.

There were no significant gender differences in the responses, at any age level, although the proportion who answered ‘yes’ increased with age – as might be expected. On the other hand, 8-year-olds born in Norway were more likely to answer that they know what rights children have (p=.05). Ten-year-olds born in Norway
were more likely to respond that adults in general respect children’s rights (p=.01), while 12-year-olds born in Norway were more likely to respond that they know about the CRC (p=.01).

As Figure 11 shows, 22% responded that adults in general respect children’s rights in Norway. We wanted to elaborate on this answer through comparing it to the children’s answers to more concrete questions. Here we have added the answers to questions about being listened to and treated fairly by parents as well as teachers, and about feeling safe at home, at school, or where the children live (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: The children’s own experiences of some of their rights (all ages), percent**

![Bar chart showing the children's own experiences of some of their rights](chart)

The answers to these more concrete questions are fairly comparable to the answers about children’s rights at a more abstract level. Again, a large majority agreed totally or a lot with the statements. However, it is notable that the children’s relationship with their teachers was less positive than their relationship with their parents. Teachers have to relate to a whole group of children at the same time, and must balance the needs or wants of the individual against the collective as well as against other children with their needs. Thus it is to be expected that individual children may feel less listened to at school than at home.
Conclusion

The majority show a high level of satisfaction and well-being in all dimensions. In this paper, we have shown some results concerning two important areas: the school and children’s rights. These results exemplify the positive results. At the same time, the participants obviously had a slightly less positive relationship with the school and their teachers than with their parents/carer and in their local area. Here, gender, not being born in Norway and age all played a role, in addition to having been hit or excluded at school. Further analyses of the data will aim to explain even better characteristics of those who were less in agreement.
Poland

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Poland was one of the last countries to join the second wave of the Children’s Worlds project. The study of children’s subjective well-being was conducted among a representative sample of primary school pupils aged 8, 10 and 12 years from Wielkopolskie (Greater Poland) voivodship located in the central-western part of the country. The capital of this region is Poznań.

Out of 3,157 school children participating in the study 48% were girls. Taking into account the type and location of schools in the study, it was established that children from urban schools constituted 57.7% of all respondents, whereas only one out of 30 pupils attended non-public school. Nearly all the young respondents (99.5%) reported they were born in Poland. Over 99% were living in a household with their own family and 85.5% were living in a full family (with both a mother and a father).

The results obtained show that the Polish children’s satisfaction with their lives is fairly high as it is indicated by the values of instruments used in the study (the OLS, the SLSS and the BMSLSS) which exceed on average 85 points (out of 100). The marks obtained on the scales applied indicate that the average level of life satisfaction is similar for both genders and is slightly higher in children from the rural schools (Table 3). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the proportion of children whose assessment of their life was low ranged (depending on age category and the applied overall subjective well-being measure) from 0.8% (BMSLSS for 8-year-olds) to 10.7% (OLS for 12-year-olds). Calculating the average, this yields almost 13 thousand children regionally and 135 thousand nationally who are not satisfied with their overall life quality (with the assumption that in other voivodships of Poland the tendencies are similar to those in Greater Poland).
### Table 3: Polish children’s subjective well-being measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>%a</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 year-old</td>
<td>93.46</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>93.50</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>93.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year-old</td>
<td>91.90</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>91.88</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>92.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 year-old</td>
<td>84.30</td>
<td>10.74</td>
<td>86.39</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>82.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 year-old</td>
<td>90.01</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>89.70</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>90.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year-old</td>
<td>88.13</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>88.14</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>88.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 year-old</td>
<td>81.44</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>82.37</td>
<td>9.90</td>
<td>80.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMSLSS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 year-old</td>
<td>91.05</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>90.40</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>91.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 year-old</td>
<td>89.82</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>89.91</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>89.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 year-old</td>
<td>83.26</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>83.89</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>82.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a percentage of children with low well-being (scored midpoint or below)

\textit{t}\text{-tests: }^*p<.01, ^{**}p<.05

The aspects of life with which the children were most satisfied (regardless of age) include mainly those relating to their family homes (house or flat where they lived, family life, the people they lived with and the things they had), and also their own health, feeling of safety, and forms of spending free time. Moreover, pupils from the 8-year-old group expressed a particularly high satisfaction with their bodies, whereas 10- and 12-year-old children valued highly doing things away from their homes and what may happen to them in the future.

For school communities particularly important can be the fact that far worse marks were given by the respondents to the aspects connected with school life (children in their class, relationship with teachers, life as a student). Low satisfaction with school life was indicated by approximately 15% of 8- and 12-year-olds and by nearly 9% of 10-year-olds. In each age group average assessments given by boys were lower than those given by girls. More research on different school life aspects (e.g., school
violence, relations with classmates and with teachers) is needed to better understand the reasons and to provide guidelines for school climate improvement.

Another topic that received relatively low scores was the area where the children lived (people in their area, the outdoor areas they could use). Among the oldest children the percentage expressing low satisfaction with the local area was nearly 12% (over 13% for girls) and thus it was more than two times higher than among 8-year-olds. It proves that, although in general both the number and the quality of playgrounds have significantly improved in Poland in recent years, they are usually dedicated to younger children. There is still a lot to do in designing places that address the unique needs and preferences of adolescents.

In addition, what attracts attention is a considerable group of children with a relatively quite low (as compared with other areas) level of satisfaction with their own bodies and with their self-confidence. It is symptomatic that nearly 23% of 12-year-old girls expressed dissatisfaction with their physical appearance, whereas among younger children the percentage of those dissatisfied with their bodies reached approximately 6%. These children need special attention, as body image dissatisfaction results not only in low SWB but also often leads to unhealthy practices, like eating disorders, smoking or alcohol abuse (Currie et al. 2012, p. 93).

The next topic concerned children’s rights. The study shows that the promotion of the awareness of children’s rights among Polish pupils brings good results. Over 70% gave a positive answer when asked if they knew about the rights they had and almost half said that he/she knew what the Convention on the Rights of the Child was. But it is cause for concern that merely 46% of the respondents were of the opinion that adults in Poland generally respected children’s rights. This percentage is the smallest among all European countries involved in the Children’s Worlds project. More qualitative research is needed to explore what are the least respected children’s rights in Poland.

In conclusion, the study of Polish children’s well-being based on their own voices shows that they are a very reliable source of information about their lives albeit from a different perspective and that we can learn a lot from them about how we can better their childhood.
Numerous studies from recent years show that Romania is among the poorest countries in the European Union. Moreover, allocations of GDP for key areas such as health, education, and social protection are very low compared to those in developed countries. The most vulnerable are the poorest families with children, those living in the rural areas, Roma, families with disabled children, dysfunctional families and those with single parents. Children also are part of the age groups with the highest risk of poverty (Varly, Iosifescu, Fartușnic, Andrei, & Herțeliu, 2014).

The economic difficulties facing a large percentage of families with children create a number of problems concerning health, participation in society and hence access to services such as health and education.

The problems these groups face are in the focus of policy makers concerned with identifying effective measures to meet their needs and to develop strategies at national level. In recent years, efforts have been made to amend the legislative framework to be consistent with international standards, and social protection measures for vulnerable social groups have been implemented. However, Romania still lacks integrated services to meet the needs of vulnerable families with children.

Despite these difficulties, many children in Romania do not report they are very affected by the problems that face their families. The Children’s Worlds study tends to confirm these results, also identified in previous studies. For example, Romanian children have had a higher perceived quality of life than those from Catalonia (Casas, Bălțătescu, Bertran, González, & Hatos, 2009), but also compared to some other countries in Latin America (Alfaro et al., 2015). This is rather surprising, given that Romanian adults are among the most dissatisfied with their lives in Europe (Bălțătescu, 2007) as well as in the world.

We should, however, remember that children from the other 14 countries in the study also have provided very positive answers to all the questions. For example, over
76% of study participants gave average scores from 9 to 10 to questions about their satisfaction with life as a whole (Rees & Main, 2015, p. 35). Moreover, the results for all 15 participating countries show that in contradiction with results of the adults, the average level of happiness in children is not correlated with GDP, a standard indicator of the wealth of the country (Bradshaw & Rees, 2015).

Whatever the explanation for the comparatively high levels of subjective well-being among Romanian children, results from the Children’s Worlds study show that, with age, the levels of their satisfaction with most areas of life drop. This result was also identified by previous studies (Bălțătescu, 2009; Casas, Bălțătescu, Bertran, González, & Hatos, 2013). It seems that with age comes a greater awareness of the problems children face.

Also, children living with a single parent or with a step-parent are less satisfied with their family life, consistent with the results of other studies (see for example Levin & Currie). In addition, children have identified problems with the way they can express their views within the family and how they are treated fairly.

We also observed differences between the urban and rural children regarding satisfaction with school. Children from rural areas are less satisfied, understandable given the precarious infrastructure of many schools in Romanian villages. A closer teacher-child relationship in rural schools seems to compensate for this problem: the children learning in these schools are more satisfied with the teacher-child relationship and with how they are listened to by the teachers.

Victimization is another problem. Romania is one of the countries with the highest levels among the 15 surveyed. It is quite common in Romanian schools (Jigău, Liiceanu, & Preoteasa, 2006; Bălțătescu, 2010), and children living with a single parent or a step-parent face it more often. Children in rural schools identified this problem more often than those in urban areas.

We also find differences regarding the children’s opportunities to spend time on playgrounds in the area where they live. While all the children found their neighbourhoods very safe, those living in rural areas have limited access to playgrounds, explainable given the poor infrastructure development in rural areas.
Thus, beyond the very high average levels of children’s subjective well-being in Romania, the survey results show that vulnerable categories have much lower levels of satisfaction. Children themselves identified some of the problems they face and their opinion should be taken into account.

When designing policies for children, young people and families, it is highly desirable to include special measures to protect children from rural areas and the Roma children. These policies should consider facilitating access to good living conditions and equal education, in order that their future outlook is not limited. Policies should also place more emphasis on offering services to families in need to reduce social inequality.

We must not forget that the family has the primary role in raising children and it is important that this support should go towards enabling parents to solve the problems they face.

Another important aspect is the child’s right to opinion, which is not respected in many cases either by the families or at school. Children and young people are able to make decisions on issues that affect them and it would be highly desirable for their views to be taken into account. This would contribute to the personal development of children. Thus, they can become responsible members of the communities they belong to, and actively involved in solving the problems faced by vulnerable categories.
Catalonia (Spain)

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ERIDIQV research team: www.udg.edu/eridiqv, University of Girona

The results of the second wave of the Children’s Worlds project in Catalonia have been extracted from the answers given to the questionnaires by a sample of 3,756 children.

Children in the group ages of 8, 10 and 12 are mostly very satisfied with their lives. However, one goal was to identify which subgroups display significantly lower subjective well-being than the population mean. Because we use a representative sample, we can estimate the absolute figure of any percentage in the overall population. What apparently is a very small percentage may represent hundreds or even thousands of children.

In Casas, Bello, González and Aligué (2013), using a representative Spanish sample, some of the subgroups identified have been reported (first wave data collection).

- Are in care, in the public child protection system
- Have parents who did not finish primary education
- Report that no adult is in paid employment at home
- Do not have access to ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies)
- Do not receive pocket money
- Perceive their family as less or much less wealthy than other families
- Do not feel safe
- Feel they cannot participate in decisions taken at home
- Have changed parents or carers during the last year

In the second wave questionnaire there were some changes in the items and the sample was limited to Catalonia. Therefore, we cannot strictly compare the results and the subgroups identified are not the same in all cases. On the other hand, data
analysis from the responses is still in process and more subgroups may still be identified.

However, we can already point out results that have clear practical implications.

- 45.4% of the children aged 8, 46.8% of those aged 10 and 49.7% of those aged 12 reported to be ‘often’ or ‘always’ worried by how much money their families have. This is consistent with European statistics reporting high rates of child poverty in Spain⁴.

- 1.8% of children report that friends are not nice to them and 2.8% think that they do not have enough friends. Because interpersonal relationships are very important for subjective well-being such situations need to be identified and faced in serious ways (at school and in the family). If the situation lasts long, it may have mental health consequences.

- 7.6% at 10 and 10.7% at 12 do not agree that they like going to school. Additionally, 1.2% aged 10 and 2% of the aged 12 report they do not agree that teachers listen to them and take what they say into account. Spain displays extremely high rates of school dropout, and demotivation at school should be faced with more appropriate programmes.

- 13.2% of 10-year-olds (5.6% of 12) that report having been hit more than 3 times in the last month by other children in their school and 8.8% (4.3% of 12) having been left out in their class also more than 3 times in one month, put into evidence a hidden serious problem. More efforts are pending to improve relationships and dynamics within the school context⁵.

- The most common use of time (every day or almost) is doing homework, followed by watching TV or listening to music. Spain is the country where children report having less time of their choice, because of so much homework. However, Spain does not rank very high in any of the skills evaluated by the PISA reports, demonstrating that doing homework as in Spain is not an efficient procedure to improve school outcomes.

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⁵ For an example of actions that can be adopted, see http://muhimu.es/educacion/kiva-acoso/
- Worrying percentages of children are unaware or unsure about their rights. UNICEF, the Catalan Parliament and different NGOs have published and broadly distributed documents on children’s rights and adapted versions of the Convention have been distributed to all Catalan schools. However, in many schools it seems that the information has not reached the children; this suggesting that current procedures aimed to guarantee that children are informed should be revised.

- The analyses taking into account demographic variables such as year group, gender, school and home context (urban, semi-urban and rural), school ownership (state-run versus state-subsidized) and the place of birth (Catalonia, other Spanish regions and abroad) reflect that levels of well-being are not uniformly distributed. Variations become even more dramatic when we take into account material deprivation. Therefore stronger efforts should be directed at those sub-groups experiencing lower levels of subjective well-being, such as children born abroad, those with higher material deprivation and ones living or attending schools in deprived urban areas. More attention should also be paid to the decreasing with age subjective well-being tendency along adolescence.

Special attention should also be devoted to changing adults’ attitude towards children so that their views are considered in all spheres of their lives.

Overall, results related to school indicate that there is much more room for improvement. Support to schooling should be even more intensive in the transition from primary to secondary school.

Some implications of these results involve challenges posed to scientific research, when a better knowledge of the situation or of the tendencies is needed; and some implications are political, because decision-making is required in order to initiate actions facing undesirable consequences for children, and such actions need indicators to be monitored and evaluated – including subjective indicators.

Certain countries have already started to systematically collect children’s subjective well-being data on an annual basis. Some phenomena can only be seriously analysed if we have regular data provided by children. Such information has also been very
useful to identify hidden vulnerabilities, as for example about how changes in their lives affect their subjective well-being (i.e., changing neighbourhood, school, or parents/carers). Such data collection requires political decisions to go ahead.

A serious challenge in Catalonia, and in all Spain, is how to involve schools in acknowledging the importance of having information on children’s perceptions, evaluations and aspirations from their own perspective. Perhaps politicians should work out how to better train teachers and other child professionals on these topics. We researchers also have a responsibility to make our results more accessible to teachers.

Many children do not feel that cities are very child-friendly, reporting that the municipality does not take children into account or listen to them.

Both schools and social policies should focus attention on promoting opportunities associated with a proper use of ICTs.

Political decisions should also be made to facilitate children’s relationships with their family by allowing a more easy coordination of parents and children’s time schedules.

Researchers need to seek out new ways of presenting to a wider audience survey results where children have provided their own views. Debates, social and in the media, are needed to improve awareness of children’s well-being. And perhaps we need more advice from children in order to better reach children’s audiences as well.
Children’s well-being in South Africa

In the current South African socio-political framework children have been afforded the highest priority within government, via affirmation of their rights. Not only have the rights and needs of children been entrenched in the development strategies of the government, but children themselves have been guaranteed socio-economic rights and protection from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. South Africa has a child population of 18.6 million, representing 37% of the total population, with 45% between the ages of 10–17 years, with a gender split of 49% female, and 51% male. However, the overwhelming majority of children, 11 out of 18 million (Hall, Woolard, Lake, & Smith, 2012), still live in impoverished and adverse conditions in this context. Due to a socio-political legacy of disenfranchisement, violence, oppression, and an institutionalised system of racism, children in South Africa are currently burdened by the effects of this onerous system (Dawes, Tredoux & Feinstein, 1989). This created, and has greatly contributed to the current milieu of importunate threats which children are exposed to, as well as violence and crime committed against children which remains a pervasive challenge within South Africa (DSD, DWCPD & UNICEF, 2012). However, although the determination and dedication of civic and government establishments have enhanced social change and legislative structure, the advantages have not been attained by every child. Evidently, children’s conditions and well-being continue to be unfavourable (Barbarin, 2003). Despite the South African government having commenced with several initiatives to lighten the burden of social inequality and deprivation for children and society at large, fundamental factors in relation to poverty, access to primary health care services, safety, education, and demarcated safe natural spaces for children still plague the majority of children. While there is information available on children’s objective well-being in the country, knowledge and information on the subjective well-being of
children have become important pursuits. It has also become increasingly important to obtain an understanding of what children regard as essential to their well-being.

The Children’s Worlds International Survey on Children’s Well-being (ISCWeB) was conducted in 2014 with children aged 8-12 years in the Western Cape province of South Africa in 29 primary schools, with a total sample of 3,284 children. This paper provides a brief overview on children’s satisfaction with school and local area. Furthermore, given the importance of bullying in the South African context, the paper also considers some of the findings of active and passive bullying.

**Children’s satisfaction with their local area**

Owing to the unsafe contexts of children’s neighbourhood environments, children within all three age groups were unhappy with the safety of their area: this appeared to decrease with age which may be explained by the fact that older children have more mobility and are thus more aware of the unsafe elements in their neighbourhoods. This was also reflected in the dissatisfaction with the lack of places to play in their areas (see Table 4 below).

**Table 4: Satisfaction with the area you live in**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>10 years</th>
<th></th>
<th>12 years</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area you live in general</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>8.02</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children’s satisfaction with school

Children in South Africa are generally happy about their school life. Children enjoyed going to school, and were satisfied with their school experience. In comparison to other countries, children from South Africa were amongst the happiest at school. Further qualitative work with children about their well-being pointed to how they are happy at school because they feel safe there, and for many children from low socio-economic status communities they receive their only meal for the day at school (owing to school feeding schemes). Having friends at school was another reason children preferred being at school than at home (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: How much you agree with various aspects of school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8 years</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>10 years</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>12 years</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like going to school</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1129</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your school experience</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your relationship with teachers</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1131</td>
<td>9.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe at school</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1123</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from 0-4, with 0 indicating ‘I do not agree’ and 4 indicating ‘Totally agree’. Mean scores closer to 4 show high agreement with the item.

Bullying

There were two items which asked children about bullying (passive- left out by other children in your class, and, active- hit by other children in your school). Although most children indicated that they were never hit, or left out by other children in their class, there was a high proportion of children across the three age groups who were hit once, two or three times, or more than three times. This may be due to the violent contexts which children find themselves in which impacts on their daily lives.
Discussion and conclusions

While research on children’s subjective well-being in South Africa (SA) is in its infancy, the data from the ISCWeB have been illuminating in beginning to traverse through understanding how children make sense of their lives. As SA is a developing country, it ranks poorly compared to the developed countries in the project.

We have begun to supplement this work with qualitative, participatory work with children which has begun to paint a picture of children’s subjective perceptions of
their well-being (see Adams & Savahl, 2016; Savahl et al., 2015). As children’s concerns around safety are paramount in this context, it is essential to address these concerns, and to make children’s communities safer for them.
Over 7,000 Korean children in 3rd and 5th grades of primary schools and 7th grade in middle schools participated in the 2013 ISCWeB study. The study was based on a nationally representative sample utilizing a random cluster sampling strategy.

The study results show that most Korean children live with two parents and report that they feel safe at home. Of the children aged 10 and 12 years, about 90% reported that they live with two parents. More than 80% of these children strongly agreed that they ‘feel safe at home”. Some variations in their satisfaction with home and family life were found by family type. Children living with both parents were more satisfied with the various aspects of family life than their counterparts in other family types.

There are moderate levels of migration among Korean children. Among the 10 and 12 year old study population, about 19 percent reported that they had moved house in the past year and about 7 percent had changed schools.

For many Korean children, obtaining essential material goods is not a problem. When they were asked whether they owned 10 things that are considered to be important during contemporary childhood, only a small proportion of the children (less than 5%) lacked more than three items. There were significant variations in number of items lacking by gender and family type. Boys lacked significantly more items than girls for all age groups. Children living with both parents lacked significantly fewer items than children in other family types.

Most children aged 8 to 12 in South Korea are relatively satisfied and happy with their lives. On life as a whole, about 40% of the 10- and 12-year-olds and 60% of the 8-year-olds were totally satisfied with their life. However, a fairly large proportion of 10- and 12-year-old children also reported to be unhappy (5-10%), which was scored as the mid-point or below various measures asking the subjective well-being of children.
Most Korean children are happy with their friends and satisfied with places where they live. Children’s views about school were also very positive. Almost half of the children totally agreed that they feel safe at school and their teachers treat them fairly. While school bullying is not a problem for most children, still a significant proportion of children experience bullying. About 16% children reported that they were hit by other children in school at least once and about 6% children reported that they were ostracized by other children in class.

For Korean children, the most common use of time was doing homework (66% of children do homework every day or almost every day) followed by watching TV (64% of children watch TV every day or almost every day). When asked about their life and future, 10- and 12-year-old children reported that they are most satisfied with health and the things they want to be good at. However, they report low levels of satisfaction in other aspects of life. Among them, they reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with appearance, their body, and self-confidence. The competitive culture in Korea, as well as emphasis on appearance and being thin, seems to be linked with children’s low level of satisfaction in self-image and self-confidence.

There are some important and interesting differences in children’s well-being responses by age, and gender. When asked about their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their life, the levels of positive responses were lowest among the older age group (age 12). Older children were less satisfied with self, school, life, possessions, and future. The significant difference in the proportion of 12-year-old children who are unhappy compared to younger children in elementary school was quite alarming and disturbing. For example, the OLS (overall life satisfaction) score of 10-year-old children was 8.21 and the score of 12-year-old children was 7.40. In particular, 12-year-old children tend to report lower levels of satisfaction in the aspects of freedom, time use, and self-confidence. In addition, these children were also unhappy with the outdoor areas they can use, body, appearance, and school marks. The significant drop in the well-being of these children could partly be explained by changes in self, who is entering adolescence, school atmosphere, parent’s emphasis on studying, and level of competition as they enter middle school. In addition, older children spend less time with family, lacked fewer essential items, have fewer experiences of bullying, and are more likely to be satisfied with the local area.
Significant differences across gender were also noticed. In general, boys reported higher levels of well-being than girls. Boys were more likely to be satisfied with schools, life, and the future than girls. On the other hand, girls were more likely to be satisfied with the local area and their possessions. In general, girls tended to spend more time with family and lack fewer items. Girls were more likely to help with housework, spend time doing homework, and watch TV. On the other hand, boys were more likely to play sports or exercise, use a computer, and take classes outside of school time. Boys were also more likely to have experienced being hit by or left out by other children in school.

When international comparisons were made across the 15 countries using ISCWeB’s individual level data, we found that Korean children had the lowest level of life satisfaction and positive affect. In order to understand what makes Korean children comparatively less satisfied with their life, we decomposed the levels subjective well-being measured by SLSS (Student’s Life Satisfaction Scale) by seven areas that are known to be important for children’s well-being. The areas are: self, environment, learning, leisure, money, relationships, and freedom to choose. By decomposing each country’s observed level of SLSS into the seven factors, we examined how much of the variations of the overall SLSS across the countries can be explained. We found that the ‘unexplained’ portions of SLSS are only moderately correlated with the overall levels of SLSS. This finding implies that the variations of subjective well-being across the countries cannot be explained completely by those ‘unobserved’ reporting biases of happiness. In other words, the so-called ‘East-Asian happiness gap’ cannot be the sole reason why Korean children report lower levels of subjective well-being. We found self and freedom are the strongest factors predicting the overall level of SLSS, whereas learning and money had the weakest effects. The findings suggest that lower levels of self-confidence and sense of less freedom to choose among Korean children are major reasons for lower life satisfaction.
Introduction

Turkey offers a paradoxical context for exploring the subjective well-being of children. While the macroeconomics reflect an economic boost, child poverty rates are still significantly higher than for adults and there are very limited social policies that target the inequalities that exist in the structural aspects of children’s lives such as the quality of education. Despite this, in the ISCIWeb Survey of 15 countries, children from Turkey consistently reported one of the highest levels of satisfaction, despite the country’s much lower scores across a number of HDI indicators, GDP per capita as well as PISA scores. How can the discrepancies between the objective and subjective indicators of well-being be understood in the context of a country that differs from the European countries in terms of affluence? While the answer to this question can’t be adequately addressed without further study, it is important to explore the high satisfaction rates in the context of much insecurity that exists in the society. While Turkish children appear to be one of the most happy/satisfied children across the 15 countries based on the global scales of subjective well-being, Turkey was among the countries with higher rates of inequality of life satisfaction (Rees & Main (2015). Thus the issue of whether socio-economic inequality is linked with the variation in satisfaction scores was further taken under investigation. Previous research has also reflected the need to address the inequalities in children’s lives to better understand their subjective well-being (Uyan-Semerci, P., Müderrisoğlu, S.; Karatay, A; Ekim-Akkan, B; Kılıç, Z; Oy, B.; & Uran, Ş., 2012)

Data collection and analysis

The survey was conducted in the biggest city of Turkey, Istanbul, which hosts nearly 18 million people. Ninety-four percent of the children attend state-run schools and this survey was conducted in state-run schools. Findings were analyzed by gender.
and age groups as well as grouping children into ‘poor’ and ‘not poor’ categories to address the issue of inequalities. This grouping is based on the culturally relevant material deprivation items (‘not having own bed’, ‘don’t have a school uniform in good condition’, ‘don’t have own clothes’, and ‘house is not heated well’) that was included in the Turkish Survey.

**Global satisfaction scales**

As Table 6 shows, while gender did not make an important difference on the Satisfaction Scales (SLSS-4, BMSLSS, PWI-SC, OLS), 12-year-olds reported lower levels of satisfaction compared to 10-year-olds. This age effect was also seen in a number of countries in the survey. In terms of looking at the impact of material inequality among the children, those children who are in the ‘poor’ group consistently reported much lower levels of satisfaction. These differences between poor and not poor children in terms of the Satisfaction Scales are further echoed on the specific domains of subjective well-being as well. This paper focuses on two aspects of children’s well-being – family and friend relationships and school experience – based on poverty grouping.

**Table 6: Means of satisfaction scales by gender, age, and poverty group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>8 year olds</th>
<th>10 year olds</th>
<th>12 year olds</th>
<th>Not Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLSS-4</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMSLSS</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWI-SC</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLS</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family and friends – relationship domain**

Poor children’s relationships with family and friends seem to be negatively affected in the context of material deprivation. While the overall scores remain high, which may need to be explained by further investigation about the vicissitudes of children’s
thinking when answering these questions, there appears to be a meaningful drop in the poor children’s satisfaction scores (See Table 7).

Table 7: Means of satisfaction scores for family and friends by gender, age, and poverty group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>10 year olds</th>
<th>12 year olds</th>
<th>Not Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with family life</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with people you live with</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with friends</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School experience

School experience involves many layers of interwoven social interactions with peers, teachers, overall experience as well as academic learning and success in which issues of difference or lack tend to be heightened. Thus, looking at the impact of material deprivation in terms of whether poor children’s school experience is felt to be less positive was investigated. Table 8 shows that ‘other children in your class’, ‘school marks’, and ‘school experience’ were the areas where the gap between the not poor and poor children was wide. Poor children also reported higher frequencies of being hit or left out, thus culminating in more negative experiences at school. The experiences in school are very significant for children as it is one of the more pertinent arenas in their lives in which they come to experience themselves vis-à-vis others.
Table 8: Satisfaction in school experience domain by gender, age, poverty group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>10 year olds</th>
<th>12 year olds</th>
<th>Not Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other children</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School marks</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School experience</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things you have learned</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your life as a student</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with teachers</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

This short paper underlines the importance of taking into consideration the experience of economic/material inequalities that negatively impact two important domains (relationships and school experience) of subjective well-being of children in Turkey. It may be the case that for countries that are less affluent compared to the European counterparts, the relevance of material inequalities makes a significant impact on children’s subjective well-being in the absence of state policies that target the existing structural differences in children’s lives.
References


