



# Children's Worlds National Report

## Poland

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## 1. Introduction

This is an initial report of the results from the Children's Worlds survey conducted in Poland, in the Wielkopolskie voivodship in the first half of 2014.

### 1.1 Context and population

#### *External influences*

Poland is located in Central Europe on the coast of the Baltic Sea. It is mainly a lowland country, only having mountain ranges (the Carpathians, the Sudetes) in its southern part. The area of Poland covers 312.7 thousand km<sup>2</sup> which makes it the 9<sup>th</sup> largest country in Europe. The capital of Poland is Warsaw; the city ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the European Union as regards population.

According to estimates produced by the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), at the end of 2013 Poland had a population of 38.5 million people which translates into an average population density of 123 people/km<sup>2</sup>. As regards the number of inhabitants, Poland occupies the 33<sup>rd</sup> place in the world and the 6<sup>th</sup> position among the European Union countries. In respect of population density, Poland is placed in the group of medium populated European states. Women constitute nearly 52% of Poland's total population. There are 107 women per 100 men (111 in the city, 101 in the rural population). Men outnumber women in the population up to 48 years of age, where there are 99 women per each 100 men.

Since the beginning of the 1980s both the number of children and their share in the total population of Poland have been decreasing. At present, the fertility rate in Poland amounts to 1.3 (1.2 in towns, 1.4 in rural areas) and is among the lowest in Europe. According to a widespread opinion, having children in Poland is very expensive. Therefore, young people more and more frequently decide first to acquire proper education in order to gain economic stabilisation and postpone starting or increasing a family until later. This shifts the most frequent age of entering into marriage upwards and delays the age of women giving birth to their first child (which nowadays exceeds 27 years on average)<sup>1</sup>

At present the share of urban inhabitants in the country's total population has reached 60.5%. In the year 2013 an inhabitant of Poland was, on average, 38.7 years old (median age). This figure was lower for men (37.0 years) than for women (40.5 years). It is estimated that at the end of 2013 there were approximately 7 million people under the age of 18 years old, which constitutes about 18.2% of the total population (for comparison, in 1990 this number was 29%). Children aged 8 to 12 years represented about 4.7% of the country's total population in 2013<sup>2</sup>.

As a result of the administrative reform of 1999, the area of Poland was divided into 16 voivodships, largely based on the country's historic regions. The current study of the subjective dimension of children's life quality was conducted in Wielkopolskie voivodship located in the central-western part of the country. The capital of this region is Poznań.

Wielkopolskie voivodship covers an area of approximately 29 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, which represents 9.5% of the country's area, making it the second largest voivodship in Poland. The number of people in

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<sup>1</sup> Podstawowe informacje o rozwoju demograficznym Polski do 2014, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Podstawowe informacje o rozwoju demograficznym Polski do 2013 roku, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2014.

Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) amounts to nearly 3.5 million, which constitutes about 9% of the country's population. Over 55% of the region's population live in cities, and 51.4% of its inhabitants are women. At the end of 2013 the number of children aged 8-12 years in Wielkopolskie voivodship amounted to about 171 thousand (4.9% of the region's population)<sup>3</sup>.

Ethnically Poland is one of the most homogeneous states in Europe. A vast majority of the country's inhabitants (94.8%) are people who identify themselves exclusively with Polish nationality, 2.3% declare a multiple national-ethnic identity (Polish and non-Polish) and only 1.5 % are of other than Polish nationality. The most numerous ethnic minorities in Poland include Silesians (approx. 850 thousand), Kashubians (approx. 230 thousand) and Germans (approx.150 thousand)<sup>4</sup>.

Although there are about 160 officially registered Churches and religious denominations in Poland, the country is virtually homogeneous as regards religion. According to various estimations, most people (87-96%) belong to the Roman Catholic Church<sup>5</sup>. The second largest official denomination is the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church with about 500 thousand followers, mainly representatives of the Belorussian minority inhabiting the area of eastern voivodships. Protestantism is the third largest Christian religion in Poland as regards the number of followers (about 130 thousand).

Poland has the largest economy in Central Europe which in recent years has been one of the fastest growing EU economies. Poland has experienced the highest cumulative real GDP growth since 2008 (ca. 20%). According to the Eurostat data, at the end of 2013 Poland's GDP amounted to 390 bn euros. Since joining the EU in 2004, Polish GDP per capita increased from 50.5% of the EU28 average to 68% and reached the level of 17500 PPS<sup>6</sup>.

As reported by the Eurostat, at the end of 2013 the rate of unemployment in Poland was 10.3% (as compared with 19.1% in 2004). Wielkopolskie voivodship, where the Children's Worlds study was conducted, is characterised by lower than the national average unemployment rate which at the end of 2013 amounted to 8.8%<sup>7</sup>.

### *Family and Child Policies*

In Poland there is no consistent child policy and the activities of various state institutions are neither coordinated nor monitored top-down. Moreover, there are no mechanisms to facilitate the analysis of child-related expenses and to assess their effectiveness. Additionally, information on the situation of children in Poland is limited and focuses mainly on children viewed from the perspective of their families<sup>8</sup>.

In the face of the current demographic situation there is an ongoing lively debate in Poland about family policy which many people see as ineffective and insufficient. Studies on Polish people's procreation needs show that most young people would like to have at least two children, however a

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<sup>3</sup> *Population, Vital Statistics and Migration in Wielkopolskie Voivodship in 2013*, Statistical Office in Poznan, Poznan 2014.

<sup>4</sup> *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland 2013*, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Churches, Denominations as well as National and Ethnic Associations in Poland 2009-2011*, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2013.

<sup>6</sup> EUROSTAT, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/> [data dostępu: 2014-09-04].

<sup>7</sup> *Unemployment in the EU28 regions*, Eurostat News Release no 60/2014.

<sup>8</sup> *Raport organizacji pozarządowych z realizacji postanowień Konwencji o Prawach Dziecka*, Warsaw 2014, <http://www.unicef.pl/Media/Files/Raport-Alternatywny-polskich-organizacji-pozarządowych>.

number of conditions are an obstacle to their plans<sup>9</sup>. The most frequently indicated reasons for such a situation are: instability of the labour market, difficulties in combining professional career with parental responsibilities, insufficient housing conditions or, finally, high costs of child-rearing, particularly the costs of education.

The pro-family policy solutions suggested so far, e.g. a one-off childbirth allowance, did not reverse the declining tendency of fertility indicators. Child-related tax reliefs in Poland are regarded as insufficient. Special family allowances granted to the poorest families are also very low. There are hopes for hindering the birth rate decline through, among other things, a longer maternity/parental leave introduced in 2013 and extended to 52 weeks during which a maternity allowance is disbursed.

Since 2014 a nationwide Big Family Card has been in force. It is granted to families with at least three children. Thanks to this solution people in multi-child families can take advantage of numerous discounts, among others in shopping centres, or when they pay for services or cultural and recreational activities in the area of the whole country. Similar solutions of a narrower range are introduced by some local government units.

### *Education System*

According to Poland's constitution, the state is obliged to guarantee its citizens a universal and equal access to education. By assumption, the universality of educational system is not only to equalise educational opportunities but, above all, it has to offer children equal social opportunities and to prevent the inheritance of social exclusion. Despite this, in certain social environments, children's access to a proper level of education is difficult.

According to existing law<sup>10</sup>, schools in Poland are divided into public schools which offer free education under the core curriculum and recruit students on the principle of common access to education, and non-public schools financed by fees from parents or other sources (e.g. grants from foundations). As all non-public primary schools and non-public junior high schools have the privileges of a public school, they are entitled to education subsidies. Senior secondary schools with the rights of public schools may also benefit from those subsidies.

Education in Poland is compulsory for children aged from 5 or 6 to 18 years of age. At present obligatory education comprises one year of pre-school education, six years of primary school, three years of junior high school (secondary school of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree) and next – secondary school of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree.

Nowadays in Poland there is an ongoing debate about lowering the age at which compulsory schooling is to start. According to the assumptions of the reform, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015 all six-year-olds will be obliged to start their education in the first grade of primary school. This change gave rise to a wide wave of protests and objections from parents who want to decide themselves at which age (6 or 7 years) their children should start school. Their main arguments are that not all six-year-olds are ready to start schooling and that many schools are not sufficiently prepared in terms of their infrastructure to admit such young pupils.

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<sup>9</sup> Postawy prokreacyjne Polaków, Komunikat z badań BS/4/2010, CBOS Public Opinion Research Center, Warsaw 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty, Dz.U. 1991 nr 95 poz. 425.

Compulsory education is free of charge and the only criterion for admitting a child into a primary school is his/her age. Until the year 2014 parents have been able to send their children to school either at the age of six or seven. However, due to the fact that the school-starting age has been lowered, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015 all six-year-olds will be obliged to start their education in the first grade of primary school.

There is a visible discrepancy between accessibility to, and quality of, education in rural areas and in (big) cities. City schools are often more modern and better equipped, with a wider range of extra activities. The problem lies both in the qualifications of teachers working in villages or small towns and in accessibility of educational institutions. In recent years this situation has been aggravated by a progressive process of liquidation of schools due to demographic decline and a decreasing number of pupils. Schools are often located far away from a child's home and transport infrastructure is sometimes insufficient. Due to the necessity of bearing additional commuting costs, young people from the rural areas much less frequently attend schools which are regarded as more reputable and which provide better opportunities to obtain education at higher levels.

An additional burden on family budgets is expenditures on textbooks, school accessories, private lessons and after-school activities. Some families simply have to resign from them, which means that children from the poorest families are less frequently successful at school. Although part of the children from the poorest families receive some aid from the state (education grants in cash or in material form, e.g. free textbooks), the scope and scale of this aid still remains far from being sufficient.

Only a very small percentage of pupils in Poland (approx. 3%) attend non-public primary or junior high schools. According to general opinion, non-public schools facilitate a better development of a child's abilities and interests. Moreover, they guarantee a better treatment of pupils, more safety and a slightly higher level of education. Despite this, as shown by the studies, most Poles are of the opinion that it is better to send children to a public school because it gives the young people an opportunity to stay in a more diversified company and to get acquainted with peers who seem to be more valuable<sup>11</sup>.

In the school year 2012/2013 in Poland there were 13,555 primary schools attended by over 2.16 million children. For Greater Poland those numbers amounted to 1n227 primary schools and 208 thousand pupils respectively.

There were 13 pupils per teacher in the school year 2012/2013. The average class size was 18.5 school children. The Polish legal regulations define the maximum number of children in a class only for grades 1 to 3 of primary school; from September 2014 this number amounts to 25 pupils (formerly 26)<sup>12</sup>.

### *Family environment*

Traditional family is recognised in Poland as the most important value of social life. According to the data from the latest National Census, in 2011 there were nearly 11 million families, including 5.5 million of those with children aged up to 24 years who remained dependent family members. The

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<sup>11</sup> Piekarczyk M., *Jak Polacy postrzegają szkoły publiczne i niepubliczne: preferencje dotyczące szkolnictwa w Polsce*, Center for Research on Prejudice, Warsaw 2014.

<sup>12</sup> *Organisation of the Education System in Poland*, Eurydice 2014.

majority of families with children are married couples, however their share is decreasing in favour of one-parent families and partnership unions which nowadays constitute respectively 23.6% and 2.6% of families with dependent children .

Among Polish families with dependent children more than half are those with only one child. Only one out of eight Polish families is a multi-child family having at least 3 children, with three-fifths of them being rural families. Nearly 77% of dependent children aged 0 to 24 live in a married couple plus children family type, 20% live in single parent families and only 3% live with parents remaining in a partnership union (cohabitation). Nearly one in four children (young people) under 25 lives in a multi-child family<sup>13</sup>

The most popular type of family life in Poland is a small (nuclear) family. A multi-generation family consisting of grandparents, parents and children is a much less frequent type and the main reason for living with the third generation is housing or economic problems. Contemporary families, despite tendencies to live on their own, maintain strong relationships with families of their origin. Grandparents very often play a significant role, taking care of their grandchildren and substituting overworked parents who have less and less time for their children.

The state of the housing market is a big problem for the Polish families. Poland lags far behind the EU countries as regards the number of flats per 1,000 inhabitants. High prices of flats, problems with accessibility of housing loans and high rental costs are responsible for the fact that the Poles move out of their family house relatively late. Moreover, Polish flats are small. Taking into account the European standards, over 40% of Poland's society live in overcrowded dwellings and this indicator is even higher for the families with children.

### *Everyday life*

School lessons usually start at 8 a.m. The number of lesson hours differs, depending on the level of education. As a rule children stay from 4 to 7 hours in primary school; in junior high school and in high school the number of lessons is bigger, up to 9 hours a day. When the number of pupils is large, schools organise lessons in two shifts; then some of the children go to school in the morning and the remainder start their lessons in the afternoon. There are about 20% of such schools in Poland<sup>14</sup>

Most schools offer their pupils hot meals (paid for) but for the children whose families are in a difficult financial situation those meals are subsidised or refunded. Moreover, many schools implement programs financed from the EU budget, e.g. 'Milk at school' or 'Fruit and vegetables at school', offering the pupils (free of charge) fresh vegetable and fruit, fruit juices, milk and dairy products .

After lessons some children take advantage of the opportunity to participate free of charge in extra classes in the selected subjects offered by their school (circles of interest). School common rooms provide care for children (mainly the younger ones) until they are collected by their caregivers. Extra courses are popular with pupils from more affluent families. They usually take place in the afternoons and evenings and they are organised by private institutions (teaching e.g. foreign languages, playing musical instruments, sports and the like). Unfortunately, many children prefer to spend their leisure time passively at home, watching TV or sitting behind a computer. When the

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<sup>13</sup> Gospodarstwa domowe i rodziny. Charakterystyka demograficzna. NSP 2011, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of National Education, <http://men.gov.pl/en/>.

weather is fine more active children meet their friends in the housing estate playgrounds, sports playing fields (in towns) or backyards (in rural areas).

The Polish people willingly spend their days off from work and learning with their families, most frequently outside their homes. In recent years family cycling trips made at weekends have become popular. Other leisure time activities popular among Polish families include going out together to the cinema, to the zoo or to the swimming pool, and in winter time – to the ice rink. Shopping malls are also a fairly popular place to spend leisure time. Shopping together sometimes takes even a few hours and usually ends with a meal eaten with the whole family in one of the local restaurants .

Summer holidays in Poland last two months. In addition, children have two weeks of holidays in winter. Moreover, the periods around Christmas, New Year, and Easter are free from school. Only the children from 50% of the Polish households go on holiday outside the place of their residence. Children from big cities spend their holidays outside home much more frequently, whereas only one-third of those from the rural areas can take a holiday rest in other places. The most frequent reason for this is financial problems<sup>15</sup>. For the children whose caregivers cannot afford to send them on holiday, the so-called day camps are organised. Children spend their free time where they live, taking part in the events organised by various institutions.

### *Unequal childhood*

A significant problem for many children in Poland is growing up in conditions of poverty and unemployment. According to the data of 2011, one in five people under the age of 18 lives at-risk-of-poverty, 35% of children are receiving family allowance, and nearly 16% are benefiting from social assistance. These indicators are even higher for children from single-parent families and from multi-child families, mainly those living in rural areas and small towns<sup>16</sup>

For those children functioning under poverty means difficulties in satisfying their basic needs, such as food, hygiene and health protection, appropriate clothing, living conditions or participation in culture. Poverty also poses a serious threat to their proper socialisation. Children from the poorest families are rarely sent to nurseries and kindergartens. At school such children have problems in dealing with their peers and often experience exclusion, among others due to the fact that they have no branded clothes or trendy gadgets. If those children have no support from their parents and/or if they have no conditions to do homework at home, their results are worse, which exposes them to reprimand from teachers<sup>17</sup>.

Another problem for children from poor families is work. Those children, especially in multi-child families, are frequently much more burdened with household duties than their peers. Very often it is the eldest daughter who bears the biggest burden, taking over from her mother, among others, the responsibility of caring for the younger siblings. A characteristic feature of the rural poverty is paid seasonal jobs in agriculture, taken up by children mainly at weekends and during holidays<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> *Wycieczki wypoczynkowe i wakacyjna praca zarobkowa uczniów*, Komunikat z Badań BS/135/2013, CBOS Public Opinion Research Center, Warsaw 2013

<sup>16</sup> *Dzieci korzystające ze świadczeń pomocy społecznej w Polsce w 2011 r.*, Statistical Office in Cracow, Cracow 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Wójcik Sz., *Ubóstwo dzieci*, Dziecko Krzywdzone, nr 3(36)/2011, Nobody's Children Foundation, p. 47-60.

<sup>18</sup> Tarkowska E., *Ubóstwo dzieci w Polsce*, Ekspertyza na zamówienie EAPN Polska., <http://www.eapn.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Ubostwo-dzieci.pdf>

### *Children's rights*

The protection of child rights in Poland is guaranteed by Art.72 of the Republic of Poland's Constitution and the Polish solutions as regards the child protection rights comply with international legal standards<sup>9</sup>, above all with the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989.

Poland was the country which in 1978 suggested that the UN Human Rights Commission should enact the Convention on the Rights of the Child and submitted a project which served as a point of reference for 11 years of work on the final version of this document. Poland was also one of the first countries to sign this Convention (26<sup>th</sup> January 1990).

Whether provisions of the Constitution and resolutions of the Convention are observed in Poland is monitored by the Spokesperson for Child's Rights. The Spokesperson for Child's Rights is a constitutional controlling authority who undertakes actions to ensure a full and harmonious development to each child, with respect for his/her dignity and individuality<sup>19</sup>.

### **1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome**

Due to financial and time limitations, the study was conducted among primary school pupils from Wielkopolskie (Greater Poland) voivodship.

Taking into account the character of available information, the scheme of selecting a representative group of respondents was based upon multistage, stratified random sampling, and the prepared sampling frame was a list of 1148 primary schools which were assigned weights proportional to their size, expressed by the total number of class groups for grades 1 to 6. In accordance with the project's assumptions, the sampling frame did not include 65 schools providing special education for children with intellectual disabilities representing ca. 5.4% of primary schools in the region.

The minimum target sample size in this research project was 1000 children in each age group (8, 10, and 12 years). Taking into account the average class size in the region, this required a random selection of at least 53 primary schools. However, taking into account the fact that some school children might be absent on the day the survey was to be conducted and that some of them might refuse to participate in the study, the sample size was increased to 65 schools.

Because schools were selected with probabilities proportional to the total number of class groups, only one class group for each children's age group (from 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade) was randomly selected from each sampled school.

Expecting that children's well-being will differ due to the place of residence, steps were taken to ensure that children from individual regions of the voivodship and those from rural and urban schools, public and non-public, were properly represented in the sample. Therefore, a random selection of the sample was conducted for 13 strata on the basis of three factors. The first one was type of school – public and non-public. Taking into account the proportion between the number of classes from public and non-public schools (ca. 5.2%), we sampled only 3 non-public schools without any further stratification. Public schools were divided into 12 strata using the other two criteria: territorial unit (6 NTS3 subregions) and area type (urban or rural).

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<sup>19</sup> Biuro Rzecznika Praw Dziecka, <http://brpd.gov.pl/>.

According to Polish law parental consent is not obligatory. Nonetheless, some schools decided that it was required, which consequently decreased the number of potential respondents. Thus, was responsible for the fact that finally the survey included 64 class groups of 8-year-olds, 63 groups of 10-year-olds, and 62 groups of 12-year-olds. The total number school children participating in the survey was 3272 (1078 from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 1156 from 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 1038 from 6<sup>th</sup> grade).

After checking the collected material as regards contents and formal requirements, 3157 respondents were finally qualified for further analysis (1021 8-year-olds, 1119 10-year-olds, and 1017 12-year-olds). Weights were assigned to all the respondents, which made it possible to balance deviations in the sample's structure, caused mainly by the fact that eight of the schools or classes randomly selected for the study refused to participate in it (we were able to replace six of these schools).

## 2. Results

### 2.1 The participants

The study of children's well-being in Greater Poland (Wielkopolskie voivodship) was carried out among primary school children, from grades 2, 4, and 6. This means that, apart from a few exceptions, the age of respondents invited to participate the study fell within 8-9 years (2<sup>nd</sup> grade), 10-11 years (4<sup>th</sup> grade) and 12-13 years (6<sup>th</sup> grade). To maintain consistency across all national reports the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade will be referred as "8 years-old" group, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade as "10 years-old" group and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade as "12 years-old" group.

Out of the 3157 school children participating in the study 48% were girls. In individual age categories (8, 10, and 12 years) the percentage of girls amounted to: 46.2%, 47.5% and 50.5% respectively.

Taking into account the type and location of schools taking part in the study, it was established that children from urban schools constituted 57.7% of all respondents (57.9% of 8-year-olds, 57.8% of 10-year-olds, and 57.4% of 12-year-olds), whereas only one out of 30 pupils attended non-public school.

When considering birthplace, children in Poland may be regarded as a very homogeneous group. Nearly all young respondents from Greater Poland (99.5%) declared they were born in Poland.

### 2.2 Your home and the people you live with

Children were asked to describe their family situation. Eight-year-olds were asked to answer a reduced set of questions.

A small percentage of both 10- and 12-year-olds regularly spent their nights in two different houses with different parents. More than 50 per cent of the children spent nights in the same house but occasionally slept in other places. This percentage was slightly higher among 10-year-olds (58%) than 12-year-olds (54%) – Table 1. Nearly all of the children included in the study (over 99%) lived in their family homes. The remaining small minority lived with a foster family or in a children's home.

Table 1: Living arrangements among 10- and 12-year-olds (%)

	10 year-old	12 year-old
I always sleep in the same home	40.4	45.1
I usually sleep in the same home, but sometimes sleep in other places (for example a friend's or grandparents')	58.0	54.1
I regularly sleep in two different homes with different adults	1.6	0.8

86.6% of 10-year-olds and 82.3% of 12-year-olds lived in a family with both their mother and father – Table 2. Approximately 8.5% of 10-year-old children and 10% of 12-year-olds were living in a lone-parent family. Nearly one-third of the children in both age groups lived with their grandmothers, which means that multi-generation families are not rare (almost 20% of 10-year-olds and 18% of 12-year-olds lived with both a grandmother and a grandfather). A substantial percentage (nearly three-quarters) of children lived with siblings.

Table 2: The 10- and 12-year-old's family composition (adults) (%)

	10 year-old	12 year-old
Mother and father	86.6	82.3
Mother and partner	4.3	6.0
Father and partner	0.2	0.5
Lone mother	8.0	8.9
Lone father	0.4	1.1
Other	0.6	1.3

A vast majority of the respondents (nearly 95%) positively (*agree a lot, totally agree*) evaluated their sense of safety at home (Table 3). A slightly higher percentage of the respondents who totally agreed when answering this question was observed among older children. Similar results were obtained when the place to study at home was assessed. Almost 95% of children from each age group declared they had good conditions to prepare for school at home.

Table 3: The children's view about their home and family life (%)

	Age group	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe at home	8 year-old	0.7	1.6	4.7	6.5	86.5
	10 year-old	0.9	0.9	3.0	5.3	89.9
	12 year-old	1.4	0.6	1.9	6.5	89.6
I have a place to study at home	8 year-old	1.3	2.0	3.8	6.8	86.1
	10 year-old	0.9	1.2	1.7	5.4	90.8
	12 year-old	1.4	1.5	2.3	4.9	89.9
My parents (or the people who look after me) listen to me and take what I say into account	8 year-old	2.5	4.8	9.8	18.6	64.3
	10 year-old	1.9	3.0	8.1	21.0	66.0
	12 year-old	3.2	2.4	10.2	27.0	57.2
We have a good time together in my family	8 year-old	1.0	1.9	4.9	7.1	85.1
	10 year-old	0.8	1.8	3.5	10.1	83.8
	12 year-old	2.6	2.3	8.0	19.4	67.7
My parents (or the people who look after me) treat me fairly	8 year-old	2.6	2.3	5.6	11.0	78.5
	10 year-old	1.1	2.5	5.2	14.1	77.1
	12 year-old	3.6	3.5	7.8	19.0	66.1

As concerns listening to what children have to say, the assessment of their parents (or carers) was slightly worse. Although in each of the three age groups the respondents' opinions were mostly positive (over 80%), nearly 7.5% of 8-year-olds said that their parents did not listen to them (for 10- and 12-year-olds this percentage reached the level of between 5 and 6%). Children enjoy spending time together with their families. In the group of the oldest respondents there were 87.3% positive opinions (*agree a lot, totally agree*) as regards this subject, accompanied by 4.9% of negative answers (*don't agree, agree a little bit*). Among 8-year-olds those values reached 92.2%, and among 10-year-olds 93.9%.

School children think that parents treat them fairly. Nevertheless, the percentage of extremely positive responses (*totally agree*) was smaller among children from the oldest age group (Table 3). 78.5% of 8-year-olds and 77.1% of 10-year-olds fully agreed with the statement under consideration, but in the group of 12-year-olds this indicator amounted to 66.1%. In that group the number of negative ratings was larger (7.1% against 4.9% among 8-year-olds and 3.6% among 10-year-olds).

Positive opinions also prevailed in the next group of statements (Table 4). On a suitable scale (0-4 in the group of 8-year-olds, 0-10 in the groups of 10- and 12-year-olds) the pupils had to mark how satisfied they were with their house and family life.

Among 8-year-old children the average assessment of a house or a flat approached the maximum value (3.8), which proves that this satisfaction was generally high. High average values were also observed in the groups of 10- and 12-year-olds (9.3 and 9.0, respectively). Eight-year-olds gave only slightly lower marks to the people they lived with and to their family life (the average amounted to 3.7 for both categories). Ten-year-olds, in turn, assessed general family life at a slightly higher level (9.4) than the house they live in, and 12-year-olds gave equal marks to each category.

Table 4: The children's satisfaction with their home and family life M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
The house or flat where you live	3.8 (0.6)	9.3 (1.7)	9.0 (1.8)
The people who live with you	3.7 (0.6)	9.2 (1.8)	8.9 (1.9)
Your family life	3.7 (0.7)	9.4 (1.6)	9.0 (1.8)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

Next the children were asked how frequently they spent time on particular activities together with their families within the last 7 days (Table 5).

About 85% of the surveyed schoolchildren had conversations with their families on most days, and nearly two-thirds did so every day. The smallest percentage of respondents who talked with their families every day was in the group of 12-year-olds (60.8%). At this age children already have other needs but this does not mean that the family is less important for them, which is confirmed by the fact that, in addition to the above 60%, one in four children from this age group talked with his/her closest family on most days of the week.

Table 5: Frequency of family life activities within the last 7 days (%)

	Age group	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
<b>Talking together</b>	8 year-old	2.5	13.2	19.4	64.9
	10 year-old	2.5	10.9	22.1	64.5
	12 year-old	3.1	12.0	24.1	60.8
<b>Having fun together</b>	8 year-old	10.5	17.2	29.4	42.9
	10 year-old	10.7	22.5	37.9	28.9
	12 year-old	18.5	30.1	34.5	16.9
<b>Learning/doing homework together</b>	8 year-old	5.6	8.0	18.1	68.3
	10 year-old	8.1	16.3	25.8	49.8
	12 year-old	27.2	26.0	23.2	23.6

Differences in particular age groups were reported for the next point which concerned having fun together. Daily fun was shared with a family by 42.9% of 8-year-olds, 28.9% of 10-year-olds and only 16.9% of 12-year-olds. In each age group over 50% of the respondents declared that the activity in question took place in their homes for most days of the week (72.5% of 8-year-olds, 66.8% of 10-year-olds and 51.4% of 12-year-olds). A similar regularity was observed as regards the last point concerning doing homework together. In the survey of 8-year-olds nearly 90% used the help of other household members for most days of the week; for 10-year-olds this percentage was around 75%, and for 12-year-olds less than 47% (which means that over 50% of the children of that age only sporadically did homework together with their families).

### 2.3 Money and things you have

The next section of the questionnaire focused on aspects of children's material well-being.

The first aspect of children's material well-being concerned things they owned. The answers obtained from these young people (Table 6) show that almost all of them (ca. 99%) had good clothes to wear for school. About 87% of the children had their own mobile phone, with this percentage being much lower for 8-year-olds (72%) than for older children (over 95%).

Only one out of ten children said that they lived in a family which did not have their own car, and only 3.5% said they had no access to a computer at home. Access to the Internet (at home or at school) reached the level of 94.5% and was wider among 10 and 12 year-old pupils.

In the questionnaire for children aged 10 and 12, we also asked them whether they had their own room (alone or with siblings) and whether they had their own books to read for pleasure and their own equipment to listen to music. The answers obtained show that 8% of the young people shared their bedroom with people other than their siblings, ca. 14% did not have any books and only one in ten children did not have his/her own audio equipment (Table 6).

Table 6: The things that the children have (%)

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old
Clothes in good condition to go to school in	98.7	99.1	98.6
Access to computer at home	94.3	97.3	97.8
Access to Internet	90.8	96.2	96.4
Mobile phone	71.8	93.3	95.7
Your own room (alone or with siblings)	-	91.5	92.5
Books to read for fun	-	89.0	82.2
A family car for transportation	90.7	89.8	88.5
Your own stuff to listen to music	-	87.8	93.0

The next question which was only asked of 12 year-old pupils was whether and how often they received pocket money from parents. The answers obtained show (Table 7) that almost one-third of 12-year-olds did not get any money from their parents and about 47% regularly received money for their own use every week (16.4%) or every month (30.4%). One in five children was given pocket money irregularly.

Table 7: Frequency of getting pocket money among 12-year-olds (%)

	Total
I don't get pocket money	32.3
I get pocket money, but not regularly	20.9
I get pocket money every week	16.4
I get pocket money every month	30.4

Analysing how the children assess all the things they have, it can be stated that a vast majority of them were satisfied with their material well-being. Only 2.5% of 8-year-olds selected an answer of 2 or less (on the 0-4 scale) and, respectively, 2.4% of 10-year-olds and 4.1% of 12-year-olds assessed their satisfaction with this aspect of life at 5 or lower (on the 0-10 scale). The mean score for children's satisfaction with their material situation was also high, amounting to 3.8 among 8 year-old children, 9.5 among 10 year-olds, and 9.1 among 12 year-olds (Table 8).

Table 8: The children's satisfaction with all of the things they have M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
All of the things you have	3.8 (0.5)	9.5 (1.1)	9.1 (1.5)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

With the aim of exploring family living standards, in this survey we asked the children about how often they worried about their family financial situation.

The results received indicate that children usually worried about the material situation of their families at least some of the time (Figure 1). Only one-third of the youngsters answered that they never worried about the amount of money their family had. Over 44% were troubled by the financial problems of their family from time to time, and nearly a quarter of children often, or even always, worried about money. These percentages depended upon age and, respectively, amounted to 34.6% (8 year-old), 21.3% (10 year-old) and 17.3% (12 year-old).

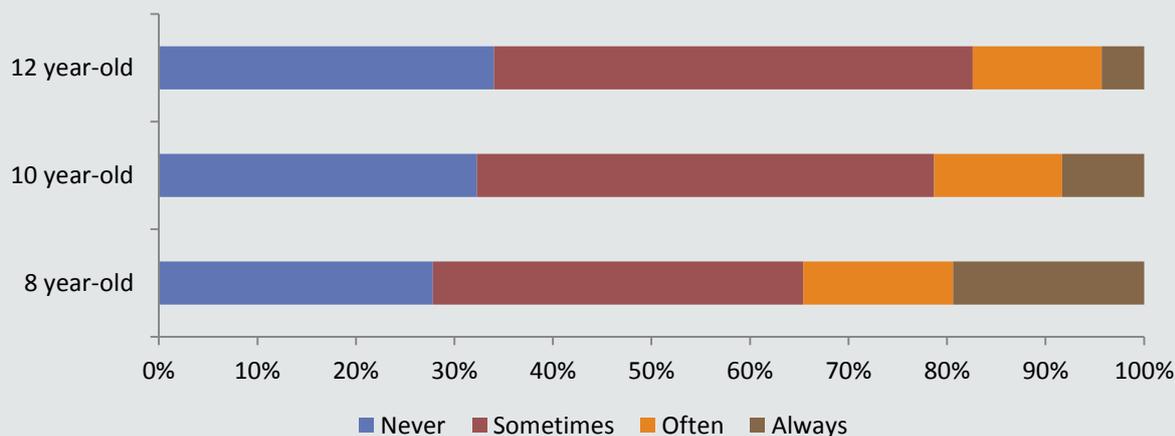


Figure 1: How often the children worry about how much money their family has (%)

We also asked young people aged 12 about the number of adults they lived with who had a paid job (Table 9). A majority (60.6%) of the children lived with two working adults. Nearly one-fifth of 12-year-olds said that they lived with more than two working people. Only 1.6% of the youngsters lived in households where nobody had a paid job and the remaining 18% of 12-year-olds lived with one working adult.

Table 9: Number of adults having a paid job that the 12-year-olds live with (%)

	Total
None	1.6
One	18.0
Two	60.6
More than 2	19.8

## 2.4 Your friends and other people

Questions about friends were asked of all age groups of children included in the survey.

The respondents were asked whether their friends are usually nice to them (Figure 2). Positive answers dominated in each group but the distribution of the two points on the right-hand side of the scale (*agree a lot*, *totally agree*) varied. Around 83% of the participants in all three age groups fell into this category. However, nearly two-thirds of 8-year-old children totally agreed with the statement that their friends were nice to them and less than 21% almost agreed. For 10-year-olds these indicators amounted respectively to 54% and 30%, whereas in the group of 12-year-olds the percentages were 44.5% and 38%.

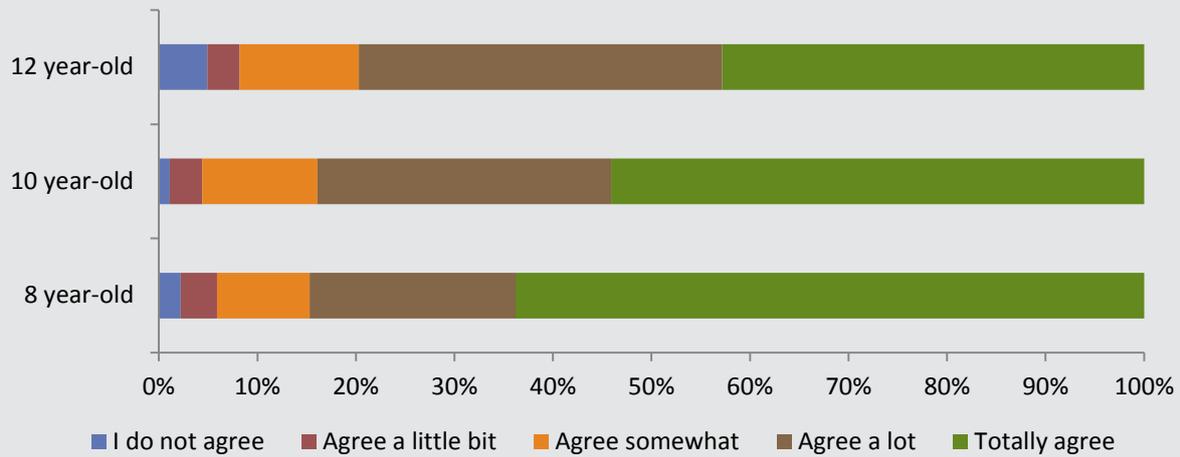


Figure 2: 'My friends are usually nice to me' (%)

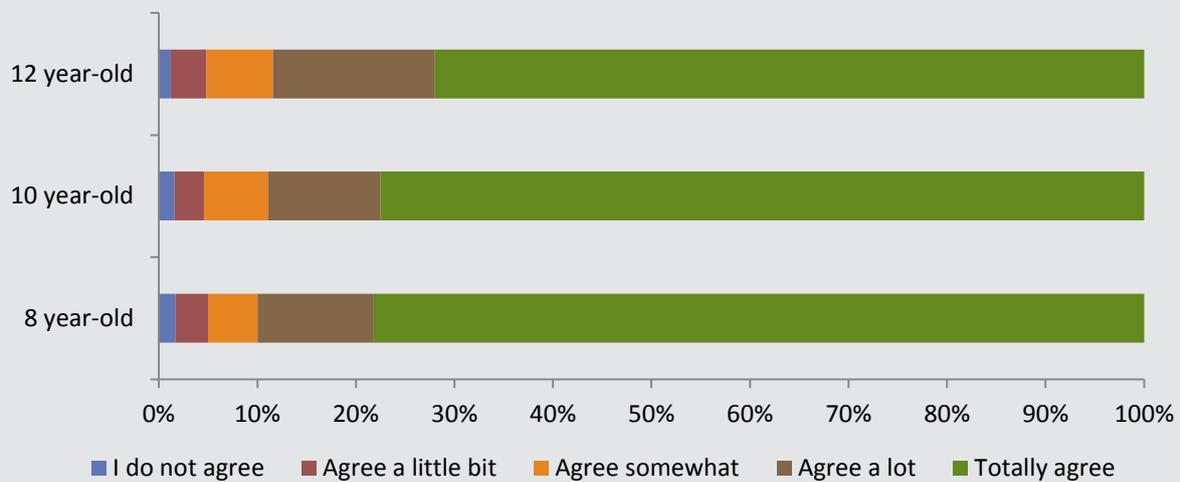


Figure 3: 'I have enough friends' (%)

In each of the age groups included in the survey the children were asked if they had a sufficient number of friends (Figure 3). Nearly 90% of the respondents agreed with this statement. The percentage of 12-year-olds who totally agreed with this question was slightly lower, but in this group the share of those who agreed a lot was bigger.

Next the children were asked to express their opinions on the given statements concerning satisfaction with their friends and other people by marking an appropriate variant on the 0 to 4 scale (8-year-olds) or 0 to 10 scale (10- and 12-year-olds).

Table 10: The children's satisfaction with their friends and other people M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
Your friends	3.6 (0.7)	8.7 (1.9)	8.3 (2.0)
The people who live in your area	3.4 (0.9)	8.5 (2.2)	7.7 (2.5)
Your contacts with people in general	3.5 (0.9)	9.0 (1.7)	8.6 (2.0)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

Among the 8-year-olds the mean score (out of 4) was 3.6, among the 10-year-olds it was 8.7 (out of 10), whereas in the oldest group it was only just above 8.0 (Table 10).

Bigger differences could be observed as concerns people living in the area. In the youngest group the mean score was 3.4 and in the group of 10-year-olds 8.5. The 12-year-olds were slightly more sceptical in response to this question (the mean was 7.7). Relationships with people in general were very positively assessed by each of the age groups.

Table 11: Frequency of activities with friends within the last 7 days (apart from activities at school) (%)

	Age group	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
Talking together	8 year-old	6.7	10.5	27.2	55.6
	10 year-old	3.8	10.9	25.5	59.8
	12 year-old	2.4	10.1	22.9	64.6
Having fun together	8 year-old	6.6	11.9	28.6	52.9
	10 year-old	5.7	11.8	34.7	47.8
	12 year-old	7.8	16.3	35.4	40.5
Learning/doing homework together	8 year-old	37.9	19.1	16.4	26.6
	10 year-old	38.6	31.3	16.8	13.3
	12 year-old	49.0	31.0	14.4	5.6

Children talked to one another very frequently outside school (Table 11). Slightly more than 50% of 8-year-olds, 60% of 10-year-olds and almost two-thirds of 12-year-olds had daily conversations with friends outside school. If we take into account conversations for most days of the week, these percentages rise to around 85%. The frequency of having fun together decreases with age. Nearly 53% of 8-year-old children had fun with friends every day. Among 10-year-olds this percentage dropped to 48%, and in the group of 12-year-olds it was 40.5%. Doing homework together was even less frequent. A quarter of 8-year-olds did this every day, reducing to one in eight 10-year-olds and only one in 18 12-year-olds.

## 2.5 The area where you live

The survey also asked the children some questions about the area in which they lived.

First the participants of the study were asked to express their views on the statement: *In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time*. The responses (Figure 4) show that a vast majority (over 82%) regarded accessibility of such places as sufficient (*agree a lot, totally agree*), and 8.5% had opposite views (*do not agree, agree a little bit*).

The structure of responses differs in respect of age. Only 6.5% of the children aged 8 and 10 had rather negative views as regards access to the places to play which would make spending their free time nicer, but such opinions were twice as frequent among 12-year-olds.

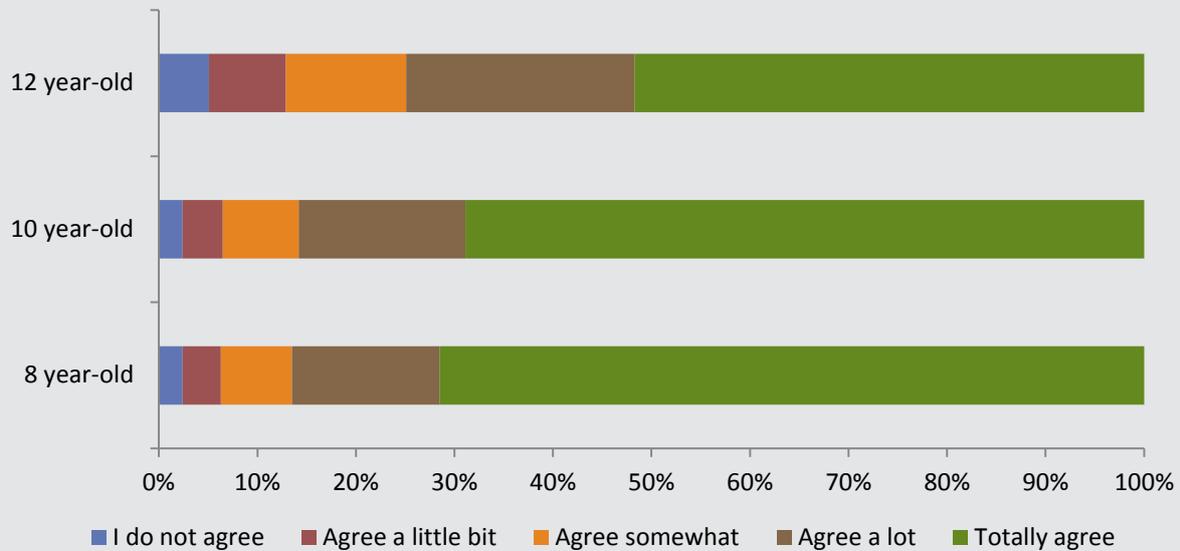


Figure 4: 'In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time' (%)

Similarly, the mean level of satisfaction with the outdoor areas children can use varied in across age groups, being 3.5 (0 to 4 scale) among 8-year-olds, 8.6 (0 to 10 scale) among 10-year-olds, and only 7.7 in the oldest group of the respondents (Table 12). In relation to this question, only 8.8% of the 8-year-olds gave a score of two or less (on the 0 to 4 scale). However, among the older children the proportion of negative opinions (5 or less out of 10) was relatively bigger and concerned one in eight 10-year-olds and one in five 12-year-olds.

The next statement the children had to consider was: *I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in*. For most children the sense of being safe in the area where they lived was at a relatively high level – over 80% of the youngsters chose the answer: *agree a lot* or *totally agree* (Figure 5). The percentage of answers indicating the lack of feeling safe (*do not agree*, *agree a little bit*) amounted to ca. 9.5%.

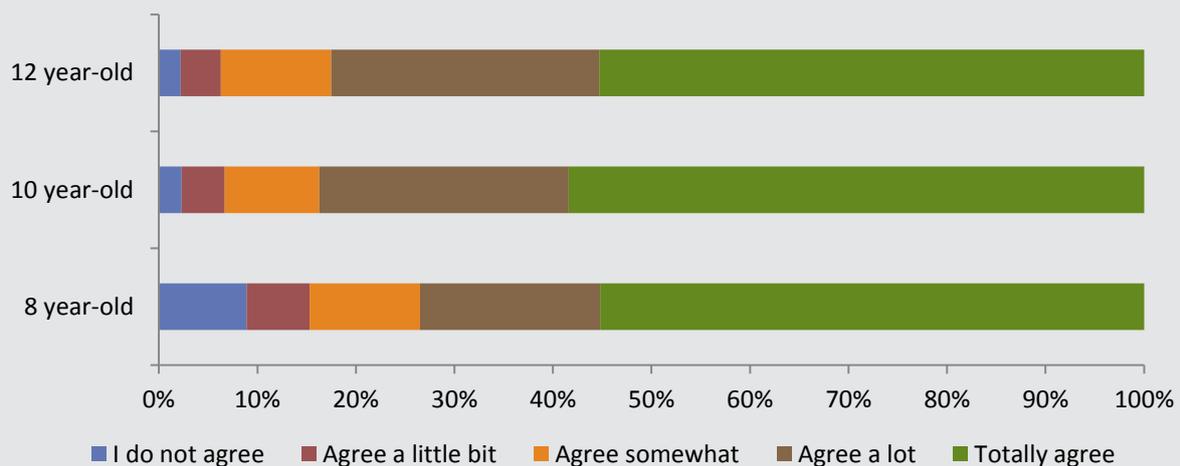


Figure 5: 'I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in' (%)

The degree of security in the area of residence increased with age of the respondents. Among children from the youngest age category the percentage of those who did not feel safe reached 15%, thus it was over twice as big as in 10 year-old children (6.7%) and 12 year-old (6.3%).

The final question about the local area under discussion concerned the level of children's satisfaction with the area in general. On the basis of the responses obtained, it may be said that among the young inhabitants of Greater Poland the level of satisfaction with the area where they live was high, higher than their satisfaction with outdoor places to play (Table 12).

Table 12: The children's satisfaction with the area they live in M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	3.5 (0.8)	8.6 (2.3)	7.7 (2.6)
The area where you live in	3.7 (0.7)	9.1 (1.8)	8.3 (2.3)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

The highest scores were given by the youngest children (the average: 3.7 out of 4), whereas the area of residence was relatively badly assessed by the 12 year-old children (8.3 out of 10 on average). At the same time, nearly 12% of them expressed low satisfaction with this aspect of their lives, while among the 8 and 10 year-old pupils this percentage was only around 6%.

## 2.6 School

With the fact that in Poland education is compulsory for children aged 6 to 18, school life may be regarded as one of the most important components (after family life) of the environment in which any child grows up. Therefore, the research on well-being of the children from Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) covered the topic of school the children attend. This area of the framework was covered by three sets of questions.

The initial questions concerned the children's views upon four aspects of their school life. The survey shows that most of the children, around 60%, had a positive attitude to the statement: *'I like going to school'*, and the structure of their responses varied by age. The results obtained show that 75% of 8-year-olds liked going to school (Table 13); while among 10-year-olds the corresponding figure was about 57% and, among 12-year-olds, only 46.8%. Similarly, the percentage of youngsters who expressed a negative attitude towards their school (*do not agree, agree a little bit*), was lowest among 8 year-olds and below 17%. In the remaining age categories this indicator was higher – nearly one in four 10 year-old pupils and one in three 12 year-old pupils said that they did not like going to school.

The next two statements the young respondents had to consider concerned student-teacher relationships (Table 13). The structure of answers from the younger pupils (8 and 10 year-old) was very similar, but in the responses obtained from the older children (12 year-old) there was a much bigger share of negative opinions. Over 16% of the children aged 12 did not agree (*do not agree, agree a little bit*) with the statement: *'My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account'*, and 17.5% with the statement: *'My teachers treat me fairly'*. As regards both 8-year-olds and 10-year-olds, the percentage of negative responses to the above-mentioned two statements did not exceed 7%. At the same time, the share of 8 and 10 year-olds with a positive attitude to the statements describing their relations with teachers reached between 81.7% and 86.4% and was decidedly higher than among 12 year-old children (slightly less than 67%).

Table 13: The children's view about their school life (%)

	Age group	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	8 year-old	2.5	4.1	6.7	21.9	61.8
	10 year-old	2.1	4.0	12.2	29.0	52.7
	12 year-old	7.8	8.6	17.3	35.7	30.6
I like going to school	8 year-old	12.6	4.2	9.1	17.2	56.9
	10 year-old	14.1	10.6	18.4	24.6	32.3
	12 year-old	18.0	13.0	22.2	26.0	20.8
My teachers treat me fairly	8 year-old	3.0	3.0	7.6	13.4	73.0
	10 year-old	2.9	4.0	10.8	21.6	60.7
	12 year-old	7.2	10.3	15.8	28.2	38.5

Another issue the children were asked to comment on was safety at school. The answers obtained indicate that although the lack of safety at school may not be a very common problem, it should not be neglected. As shown (Figure 6), over 7% of the respondents had negative (*do not agree, agree a little bit*) feelings about the sentence: '*I feel safe at school*'. This indicator differed between age groups and was highest (approximating 9%) among 12 year-olds. The percentage of 12-year-olds who felt safe at school (*agree a lot, totally agree*), was under 80% and was significantly lower than among 8-year-olds (88.1%) and 10-year-olds (85.6%).

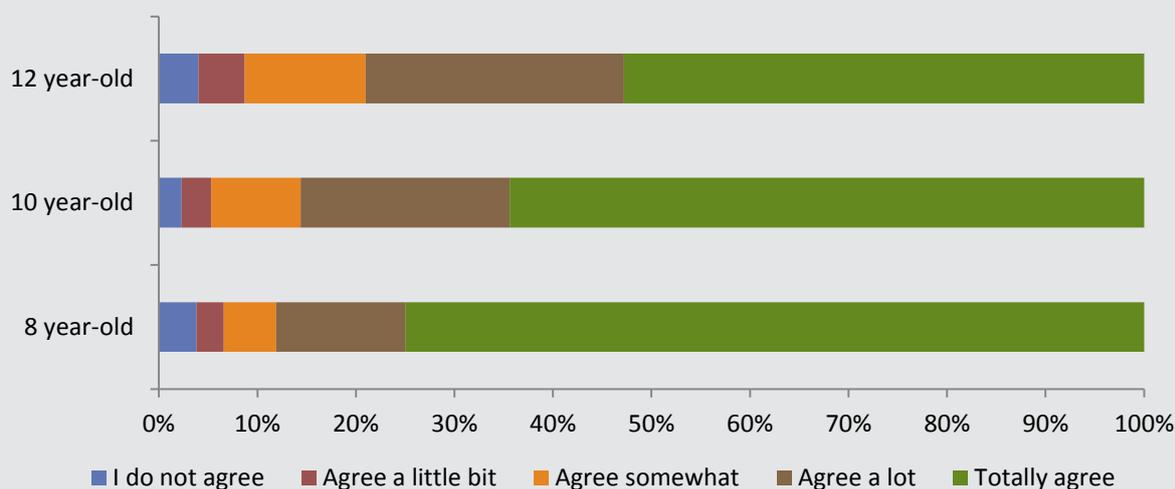


Figure 6: 'I feel safe at school' (%)

A separate point explored in the survey, and connected with the sense of safety at school, was the issue of school bullying, i.e. experiencing physical violence and psychological abuse from peers. In the research the respondents were asked about their recent experiences (over the last 30 days) connected with school bullying, namely, '*How often they were hit by other children in the school?*' and '*How often they were left out by other children in the class?*'. The answers obtained are shown on a four-grade scale and they indicate that school bullying is a significant problem in Polish schools –

nearly 35% of the children said they had been hit at least once within the last 30 days and over 30% felt rejected by peers (Figure 7).

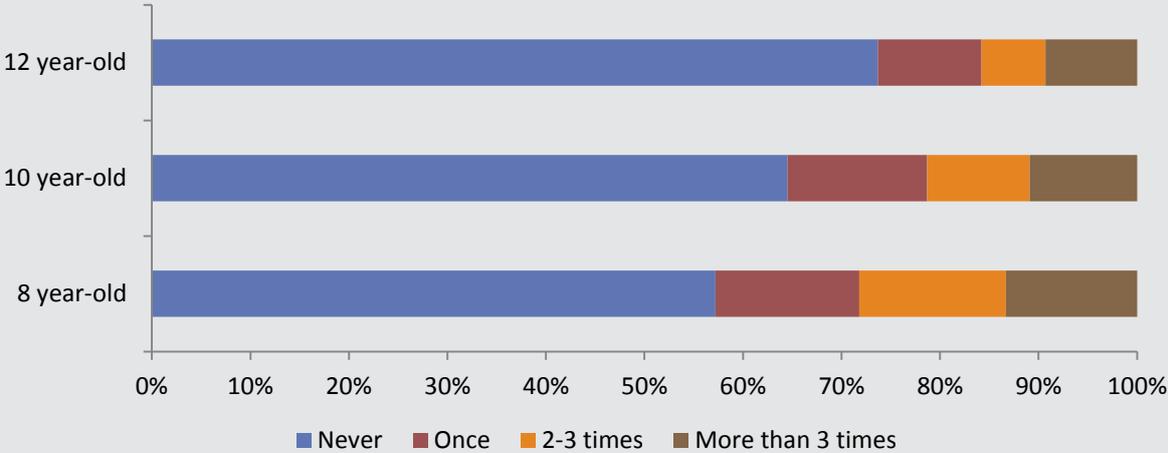


Figure 7: Frequency of being hit by other children within the last 30 days (%)

It should be emphasised that experiences of violence at school were more common among the youngest children – over 28% of 8-year-olds said they had been hit at least twice over the last 30 days, whereas this percentage was nearly two times smaller among 12-year-olds. At the same time only 57% of 8 year-old pupils declared they had not experienced physical violence from their friends at school. Among the older pupils (10 and 12 year-old ) the fraction of such persons was considerably higher, reaching respectively 64.5% and 73.7%.

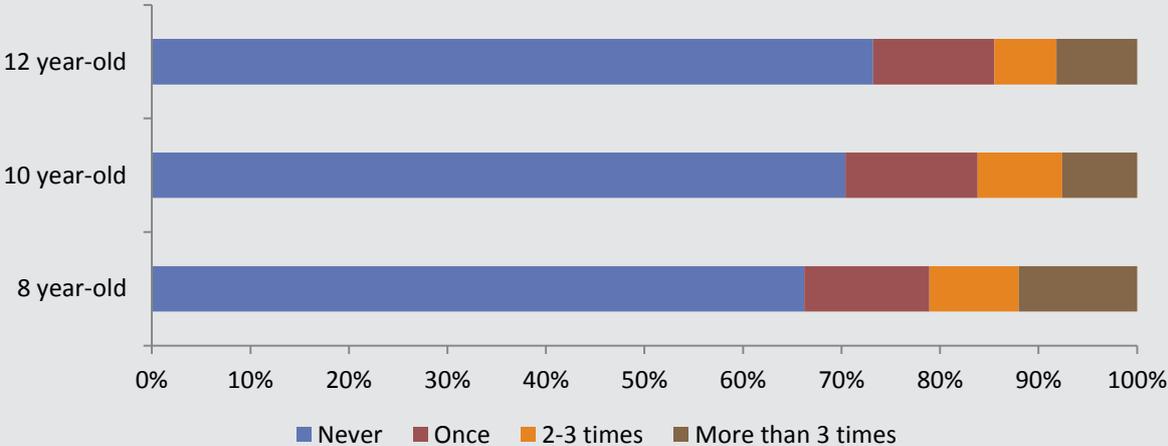


Figure 8: Frequency of being left out within the last 30 days (%)

A similar tendency was observed when analysing children’s responses to the question about their feelings of alienation from the circle of peers (Figure 8). The percentage of persons who relatively frequently (2 or more times) experienced such a form of school bullying decreased along with a child’s age (21.1%, 16.2% and 14.5% in the 8, 10 and 12 year-old respectively).

The next and the last question the children were asked in connection with their school life concerned the level of satisfaction with four (in the 8-years-old questionnaire) or six (in the 10- and 12-years-old questionnaire) aspects of this area. The responses again varied by age group (Table 14).

In the youngest age group the average level of being satisfied with particular areas of their school life was similar and reached the values between 3.4 and 3.5 (out of 4). Similarly, the percentage of 8-year-olds who gave low marks (2 or less out of 4) to the aspects in question was relatively small, amounting respectively to 8.9% (children in the class), 9.0% (school marks), 14.4% (school experience) and 12.6% (contact with teachers).

Table 14: The children's satisfaction with their school life M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
Other children in your class	3.5 (0.8)	8.4 (2.0)	7.8 (2.3)
Your school marks	3.5 (0.8)	8.4 (2.1)	7.3 (2.5)
Your school experience	3.4 (0.9)	8.6 (2.0)	8.0 (2.3)
Your life as a student	-	8.4 (2.2)	7.7 (2.5)
Things you have learned	-	8.8 (2.0)	7.9 (2.3)
Your contacts with teachers	3.5 (0.9)	8.4 (2.4)	7.1 (2.9)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

The answers obtained from 10-year-olds show that the average level of their satisfaction with school life was as high as that of 8-year-olds (Table 14), and the highest mean scores were for: things they have learned (8.8 out of 10) and school experience (8.6). The percentage of 10-year-olds who were not satisfied with the aspects of their school life covered in the survey was similar to the level observed among 8-year-olds and ranged from 8.1% (things they have learned) to 12.8% (contacts with teachers).

In the 12-years-old age group the level of satisfaction with particular areas of their school life was considerably lower than in the remaining age categories (Table 14). Similarly to 10-year-olds, the 12 year-old gave the highest scores to school experience (8.0 out of 10) and things they have learned (7.9), and the worst ones to contact with teachers (7.1) and school marks (7.3). At the same time the percentage of persons who scored five or less out of ten to their relationships with teachers exceeded 25% among the 12-year-olds, which was over two times higher than in the case of their younger school mates. An equally large percentage of 12-year-olds (22.5%) were not satisfied with their progress in learning.

## 2.7 How you use your time

The next section of the questionnaire covered how children spent their time. Children were asked to say how often they spent time on particular types of activity.

The responses show that 27% of 10-year-olds and 28% 8-year-olds took extra classes (other than lessons at school) every day or nearly every day (Table 15). This percentage was lower among 12-year-olds, amounting to 18.8%. However, almost 50% of them participated in such classes once or twice a week. Participation of the oldest children in organised group activities was even less frequent. Nearly three-quarters of 12-year-olds never took part in this type of classes and only 1 in 20 participated in them every day or almost every day.

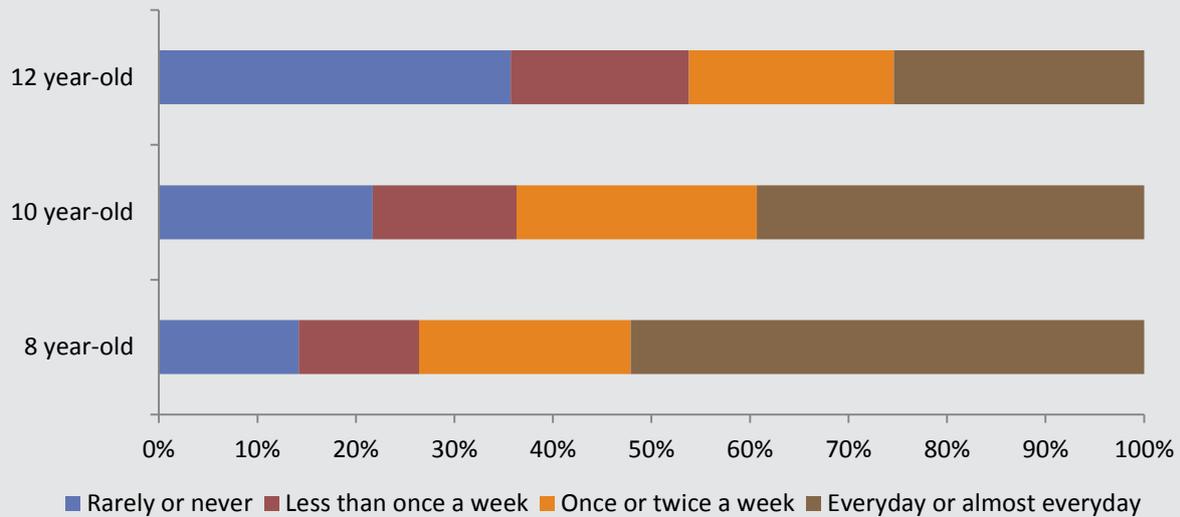


Figure 9: Frequency of reading for fun (not homework) (%)

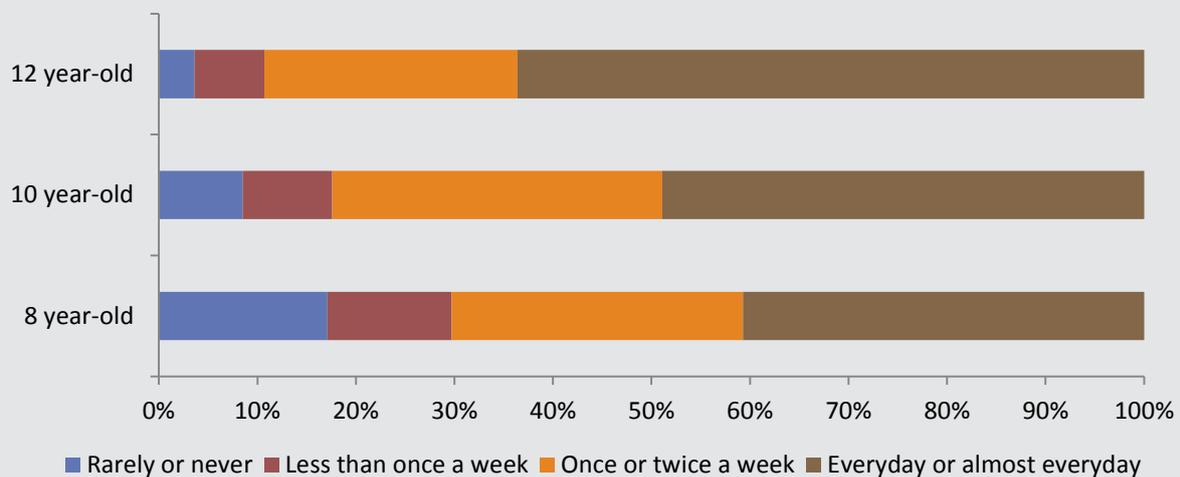


Figure 10: Frequency of using a computer (%)

There were clearly visible differences in the distribution of responses for the activity *'reading for fun'*. Over 50% of 8-year-olds read for pleasure every or almost every day, among 10-year-olds this percentage was slightly less than 40%, but in the group of 12-year-old children only 25%. At the same time, the percentage of persons who read rarely or never increased with age and was, respectively, 14.2%, 21.7% and 35.7% (Figure 9).

Physical activity was also popular with the survey respondents: 67.3% of 8-year-olds, 71.6% of 10-year-olds and 63.6% of 12-year-olds exercised or practised sports every (or almost every) day. Relatively high percentages were also reported for the option *'once or twice a week'* which amounted to 20.7%, 19.9% and 26.1% respectively (Table 15).

Using a computer, in turn, is an activity on which children spend less time than on sports. Nearly one-third of 8-year-olds only occasionally spent their leisure time in this way (less frequently than once a week or never). Among 10-year-olds this percentage reached 17.6%, and in the group of 12-year-olds – only 10.7% (Figure 10).

Helping around the house was commonly practised. Nearly 90% of 8-year-olds did that at least once a week and in the older group – over 90% of children (Table 15). The respondents who did not do their homework were very rare. In each group the percentage of children who did this activity at least once a week was above 95%.

Table 15: How the children usually spend their time on various activities (%)

	Age group	Rarely or never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Everyday or almost everyday
Taking classes on matters different than at school (like music, sports, dancing, languages etc.)	8 year-old	28.8	8.8	34.1	28.3
	10 year-old	22.5	6.9	43.5	27.1
	12 year-old	26.0	10.0	45.2	18.8
Participation in organized leisure time activities (like scout, church organisations etc.)	12 year-old	73.8	9.3	11.7	5.2
Helping up around the house	8 year-old	4.0	7.9	20.6	67.5
	10 year-old	4.3	4.8	24.7	66.2
	12 year-old	3.4	6.5	30.9	59.2
Doing homework	8 year-old	1.8	2.6	5.8	89.8
	10 year-old	1.5	1.2	4.7	92.6
	12 year-old	1.6	2.2	6.7	89.5
Watching TV	8 year-old	5.1	4.7	15.1	75.1
	10 year-old	2.6	2.4	14.9	80.1
	12 year-old	2.4	5.0	12.4	80.2
Listening to music	10 year-old	5.8	7.3	22.3	63.6
	12 year-old	2.8	4.7	17.6	74.9
Playing sports or doing exercise	8 year-old	6.5	5.5	20.7	67.3
	10 year-old	4.1	4.4	19.9	71.6
	12 year-old	3.9	6.4	26.1	63.6
Spending time just being by myself	12 year-old	18.0	18.2	24.5	39.3
Taking care of brothers or sisters or other family members	12 year-old	35.1	14.3	20.1	30.5

About 90% of 8-year-olds watched TV at least once a week. For 10-year-olds this indicator reached the level of 95%. In the group of 12-year-olds it was only slightly lower (92.6%). Listening to music was also a popular activity, although the percentages of children spending time on this activity at

least once a week were lower than those reported for watching television (slightly less than 87% of 10-year-olds and 91.5% of 12-year-olds).

Only 12-year-olds were asked to indicate the frequency of the next two activities. Almost 40% of the children spent time alone, '*being by myself*', every or nearly every day, whereas 36.2% of the respondents did that less frequently, once a week or never. The next 35.1% never or rarely looked after their siblings or other members of the family and 30.5% were engaged in this activity every or almost every day.

Next the children were asked to assess on a 5-point scale (8-year-olds) or on an 11-point scale (10- and 12-year-olds) the level of their satisfaction with forms of using their (free) time (Table 16).

The children's degree of satisfaction with how they use their time was slightly higher among 10-year-olds. On the 0 to 10 scale the mean score was 9.1, while among 12-year-olds it was 8.3 (8-year-olds did not answer this question). The share of pupils who were not satisfied with how they used their time was 5.2% among 10-year-olds and 10.1% among 12-year-olds. The percentage of children that scored the maximum of 10 out of 10 in individual categories was 63.2% and 40.6% respectively for the two. Only a slightly higher level of satisfaction was indicated by the respondents as regards what they did in their free time. Among 10-year-olds the average score was 9.2, and in the group of 12-year-olds it was 8.5. The eight-year-old children evaluated their satisfaction with this aspect at 3.7 on the 0 to 4 scale. The percentage of children dissatisfied with forms of spending their free time amounted to around 5% among 8- and 10-year-olds and compared to almost 10% among 12-year-olds.

Table 16: The children's satisfaction with their free time M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
How you use your time	-	9.1 (1.7)	8.3 (2.0)
What you do in your free time	3.7 (0.7)	9.2 (1.6)	8.5 (2.1)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

## 2.8 Your life and your future

In the next part of the questionnaire the 8-year-olds were given a series of four questions concerning their own life and their future. Their answers expressed on the scale 0-4 show that 8 year-old pupils evaluated their health, their bodies and their feeling of safety (average marks at the level of 3.7 out of 4) very highly, and the average as regards freedom was evaluated only slightly worse (3.6) (Table 17). The percentage of 8-year-olds who were dissatisfied with those areas of their lives was not high either and ranged from 5% (body and health) to 7 to 8% (safety and freedom).

A wider set of questions about various areas of life was asked of the older respondents (Table 17). The results show that the level of satisfaction of the 10 year-old pupils with these aspects of life was also high. The average scores obtained from 10-year-olds were the highest for elements such as health, and doing things away from home (9.3). The average satisfaction with the other aspects of life under analysis was slightly lower, nevertheless it did not drop below the value of 9 (out of 10). The percentage of 10 year-old pupils who were dissatisfied with the listed aspects of their lives

reached a low level, ranging from 4.1% for the feeling of safety to 7.7% for the assessment of their own body.

Table 17: The children's satisfaction with various aspects of their life M (SD)

	8 year-old*	10 year-old**	12 year-old**
The freedom you have	3.6 (0.8)	9.0 (1.8)	8.3 (2.2)
The amount of opportunities you have in life	-	-	8.4 (2.0)
Your health	3.7 (0.7)	9.3 (1.7)	8.6 (1.9)
Your own body	3.7 (0.6)	9.0 (1.9)	7.8 (2.7)
Your self-confidence	-	9.0 (1.8)	8.2 (2.3)
How safe you feel	3.7 (0.7)	9.2 (1.7)	8.8 (2.0)
Things you want to be good at	-	9.2 (1.7)	8.5 (2.0)
Doing things away from your home	-	9.3 (1.6)	8.8 (1.8)
What may happen to you later in your life	-	9.2 (1.6)	8.8 (1.9)

\*scale 0-4, \*\*scale 0-10

In the sub-population of 12-year-olds the average level of satisfaction with the chosen aspects of their lives was relatively lower than that in the remaining age categories and lay within the range from 7.8 to 8.8 (out of 10) (Table 17). The areas which reached the highest scores among 12 year-old pupils include: feeling safe, doing things away from home and expectations concerning the future (*"What may happen to you later in your life"*). At the opposite end of the spectrum one could find satisfaction with one's body (average 7.8) and one's own confidence (8.2). It is symptomatic that that the percentage of 12-year-olds who gave low marks to their bodies amounted to nearly 18%, thus it was as much as 13% and 10% higher than that among 8- and 10-year-olds.

The next set of three questions addressed to 10- and 12-year-olds concerned changes they experienced in their lives during the last 12 months. As shown below (Table 18), only about 9% of the children had recently moved their house, and only 1 in 20 respondents said that he/she had changed school within the last year. Similarly, around 5% of the children did not live with the same parents (or carers) they had lived with a year ago. As regards these experiences, the survey did not reveal any clearly visible differences between age groups.

Table 18: Changes in life in the past year (only 10 and 12 years-old) (%)

	10 year-old	12 year-old
Have moved their house	10.0	8.2
Have changed schools	5.3	4.2
Are living with the same people (parents or carers) that they lived with one year ago	93.5	96.5

The next topic included in the survey (only for 10- and 12-year-olds) concerned children's rights. Over 70% of the children gave a positive answer when asked if they knew about the rights they had.

Almost half of children said that he/she knew what the Convention on the Rights of the Child was and 46% were of the opinion that adults in Poland generally respected children's rights. The answers obtained show differences due to the respondents' age (Table 19). A larger proportion of 10 year-old children said that they know their rights compared to 12 year-old. 12 year-old pupils from relatively more frequently expressed the opinion that children's rights were not respected in Poland.

Table 19: The 10- and 12-year-olds' knowledge about children's rights (%)

	Age group	No	Not sure	Yes
I know what rights children have	10 year-old	2.3	23.9	73.8
	12 year-old	4.3	28.0	67.7
I know about the children's rights convention	10 year-old	11.9	37.2	50.9
	12 year-old	13.6	39.7	46.7
I think in my country, adults respect children's rights	10 year-old	7.7	39.0	53.3
	12 year-old	13.7	46.9	39.4

## 2.9 Overall subjective well-being

Several measures of overall subjective well-being were used in the survey (detailed information about these measures can be found in the Methods section in the General Introduction on page 2).

### *Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS)*

The simplest of these was a single measure of overall life satisfaction (OLS). We asked the children how satisfied they were with their life as a whole. The responses obtained on a 5- (8-year-olds) or an 11-point scale (10- and 12-year-olds) were transformed into a value from 0 to 100. The average level of overall life satisfaction was relatively high among the young inhabitants of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) and reached 93.5 and 91.9 respectively among pupils from the 8 and 10 year-old age groups. The sub-population of the oldest children declared a slightly smaller satisfaction with their lives, with a mean score of 84.3 (Table 20). As many as 89.6% of the 8-year-olds, 69.1% of 10-year-olds, and 44.2% of 12-year-olds were totally satisfied with their life (scored a maximum).

### *Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)*

Another measure used in the study was a reduced version of Huebner's Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS-5), based on five statements about children's overall life satisfaction. We formed a scale by summing the scores and transforming the scale from 0 to 100. The average level of satisfaction measured on the SLSS was higher among the 8 and 10 year-old pupils from (88 to 90) than among 12-year-olds (81.4). Nearly 50% of 8-year-olds, one-third of 10-year-olds and only one-fifth of 12-year-olds indicated that they had the highest possible levels of satisfaction with all of the five indicators used. Approximately 5%, 6% and 11% of the children in various age groups scored the at the mid-point or below.

### *Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)*

The next measure applied in the study was an adapted version of the Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale using the questions about satisfaction with family life, friends, school

experience, local area and body. The scale is a sum of these five scores transformed so that it is from zero to 100. The results obtained using the BMSLSS were for all the three age groups slightly (by ca. 1 to 2%) higher than the values of SLSS (Table 20). At the same time, over 40% of 8-year-olds, 26% of 10-year-olds and only 12% of 12-year-olds achieved a maximum score of 100 points on BMSLSS.

Table 20: The children's overall subjective well-being measures M (SD) (0-100 scale)

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old
<b>OLS</b>	93.5 (15.2)	91.9 (17.2)	84.3 (21.8)
<b>SLSS-5</b>	90.0 (17.2)	88.1 (18.7)	81.4 (21.7)
<b>BMSLSS</b>	91.1 (11.3)	89,8 (12.5)	83.3 (15.9)
<b>PWI-SC</b>	-	92.4 (11.8)	87,4 (14.7)
<b>Positive affect</b>	-	87.9 (17.2)	79.8 (20.6)

#### *Personal Well-being Index-School Children (PWI-SC)*

Among the 10 and 12 year-old pupils the Personal Well-being Index – School Children was used, created by summing the seven item scores transformed into a value from zero to 100. The measure showed an even higher level of overall life satisfaction among both 10- and 12-year-olds (Table 20). Nearly one-third of 10-year-olds and one-sixth of 12-year-olds scored the maximum.

#### *Positive affect*

In addition, six questions on positive affect (derived from Russell's measures of Core Affect) were included in the survey. The 10 and 12 year-old children were asked how often over the span of the last 14 days they had felt: satisfied, happy, relaxed, active, calm and full of energy. The average achieved scores are presented in the Table above.

#### *Overall happiness*

Finally, the children aged 10 and 12 were asked how happy they had been feeling in the last 14 days. The answers obtained (Table 21) indicate that the sense of happiness was higher among the 10-year-olds (average 8.9) than among their older colleagues (8.1 out of 10). Around a half of 10-year-olds and 30% of 12-year-olds said that they were totally happy.

Table 21: Over all happiness M (SD) (0-10 scale) )10 and 12 years-old only)

	10 year-old	12 year-old
<b>How happy have you been feeling during the last 14 days</b>	8.9 (1.7)	8.1 (2.0)

## **2.10 National questions**

Along with Poland's accession to the European Union the phenomenon of job emigration became more common. It is estimated that since the year 2004 the number of people who emigrated for economic reasons (mainly to Great Britain, Germany, and Ireland) has increased by about 1.1 million. One of the more serious consequences of intensified emigration, particularly important from the viewpoint of children's life quality, is the so-called "euro-orphanhood." The notion of euro-orphans is

most often defined as a situation in which economic emigration of parents, or at least one parent, disturbs the basic family unit and its ability to function properly<sup>20</sup>.

Recognising the problem of how parents' emigration for jobs influences children's well-being, the survey asked children (only those aged 10 and 12) from Greater Poland's schools a question about whether their parents had been working for at least one month in a country other than Poland over the span of the last 12 months.

On the basis of the answers it was established that nearly 16% of the young respondents (16.5% of 10-year-olds and 15.3% of 12-year-olds) had parents who had been working abroad for at least one month. About 11.6% of the children said that only their father had been working in a foreign country, only 1.8% said it was only their mother, whereas 2.6% indicated both of their parents.

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<sup>20</sup> Kożuh A., Miłkowska G., *Euro-Orphans: The New Problem in Polish Schools*, Education and Culture, Grand Forks 2010, p. 112-132.

### 3. Conclusions

The results obtained from this study on life quality of the children aged 8 to 12 years from Wielkopolskie voivodship show that the children's satisfaction with their lives is fairly high. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the share 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 Wielkopolska).

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the comparison of average scores reflecting children's satisfaction with particular aspects of their lives makes it possible to detect certain differences which are not easy to see when analysing each of those aspects separately. It validates the notion of asking children about their satisfaction with different aspects of their lives. Tables 22-24 enable a comparison of the means, standard deviations, percentages of maximum scores and scores on or below the mid-point for all questions asked about satisfaction with different aspects of life in the 8, 10 and 12-year-olds survey.

Table 22: Satisfaction with different aspects of life (0-4 scale) (8 years-old)

	Mean (SD)	% max	% mid-point or below
All the things you have	3.8 (0.5)	86.7	2.5
The house or flat where you live	3.8 (0.6)	81.9	4.2
Your family life	3.7 (0.7)	80.5	5.0
What you do in your free time	3.7 (0.7)	79.7	5.5
Your own body	3.7 (0.6)	78.7	4.9
The people you live with	3.7 (0.6)	77.7	6.1
Your health	3.7 (0.7)	77.0	5.6
The area you live in general	3.7 (0.7)	75.6	5.7
How safe you feel	3.7 (0.7)	75.5	6.8
Your friends	3.6 (0.7)	69.1	5.4
The freedom you have	3.6 (0.8)	68.8	8.4
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	3.5 (0.8)	67.9	8.8
Your school marks	3.5 (0.8)	66.9	9.0
Your relationship with teachers	3.5 (0.9)	65.9	12.6
Your relationship with people in general	3.5 (0.9)	64.1	12.0
Other children in your class	3.5 (0.8)	62.5	8.9
Your school experience	3.4 (0.9)	64.9	14.4
The people in your area	3.4 (0.9)	61.1	12.8

A comparison of the data presented above leads to a conclusion that although children from the age categories surveyed had a relatively positive attitude to particular aspects of their lives, some differences are evident in their assessments. 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 expressed a particularly high satisfaction with their bodies, whereas 10 and 12 year-old children from evaluated highly doing things away from their homes and what may happen to them in the future. Much 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).

Table 23: Satisfaction with different aspects of life (0-10 scale) (10 years-old)

	Mean (SD)	% max	% mid-point or below
All the things you have	9.5 (1.1)	71.8	2.4
Your family life	9.4 (1.6)	76.8	4.5
The house or flat where you live	9.3 (1.7)	73.1	4.7
Your health	9.3 (1.7)	71.2	4.8
Doing things away from your home	9.3 (1.6)	69.3	4.7
The people you live with	9.2 (1.8)	69.5	6.5
What you do in your free time	9.2 (1.6)	68.9	4.9
How safe you feel	9.2 (1.7)	68.0	4.1
What may happen to you later in your life	9.2 (1.6)	65.9	5.6
The things you want to be good at	9.2 (1.7)	64.8	5.2
The area you live in general	9.1 (1.8)	64.1	6.4
How you use your time	9.1 (1.7)	63.2	5.2
Your own body	9.0 (1.9)	62.4	7.7
Your self-confidence	9.0 (1.8)	59.4	6.2
The freedom you have	9.0 (1.8)	58.6	6.6
Your relationship with people in general	9.0 (1.7)	57.9	6.5
Things you have learned	8.8 (2.0)	56.6	8.1
Your friends	8.7 (1.9)	49.3	8.3
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	8.6 (2.3)	54.6	12.2
Your school experience	8.6 (2.0)	49.3	8.7
The people in your area	8.5 (2.2)	46.0	11.9
Your relationship with teachers	8.4 (2.4)	47.5	12.8
Your life as a student	8.4 (2.2)	45.5	11.3
Your school marks	8.4 (2.1)	42.4	12.8
Other children in your class	8.4 (2.0)	38.6	10.2

Further study is needed to better understand the reasons, but possible explanations may be found in school violence and social exclusion by other children or teachers' attitudes towards, and expectations of, the students. Another topic that received relatively low scores was the area where the children lived in (people in their area, the outdoor areas they could use). In addition, what attracts attention is a relatively quite low (as compared with other areas) level of satisfaction among the children from the oldest sub-population with their own bodies and with their self-confidence (Table 24).

Table 24: Satisfaction with different aspects of life (0-10 scale) (12 years-old)

	Mean (SD)	% max	% mid-point or below
All the things you have	9.1 (1.5)	54.2	4.0
Your family life	9.0 (1.8)	58.8	6.4
The house or flat where you live	9.0 (1.8)	62.5	5.8
The people you live with	8.9 (1.9)	58.6	8.6
How safe you feel	8.8 (2.0)	52.5	7.4
Doing things away from your home	8.8 (1.8)	52.0	6.7
What may happen to you later in your life	8.8 (1.9)	50.2	7.0
Your health	8.6 (1.9)	47.6	8.5
Your relationship with people in general	8.6 (2.0)	43.7	9.5
What you do in your free time	8.5 (2.1)	46.7	9.7
The things you want to be good at	8.5 (2.0)	42.1	9.9
The amount of opportunities you have in life	8.4 (2.0)	41.0	10.3
Your friends	8.3 (2.0)	37.0	11.0
The freedom you have	8.3 (2.2)	43.3	11.6
The area you live in general	8.3 (2.6)	43.6	11.9
How you use your time	8.3 (2.0)	40.6	10.2
Your self-confidence	8.2 (2.3)	39.9	13.7
Your school experience	8.0 (2.3)	38.2	15.1
Things you have learned	7.9 (2.3)	32.7	15.3
Your own body	7.8 (2.7)	38.3	17.8
Other children in your class	7.8 (2.3)	27.9	17.0
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	7.7 (2.6)	33.0	20.3
Your life as a student	7.7 (2.5)	29.8	18.5
The people in your area	7.7 (2.5)	27.2	16.6
Your school marks	7.3 (2.5)	24.4	22.5
Your relationship with teachers	7.1 (2.9)	24.8	26.0

For many of the measures of children's subjective well-being we have presented in this report there are some variations by age group. Those differences are mainly visible in the comparison of 12-year-olds with their younger peers and concern, above all, the aspects connected with school and also with satisfaction with their own bodies. For all these aspects older children felt significantly less satisfied than younger children. Smaller differences in the assessment of particular aspects of life occurred as regards the children's family life, places they lived in and material situation, although here as well the level of satisfaction was decreasing along with age of the respondents.

Finally, worth mentioning is the enthusiastic attitude of the young respondents to the Children's Worlds Project in which they had an opportunity to participate. The children recognised how significant the conducted survey was – about 90% of the participants from each of the distinguished age groups agreed with the statement that questions addressed to them concerned important things. However, when evaluating the structure of the questionnaire, half of 12 year-old pupils were of the opinion that the questionnaire they received contained too many questions (for 8 and 10 year-old children this percentage respectively amounted to 42% and 40%).