



Children's Worlds National Report

Estonia

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

External influences

Estonia lies on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, neighbouring Finland, Sweden, Latvia and Russia. Estonia is a small country with 1.3 million people out of which 70% of the population are Estonians and the next biggest ethnic group is formed by Russians.

Estonian is the only state language after the restoration of independent statehood in 1991. This causes problems for children not speaking Estonian especially when they live in the North-East part of Estonia which is the major Russian-speaking region. Their families are Russian-speaking and children go to Russian-speaking schools. However, in line with language policies, schools have started introducing Estonian as the language of instruction. The latter has not gained popularity among the Russian-speaking population. Yet there are parents who send their children to Estonian-speaking childcare centres and Estonian schools for language learning and better career prospects in the future.

The main religion in Estonia is Protestant and Russian Orthodox is the second, however Estonians are, according to comparative European studies, the most secular nation in Europe. Even being secular, children celebrate Christmas and enjoy days out of school or kindergarten during Easter holidays.

Estonia, like the whole of Europe, is an ageing society where the proportion of children among the population is decreasing while the proportion of older people is increasing. People in Estonia are concerned about the survival of the Estonian nation: low fertility and transnational migration are the main risk factors.

During recent years Estonia has been one of the fastest-growing economies in Europe, a demonstrating good recovery from the economic crisis. However, the resources released during the crisis have been put extensively to use and now the poor economic climate in neighbouring countries is holding the Estonian economy back¹.

In children's lives the transnational job migration of parents is a spreading phenomenon: there are children left behind by one or both parents, and there are children who leave the country with their parents. Not only lack of jobs but also income poverty among working adults is an important motivator for seeking jobs elsewhere (most often in Finland as the languages are close and the country is a close neighbour). Children of commuting parents keep contact with parents using Skype, sms, Facebook and other social media tools. They say that in some moments they long for their parents, however they also admit that they take more responsibility over everyday actions and can enjoy independence from their parents.

¹Krusell, S. & Mürsepp, R. (2014) 'Economic and Social Overview'. Statistical Yearbook of Estonia. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, pp 25–34.

Family and Child Policies

Children in Estonia are politically highly valued as a resource of physical reproduction of the society and survival as a nation. For this reason they stay permanently on the agenda of pronatalist politics. Pronatalism has been a dominating family policy discourse over years. The birth of children is generously supported by political measures (parental allowance that is paid until the child reaches 1.5 years old is income-related and compensates for the major income loss after a baby is born; it is the major expenditure in the structure of family benefits and allowances), but the understanding about child wellbeing in the here and now is comparatively less prioritised .

The policies impacting children's lives have internal contradictions: on one hand a parent (most often a mother) should return to work after the parental allowance ends once their child reaches 1.5 years, and the child has to become familiar with childcare facilities; on the other hand, a parent has a right to stay at home and live on low state support until the child reaches three years old. All children receive universal monthly child benefit. The amount is small but it is well-targeted in the case of children with many sisters and brothers .

There is a lack of places in nursery groups and this is why the municipalities are currently supporting the opening of new child-minding services, both public and private. The idea behind this is to make the early return to work of the caring parent (most often a mother) possible by closing the gap between the end of the parental allowance and lack of childcare places for children under three years old. The municipalities give support to childcare facilities and extra-curricula hobby schools and activities while parents pay for the other part. Schools are free of charge in Estonia, however there are also some private/public schools jointly funded by the municipalities and parents.

Estonia ratified the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child shortly after regaining independence in 1991, and there is an Ombudsman for Children (<http://lasteombudsman.ee/en/welcome>). Additionally, the Child Protection Law Act was introduced a year after; however operational regulations did not follow. A new Child protection Act that applies the ideas from the new paradigm of childhood was introduced in 2014. The preparation of the Act took many years and instigated hot discussions between policy actors, practitioners, researchers and the broader civil society. It still lacks several operational procedures and is more child protection (reactive) than wellbeing (proactive, preventive) focused .

Children have gained a clear position in politics. For instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs prepared a developmental plan for families and children and the Green Paper on children and families was launched in 2015. Researchers make attempts to include children's statistics into the state mainstream statistics for informed policy making purposes. As the first sign of it, a collection of children's statistics focussing on child wellbeing was published in 2013 and a set of child wellbeing indicators was proposed for addition to national statistics.

Education system

Pre-school education is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months to seven years in specially dedicated educational institutions. Basic education serves as the mandatory minimum of general education requirement, which can be acquired either partially in primary schools (grades 1 to 6), basic schools (grades 1 to 9) or upper secondary schools that also teach basic school curricula. The basic school is divided into three stages: grades 1-3 as stage I; grades 4-6 as stage II, and grades 7-9 as stage III. In most cases schools are managed by local governments. (www.hm.ee).

Estonian society is an individualistic, success-oriented society. Parents are concerned about their children's personal success from an early age. Education as a tool for building one's success has been highly valued by Estonians over centuries. It is interesting to mention that according to Civil Census in 1881, 94% of the population could read and 48% could both read and write .

Children have to compete for places in the best schools as an investment into personal success in the future. Some children have to compete even for a place in a better-quality childcare facility to be better prepared for the competition to enter an excellent school (with in-depth foreign language – most often English or sciences). All children can take preparation classes for school the year before going to school and some children take extra classes with private teachers to prepare for changing school to a better one or for receiving better marks .

Policymakers are concerned about the cost efficiency of schools and this hits first of all small rural schools. The moral apology for closing them is the fact that bigger schools in the cities offer better quality education according to official rankings of schools based on examination results (compared to the small rural ones), and as parents are interested in the personal success of their children closing small schools could thus be for children's good .

Estonia is doing relatively well internationally according to the PISA test. However children lag behind with happiness scores compared to, for instance, children in the Nordic countries. Every tenth child aged 11-15 has at least once thought about attempting suicide. The wellbeing of children in big city schools is not as high as in small rural schools. Some children who are over-distressed at school move to a smaller, rural one neighbouring the city. School bullying is a problem acknowledged even by the Government and the Child Ombudsman's Office. Researchers say that not children but the school environment is the problem. Children inform researchers that bullying often starts from wrong and unethical behaviour of adults, and children give the advice: combating school-bullying should start with adults who should change first.

Family environment

The child population (0-17 yrs) forms 18.4% of the whole population, and this proportion is decreasing. Most children (94%) live in one-family households (about 73% of them live with two parents and 21% live with one parent); the rest live in multi-family households (e.g. grandparents living together with the family of a younger generation) or non-family households (e.g. a grandparent and a grandchild). 61% of the children who live with both parents have married parents, and the rest have cohabiting parents. The proportion of children living with cohabiting parents is increasing and of those living with married parents is decreasing. The younger the children, the more likely they are to have cohabiting parents (42% of children aged under 3 and 22% of children aged 12–17). The probability of living together with a step-parent in a two parent household increases with the child's age. Nuclear families are common in Estonia and less than one in ten children live with grandparent(s). As the life expectancy of men is lower than that for women, and due to high number of family separations and divorces, grandfathers often play less important roles in children's lives than grandmothers.

Most children (61%) live in apartments and a third live in single-family homes. Single-family houses have been traditional and preferred in Estonia, however together with growing cities living in flats has increased to form the majority.

Parenting skills and capacities of coping economically are important contextual factors of children's wellbeing in Estonia. A new generation of parents is making efforts to develop towards shared parenting. This is supported by family policies, for instance parents are invited to flexibly divide who and when takes the parental allowance and stays with the child at home during the child's first 1.5 years. Still majority are mothers, but there is growing evidence that fathers stay at home with the child at least for some time. Poverty is structural in Estonia: children from big families and those living with lone parents are at high risk of poverty. Risk factors can cumulate in some children's lives; for instance unemployment, disability or chronic illness of a family member, living in a big family or with a lone parent, or any of these factors combined with low income from work.

Children have reported that they have some responsibilities at home, however from their reports it has become evident that the division of household chores often follows gender stereotypes, for instance girls keep an eye on younger siblings while boys do repair works.

Everyday life

Children start with hobbies from early age: some of them visit baby playgroups, some of them join singing groups before the age of three, some start with dancing at three, some start playing a musical instrument, play sports, etc., before they go to school at seven. Children are active in extra-curricular activities: only one out of ten is rarely or not at all involved in any. Busy children result in parents having to negotiate over the logistics of commuting between children's "islands" (a term coined by German Childhood Sociologist Helga Zeiher): who takes whom from where and to where. It is rather common that children are taken to school in the mornings by car and they are met by parents at their hobby schools. However, children also travel by themselves, using public transport. For children living in remote areas, public transport is organised to reach their rural schools but their opportunities for extra-curricular activities are limited compared to children living in urban areas .

Children spend long hours with TV and IT technology (music devices, computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) and do homework which is regularly given at school. Close to three quarters of children have got their own smart phone when they go to school, and the proportion of phone owners increases fast with age. About a half of them have their own tablet or computer when going to school. Children get fond of all kinds of IT devices from early age and reach competence in using them which can exceed the competence of their parents. In some families parents try to retain control over their children's IT use but sometimes IT can work for the good of parents as childminders when parents themselves are busy. The research evidence shows that Estonian children are the highest in Europe for excessive internet use and harmful online experiences, while parents hardly acknowledge this .

Urban and rural children have different playgrounds. Urban children's leisure is more controlled by adults and children can visit public playgrounds or playrooms while rural children reported that: "our village is our playground ."

Children like to spend time with friends. Very often they use IT together and invite more friends to join over FB or Skype. Sometimes they stay overnight at friends' houses. Children in Estonia like to have their birthday parties in public playrooms where they can host many friends. This is also a wonderful chance for parents to have a chat while watching their children.

Unequal childhoods

Estonia is a country with high social inequality and this affects children's lives. In 2011, 17% of all children aged under 18 lived in relative poverty (60% of the median income, equivalence scales: 1: 0.5: 0.3). Teenagers are at the highest risk of poverty (22% of 11–17-year-olds), because there is a greater probability that there are more children in the family (younger siblings). Also, the share of children living in lone-parent families has increased by that age and living in a lone-parent family is a risk factor for poverty². Not all children acknowledge the material poverty of their family or are sad because of not receiving pocket money regularly; their perception of being unequal begins from the feeling of being deprived in important aspects of their lives— opportunities to be involved in activities in their interests that require money and help them to have equal opportunities to make friends. There are also children who live in families with permanent extreme poverty. They even lack food of good nutritional value at home. In Estonia lunch in schools is offered for free until the gymnasium level. This is especially important for children from very poor families. The determinants of unequal childhoods can be found at all levels of the social life: poor family environment, changing family structures, low parenting skills, limited access to out-of-home activities that are not free of charge, uneasy treatment of children by adults, unemployment of parents, low income from work, the highest gender pay-gap in Europe. The accumulation of risk factors hits children in lone mother families most. Unequal childhoods contribute to a poverty culture and to the intergenerational transmission of inequalities.

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

The Estonian sample was designed to achieve a nationally representative sample of children in school years 2 (aged 8 to 9 years old), 4 (aged 10 to 11 years old) and 6 (aged 12 to 13 years old) with at least 1,000 children in each group. Cluster sampling of schools was used. At the first stage, the list of schools was stratified according to the type of settlement and type of school and then the random selection of schools in each stratum was made. From the selected schools, all children in each age group (2nd, 4th and 6th classes) were invited to participate in the survey with one exception: if the number of classes on the same level in the selected school was greater than 2, two classes from the list of all classes were randomly selected. The following specifications were applied: (1) extremely small schools (number of pupils in the 2nd, 4th and 6th classes together is smaller than 10) were excluded from the sample. Such schools comprise about 1% of the population under survey; (2) schools for children with special educational needs were also excluded from the list of all schools because conducting a questionnaire-based study in such schools is very complicated – these schools comprise about 2% of the population under survey. Schools with Russian language of instruction were included in the sample later and the sample was adapted accordingly.

We used five strata: (1) the biggest cities (Tallinn, Tartu, excluding small-sized schools); (2) urban areas (county centres and East-Virumaa cities); (3) towns and villages with middle-sized schools; (4) towns and villages with large schools (over 500 students), and (5) small schools (100 or less students), mostly rural. In each stratum the schools were randomly selected. We had a special interest in pupils attending small schools mostly located in the rural areas – in many other surveys they have been overlooked.

² Laes, T.-L., Krusell, S., Reinomägi, A., Toros, K. (2013). 'The child in different environments'. Kutsar, D. (Ed). Child Well-Being. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, pp: 13–41.

Formation of the final sample

Altogether 54 schools were selected; 10 refused to participate. Due to some pre-planned oversampling based on statistical data about schools and classes only three randomly selected schools were added later to the sample. All of them agreed to participate. The final number of surveyed schools was 47. By age groups the schools included: 2nd Year – 1131 resp (592B/533G); 71 class interviews (av class size 15.9; response 85% - incl refusals and absentees; 18% Russian); 4th Year – 1034 resp (534B/490G); 69 class interviews (av class size 15; response 88%; 21% Russian), and 6th Year – 1033 resp (521B/511G); 70 class interviews (av class size 14.8; response 85%; 22% Russian).

The fieldwork

The class interviews were carried out by 3rd year BA students of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work. They passed both the course on Sociology of Childhood and careful training followed by further supervision during the whole fieldwork. Ethical aspects of the study were carefully followed. Informed passive parental consent was applied: there were more refusals from parents in classes with Russian as a language of instruction in larger cities. The refusals by parents caused distress in children and left a feeling in the fieldworkers of violation of the participation right and right to have a choice of the child. Every child participating in the survey was thanked with a small chocolate. Children very much appreciated this attention. In Estonian-speaking schools Estonian versions of the questionnaires were used and in the schools in which Russian is the language of instruction Russian versions were used.

After data cleaning, the survey data set contains questionnaires from a sample of 3198 children; each age group contains over 1000 respondents (table 1)

Table 1: Achieved sample by schooling year and strata (N)

	Stratum					
	All	1	2	3	4	5
Year 2	1131	382	208	237	207	97
Year 4	1034	330	226	209	204	65
Year 6	1033	333	248	190	177	85
Total	3198	1045	682	636	588	247

The further analysis applies weights to ensure that the proportion of children in the data set in each stratum is equivalent to the proportion of children in that stratum in the population. For making weights we used the most recent data (2013/2014 study year) from the Ministry of Education and Research. Weights were calculated by Gwyther Rees from the core group of the survey.

2. Results

2.1 The participants

Age and gender

The schooling age is seven in Estonia but some children start school at age 6. The age of the child respondents ranges between 7 and 14 (table 2). In Year 2 most were 8 years old, in Year 4 and 6 – 10 and 12 years old accordingly. The sample is not representative by age so will be analysed by year group from here on: to maintain consistency across the countries reports we will name the Year 2 - “8-year-olds” group the Year 4 - “10-year-olds”, and Year 6 - “12-year-olds” group.

Table 2: Age by gender (N)

	7 years old	8 years old	9 years old	10 years old	11 years old	12 years old	13 years old	14 years old	Total
Boy	11	511	74	455	83	432	77	2	1645
Girl	21	469	61	419	72	454	38	0	1534
Total*	32	980	135	874	155	886	115	2	3179

* 19 respondents did not mark their gender.

Country of birth

97% of children were born in Estonia and the rest reported other countries, such as Sweden, Finland, Russia and Ukraine.

2.2 Your home and the people you live with

As demonstrated in the contextual part of this report, children in Estonia can experience different family types during their childhood. According to the analysis, the majority of children from fourth and sixth classes live with both biological parents; however, over ten per cent of children live with two parents out of whom one is “obtained” or social (not biological). Over ten per cent of children live with a single parent (figure 1).

We also asked about whether children also lived in another home, but were not very successful because the term “another home” was not so clear to them. It might be the stay overnight with a parent from whom the child is separated or with the parent commuting by job to another country, or a grandparent with whom to spend time during the holidays or just the regular stay at a friend’s home.

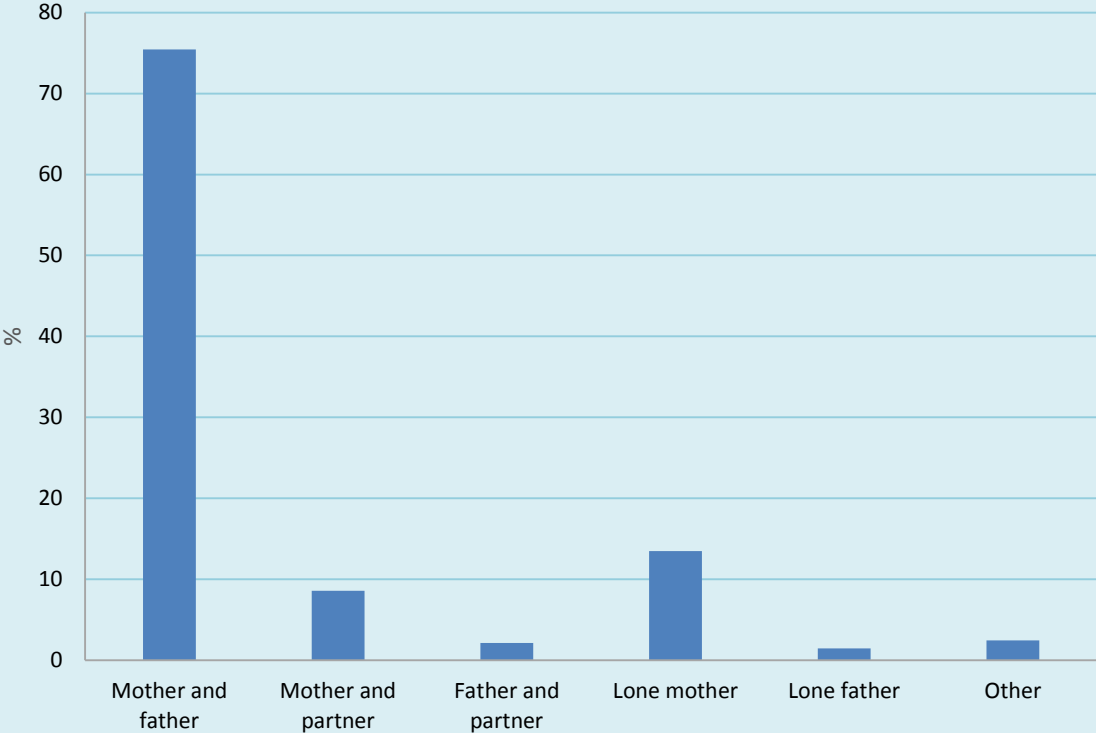


Figure 1. Family type in the first home (Y10 and Y12 together) (%)

There were questions asked about children’s views on the home and people they live with (table 3). Home is a safe place for most children; however over seven per cent hesitated to agree more than “somewhat” with the statement. They also enjoy time spent together in the family. Children are more critical concerning their parents’ parenting styles: how much they listen to children and how much they take into account what children say, and how fairly they treat children. Only slightly more than a half of the respondents totally agree that they are listened to, taken into account and treated fairly at home. Every fifth child has a problem with finding a quiet place to study at home.

Table 3: Home and family (All year groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe at home	1.4	2.3	3.7	12.1	80.5
I have a quiet place to study at home	5.9	5.6	7.3	21.5	59.6
My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account	4.8	7.1	9.5	25.3	53.4
My parents/carers treat me fairly	2.7	3.2	7.0	20.0	67.1
We have a good time together in my family	1.6	2.1	5.5	12.7	78.2

Children's levels of agreement were rather stable among the age groups while girls were in general more positive than boys in their assessments (table 4). It is important to note that children living with their own parents were most positive while children living with own and step-parent were the most critical: the latter had the least space to study and felt least that parents listened to them. Living with a lone parent is subjectively perceived by a child as more favourable situation than living with a step-parent in a two parent family.

Table 4: Variations in questions about home and the people you live with (All age groups) (Means)

	Feel safe	Place to study	Parents listen	Parents fair	Good time together
Gender					
Boy	3.65	3.18	3.11	3.44	3.60
Girl	3.72	3.29	3.20	3.50	3.68
Age group					
8 years-old	3.61	3.15	3.04	3.35	3.62
10 years-old	3.71	3.23	3.18	3.70	3.56
12 years-old	3.74	3.32	3.24	3.59	3.50
Family type					
Mother and father	3.77	3.34	3.27	3.58	3.70
Parent and stepparent	3.60	2.98	2.98	3.24	3.41
Lone parent	3.64	3.24	3.13	3.50	3.56
Total	3.69	3.23	3.15	3.47	3.64

Joint activities and time spent together is a sensitive topic: about two thirds report talking together every day while only about 30% agree that they have fun together every day (table 5). Learning together is more spread over the assessment scale and reflects probably the children's capacities of doing homework independently vs needing external assistance. However, it also may reflect the parental eagerness to find time for learning together as this is perceived by children.

Table 5: Time spent activities with family in the past week (All age groups) (%)

	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
How often do family: Talk together	3.0	7.9	22.1	67.0
How often do family: Have fun together	5.9	18.0	45.4	30.7
How often do family: Learn together	14.6	22.4	28.7	34.2

Table 6 compares the mean scores for the above questions about time spent with family. It appears that there are no gender variations. Learning together is in general decreasing with age, and the same can be said about having fun together in the family.

Table 6: Variations in time spent activities with family in the past week (All age groups) (Means)

	Talk together	Have fun together	Learn together
Gender			
Boy	2.48	1.99	1.84
Girl	2.59	2.03	1.80
Age group			
8 years-old	2.50	2.23	2.25
10 years-old	2.56	2.03	1.87
12 years-old	2.54	1.75	1.32
Total	2.53	2.01	1.83

The next questions covered satisfaction with family life. In the 8 year-old group children were asked to answer in 5-point emoticons scales and older children were asked to answer using 11-point scales. In all cases zero represents the unhappiest response and the highest value – being most happy. In the youngest group, girls gave statistically higher estimates of satisfaction with home and the people they live with (table 7). Children in the older age groups were on average happier with their family life than with their living environment – house or flat (table 8). Girls were statistically more satisfied with people they live with than boys.

It turned out from the fieldworkers' notes that "All other people in your family" was not so well understood by children, and also the mean scores appeared to be lower compared to the other items, especially in case of boys from the 10 year-old group. In Estonia small one-family type is most common meaning that children may have had problems in drawing the family borders while forming their responses to this question; they may have had a problem in identifying who "the other people in your family" are. For instance in a case when they have grandparents who live separately and children see them often, or oppositely, not as often as they wished – the psychological borders of the family can be broader than the border of the household and thus impact the assessment.

Table 7: Satisfaction with home and the people you live with (8 years-old) (Means)

	The house or flat where you live	The people you live with	All the other people in your family	Your family life
Boy	3.61	3.46	2.91	3.57
Girl	3.67	3.59	3.02	3.67
Total	3.64	3.52	2.95	3.62

Table 8: Satisfaction with home and the people you live with (10 and 12 years-old) (Means)

		The house or flat where you live	The people you live with	All the other people in your family	Your family life
10 years-old	Boy	9.10	9.04	7.83	9.26
	Girl	8.99	9.37	8.05	9.28
	Total	9.04	9.19	7.91	9.27
12 years-old	Boy	8.82	9.16	8.57	9.19
	Girl	8.70	9.16	8.60	8.97
	Total	8.76	9.16	8.59	9.08

2.3 Money and things you have

Children were asked a set of questions about things that they have at home. There was a shorter list presented to younger children and a longer list to the older groups. In Estonia owning a TV-set is very common thus we decided not to include this item (see table 9 – “NA”). It appeared that in all age groups more girls than boys owned books to read for fun and boys owned more often than girls the rest: computer, internet, own stuff to listen to music, etc. Table 9 shows that access to computer and internet is most common among children of the two older age groups; however younger children also have rather good access. Among the older age groups owning a mobile phone is also common while only 72% report about having their own room at home.

Table 9: Things you have (All age groups) (Means)

	8 years-old	10 and 12 years-old
Mobile phone	-	95.7
Own room	-	72.3
Books to read for fun	-	95.4
Own stuff to listen to music	-	88.2
Clothes in good condition to go to school in	99.3	99.6
Access to a computer at home	91.3	97.2
Access to the Internet	88.3	97.6
Family car for transportation	88.1	87.9
Television that can use	NA	NA

From the perspective of peer cultures, owning the “right” things is important to children as a “key” to enter into a peer group. In the survey we were interested in children’s answers to how many items in the list they are lacking. We leave this issue for further and more detailed analysis. On average, girls of the youngest group were happier with the things they have than boys and children from the 12 year-old age group were less happy than those from the 10 year-old group (table 10).

Table 10: Variations in satisfaction with the things you have (Means)

	8 years-old	10 and 12 year- old
<i>Gender</i>		
Boy	3.55	8.96
Girl	3.64	9.01
<i>Age group</i>		
10 years-old		9.07
12 years-old		8.88
All		8.98

Getting pocket money was reported by the majority of children from the oldest age group (this question was not asked of the younger groups). However, 30% say they receive it irregularly and another 30% say it happens not very often (every month); only one third report receiving pocket money regularly every week (table 11).

Table 11: Pocket money (12 years-old) (%)

	%
I don't get pocket money	6.3
I get pocket money, but not regularly	31.5
I get pocket money every week	34.3
I get pocket money every month	27.9
Total	100.0

In 2012, 4.8% of all children lived in unemployed households in Estonia.³ In our survey, children of the oldest group were asked about their household's current economic situation. It appeared that almost 80% of children live in households with at least two family members who have a paid job and less than one per cent of children have none in a paid job (table 12).

Table 12: How many adults that you live with have a paid job? (12 years-old)

	%
None	0.6
One	20.7
Two	61.4
More than two	17.3
Total	100.0

We were also interested how children assess the economic situation in their household, and asked how often they worry about money in their family. About one quarter across the age groups reported that they never do; among younger children there were more compared to the older groups who always worry about money (table 13). Interestingly, reporting being worried about money decreases with age and girls slightly more often than boys agree with this statement (table 14).

Table 13: Frequency of worrying about how much money family has (All age groups) (%)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
8 years-old	27.1	35.6	12.2	25.1
10 years-old	26.7	42.6	19.4	11.3
12 years-old	25.3	50.7	18.6	5.4

³ Laes, T.-L., Krusell, S., Reinomägi, A., Toros, K. (2013). 'The child in different environments'. Kutsar, D. (Ed). Child Well-Being. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, pp: 13–41.

Table 14: Variations in frequency of worrying about how much money family has (All age groups) (Means)

	Means
Gender	
Boy	1.14
Girl	1.22
Age group	
8 years-old	1.35
10 years-old	1.15
12 years-old	1.04
Total	1.18

2.4 Your friends and other people

Friends are important in children's lives. We asked a few questions about presence of friends and relationships with friends and other people. It appears in the table 15 that 77% of children have enough friends; however, only a half totally agree with the statement that friends are usually nice to them. Around three per cent of children do not have enough friends and close to that proportion hesitate to answer that their friends are usually nice to them (table 15). No significant variations in the assessments observed (table 16)

Table 15: Friends (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My friends are usually nice to me	2.3	5.2	8.7	32.6	51.2
I have enough friends	2.9	4.2	4.9	11.4	76.6

Table 16: Variations in friends (All age groups) (Means)

	My friends are usually nice to me	I have enough friends
Gender		
Boy	3.25	3.57
Girl	3.29	3.54
Age group		
8 years-old	3.26	3.54
10 years-old	3.32	3.65
12 years-old	3.27	3.56
Total	3.27	3.56

We also were interested in how much children are satisfied with friends, with people in their area, and with people in general. As a general trend across all age groups children reported being more satisfied with friends than with people in their area and people in general (tables 17 and 18).

Table 17: Satisfaction with friendships and other relationships (8 years-old)

	0	1	2	3	4
Your friends	1.2	2.1	6.2	26.9	63.7
The people in your area	3.0	3.2	12.7	26.9	54.2
Your relationships with people in general	2.5	2.2	13.8	30.8	50.7

Table 18: Satisfaction with friendships and other relationships (10 and 12 years-old)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your friends	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.2	2.0	3.2	2.9	6.5	12.9	21.6	48.4
The people in your area	2.2	1.3	1.3	2.3	2.8	5.6	4.7	7.0	12.3	19.5	41.1
Your relationships with people in general	0.8	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.9	4.7	3.5	6.5	14.3	25.9	40.0

Due to different measurement scales we cannot compare the youngest age group with the rest, however we can say that children are in general positive about relationships with other people. Gender variations were found in all age groups: compared to boys, girls were more satisfied with people in general (tables 19 and 20).

Table 19: Satisfaction with friendships and other relationships (8 years-old) (Means)

	Your friends	The people in your area	Your relationships with people in general
Boy	3.49	3.19	3.15
Girl	3.51	3.33	3.35
Total	3.50	3.26	3.25

Table 20: Variation in satisfaction with friendships and other relationships (10 and 12 years-old) (Means)

		Your friends	The people in your area	Your relationships with people in general
10 years-old	Boy	8.92	8.23	8.31
	Girl	8.93	8.62	8.84
	Total	8.91	8.39	8.54
12 years-old	Boy	8.57	7.87	8.44
	Girl	8.56	7.81	8.50
	Total	8.56	7.84	8.47

In table 21 it appears that children spend much time together talking and having fun. Learning together is not done so often: 40% report they do not learn together and more than one quarter say they do it often. Girls more often than boys spend time with friends talking together; this is more often reported by children of the two older age groups, while their joint time with friends spent with learning is the least often (table 22).

Table 21: Time spent activities with family in the past week (All age groups) (%)

	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
Talk together	4.9	13.3	32.8	49.1
Have fun together	8.4	18.8	35.6	37.2
Learn together	40.4	30.1	14.9	14.6

Table 22: Variations in time spent activities with family in the past week (All age groups) (Means)

	Talk together	Have fun together	Learn together
Gender			
Boy	2.20	2.02	0.95
Girl	2.32	2.01	1.13
Age group			
8 years-old	2.16	2.09	1.24
10 years-old	2.30	2.03	1.03
12 years-old	2.33	1.93	0.82
Total	2.26	2.02	1.04

2.5 The area where you live

Estonia is a country where over 70% of the population lives in urban areas. The children's spaces in rural and urban areas differ qualitatively: in towns they have public playgrounds and backyards of their private houses while in the rural areas children can define their playground more broadly. For instance children of a village school commented: "The village is our playground".

From the study it appeared that in general children are satisfied with their places to play or have a good time, and also that in general they feel safe. However, children of the oldest age group reported that the town council does not often ask their opinion about things that are important to them: only about a third of the respondents agreed with this statement (table 23). There are only some variations by gender and age. Girls are less likely than boys to agree with the statement that they feel safe when walking in the area they live, and the proportion agreeing that they have enough places to play or have a good time declines with age (table 24). In general children are satisfied with the area they live in, and girls of the two older groups (10 and 12 years-old) give higher estimates compared to boys (table 25 and 26). Girls are also more satisfied than boys with how they are treated by doctors and with the outdoor area that children can use (table 26).

Table 23: Views about local area (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
The town council asks children their opinion about things that are important to them (12 years-old only)	29.9	17.2	20.7	18.7	13.4
In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time	5.3	7.1	8.1	18.9	60.6
I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in	3.6	5.8	9.2	22.6	58.8

Table 24: Variation in views about area (Means)

	Enough places to play or to have a good time	I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in
Gender		
Boy	3.27	3.31
Girl	3.18	3.23
Age group		
8 years-old	3.46	3.36
10 years-old	3.40	3.37
12 years-old	2.80	3.08
Total	3.23	3.27

Table 25: Satisfaction with local area (8 years-old) (Means)

	How you are dealt with at the doctors	The outdoor areas children can use in your area	The area you live in general
Boy	2.98	3.16	3.56
Girl	3.15	3.26	3.59
Total	3.06	3.21	3.58

Table 26: Satisfaction with local area (10 and 12 years-old) (Means)

		Local police in your area*	How you are dealt with at the doctors	The outdoor areas children can use in your area	The area you live in general
10 years-old	Boy	-	8.82	7.96	8.79
	Girl	-	8.96	7.99	8.95
	Total		8.87	7.96	8.85
12 years-old	Boy	6.69	8.58	7.20	8.30
	Girl	6.93	8.45	7.26	8.36
	Total	6.81	8.51	7.23	8.33

*only asked in the 12 years-old age group

2.6 School

Children in Estonia express rather critical views about school. This has also been the evidence drawn from other international comparative surveys in which children from Estonia participated. In general, children feel safe at school and agree that teachers treat them fairly. However, the general attitude towards liking going to school is the most critical: only 61% of the respondents admitted that they like going to school and 12% said they do not like it. Every fourth child was critical towards teachers in terms of how much they have been listened to and what they say has been taken into account. As an average, girls are less critical compared to boys, and critical attitudes increase with age (tables 27 and 28).

Table 27: Views about school (All age groups) (%)

	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	6.0	7.0	11.5	32.0	43.5
I like going to school	12.3	11.7	15.0	25.2	35.8
My teachers treat me fairly	3.9	5.8	11.6	24.5	54.1
I feel safe at school	5.1	5.7	9.9	21.5	57.9

Table 28: Variations in views about school by gender and age group (All age groups) (Means)

	My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	I like going to school	My teachers treat me fairly	I feel safe at school
Gender				
Boy	2.91	2.43	3.12	3.15
Girl	3.10	2.84	3.31	3.31
Age group				
8 years-old	3.11	3.11	3.41	3.40
10 years-old	3.14	2.66	3.35	3.28
12 years-old	2.76	2.07	2.89	2.98
Total	3.00	2.63	3.21	3.22

Girls are more satisfied than boys with their school marks, school experience, relationships with teachers, and how much teachers listen to them (tables 29 and 30).

Table 29: Satisfaction with school (8 years-old) (Means)

	Other children in your class	Your school marks	Your school experience	Your relationship with teachers
Boy	3.18	3.31	3.36	3.27
Girl	3.21	3.49	3.57	3.60
Total	3.20	3.39	3.46	3.43

Table 30: Satisfaction with school (10 and 12 years-old) (Means)

		Other children in your class	Your school marks	Your school experience	Your life as a student	Things you have learned	Your relationship with teachers
10 years-old	Boy	8.27	7.99	8.49	8.41	8.89	8.07
	Girl	8.09	8.43	8.96	8.87	9.08	9.02
	Total	8.16	8.19	8.69	8.61	8.95	8.51
12 years-old	Boy	7.61	7.37	7.60	7.57	8.20	7.72
	Girl	7.50	7.68	8.12	7.90	8.43	8.23
	Total	7.56	7.52	7.86	7.73	8.32	7.97

Bullying at school is a serious problem in Estonia, which is acknowledged and dealt with by the Child Ombudsman. In the present study, slightly more than a half of the children reported never being bullied at school with no big variation between its two forms (been hit and left out by classmates) and by gender. The children from the youngest group (more boys than girls) report being hit more often than the rest. Being hit and being left out at school is much more common for younger children; the frequency of being bullied decreases as children get older (tables 31 and 32).

Table 31: Frequency of bullying in the last month (All age groups) (%)

	Never	Once	Two or 3 times	More than three times
Hit by other children in your school	52.1	17.0	14.1	16.8
Left out by other children in your class	57.4	17.9	12.6	12.2

Table 32: Variations in bullying (All age groups) (Means)

	Hit by other children in your school	Left out by other children in your class
Gender		
Boy	1.13	0.87
Girl	0.77	0.73
Age group		
8 years-old	1.22	0.98
10 years-old	0.94	0.80
12 years-old	0.70	0.62
Total	0.96	0.80

2.7 How you use your time

Children in Estonia are active in extra-curricular activities: 83% report that they take classes outside school time at least once or twice a week and only 12% report that they take classes rarely or never. However, the most common activity for children is doing homework (91% do it every day). This is because in the Estonian school system children receive home tasks from school every day. The next activity that takes children's time is watching TV (80% of children do it every day). Being very active in playing sports or doing exercise and in using computer is evenly spread among about a half of the children. Active computer use in a broader sense (playing, reading, using their smart phones) should be even more spread because 70% of younger children and 80% of children from the oldest age group report owning smart phones (see later in the section: "Additional questions"). The least common activity among children is reading for fun (only 32% agree that they do it every day). Helping with housework and taking care of other family members is actively done by about a half of children (the latter asked only in the 12 year-old age group) (table 33).

Table 33: Time use (All age groups) (%)

	Rarely or never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Every day or almost
Taking classes outside school time	11.7	4.7	30.8	52.7
Taking part in organized leisure time activities (like clubs and groups)*	70.2	13.1	10.8	6.0
Reading for fun	24.8	17.9	25.5	31.8
Helping with housework	4.8	10.4	35.0	49.8
Doing homework	1.2	1.6	5.6	91.6
Watching TV	2.6	3.5	13.8	80.1
Playing sports or doing exercise	6.7	6.9	29.2	57.1
Using a computer	6.3	9.0	25.1	59.6
Just being by myself*	9.1	17.3	32.1	41.5
Taking care of brothers, sisters, other family members or people you live with*	14.8	12.4	25.6	47.2

*Asked only in the 12 years-old age group

Interestingly girls are more active in several activities, such as classes outside school, reading for fun and doing housework. They are also more active in helping around the home while boys spend more time with a computer. Reading for fun and helping with housework at home are more common among younger children while using a computer is more common among older children (table 34). In general boys are more satisfied about how they spend time than girls (10 and 12 year-old groups), and children of the 12 year-old group are less satisfied than the 10 year-old children in how they use time (table 35).

Table 34: Variation in time use (All age groups) (Means)

	Classes outside school	Organized leisure activities *	Reading for fun	Helping with housework	Doing homework	Watching TV	Sports or exercise	Using a computer	Spending time by myself *	Taking care of family members *
Gender										
Boy	2.21	0.56	1.52	2.21	2.84	2.72	2.43	2.50	1.93	2.07
Girl	2.29	0.49	1.78	2.41	2.91	2.71	2.31	2.27	2.19	2.02
Age group										
8 years-old	2.19	N/A	1.91	2.37	2.86	2.57	2.33	2.08	N/A	N/A
10 years-old	2.34	N/A	1.75	2.30	2.91	2.75	2.43	2.41	N/A	N/A
12 years-old	2.21	0.53	1.28	2.24	2.87	2.83	2.37	2.69	2.06	2.05
Total	2.25	0.53	1.64	2.30	2.88	2.71	2.37	2.39	2.06	2.05

*Asked only in the 12 years-old age group

Table 35: Variations in satisfaction with time use (Age groups as indicated) (Means)

	How you use your time (10 and 12 years-old)	What you do in your free time (10 and 12 years-old)	What you do in your free time (8 years-old)
Gender			
Boy	8.63	9.10	3.63
Girl	8.55	8.98	3.66
Age group			
10 years-old	8.98	9.26	
12 years-old	8.19	8.81	
Total	8.58	9.03	3.64

2.8 Your life and your future

There were six questions asked of the youngest group of children about their life and future. Girls were generally more satisfied than boys but the differences were significant in respect of safety, appearance, health and freedom (table 36). The highest estimates were given by the youngest group of children to safety and the lowest – to freedom.

Table 36: Variation in satisfaction with life and future (8 years-old) (Means)

	Freedom	Health	Appearance	Body	Listened to by adults	Safety
Boy	3.24	3.42	3.41	3.46	3.31	3.54
Girl	3.32	3.51	3.55	3.50	3.42	3.61
Total	3.28	3.46	3.48	3.48	3.36	3.57

For the two older groups of children, eleven questions were asked about their life and future. Boys were generally more satisfied than girls, and the differences were significant with respect to being satisfied with their own health, appearance and body. The only item that was on average more highly estimated by girls was their vision about later life (table 37).

In Estonia a discourse of personal success and self-reliance is dominating. This is also reflected in children's views: satisfaction with doing things away from home and the things you want to be good at received the highest means while satisfaction with personal health occupied the third place, followed equally by the statements 'listened to by adults' and 'self-confidence'. They were also satisfied with feeling safe. Satisfaction with their own body received the lowest estimates. Children from the oldest group (12 years-old) were generally less satisfied with their life than children from the 10 year-old group (table 37).

Table 37: Variation in satisfaction with life and future (10 and 12 years-old) (Means)

	Freedom	Opportunities	Health	Appearance	Body	Listened to by adults	Self-confidence	Safety	The things you want to be good at	Doing things away from your home	Later in life
Gender											
Boy	8.28	8.47	8.91	8.55	8.45	8.54	8.59	8.81	8.96	8.89	8.30
Girl	8.18	8.40	8.70	8.08	7.83	8.55	8.45	8.77	8.80	8.98	8.50
Age group											
10 Y.O	8.50	NA	9.01	8.79	8.63	8.80	8.86	9.02	9.19	9.06	8.39
12 Y.O	7.96	8.43	8.60	7.84	7.66	8.27	8.18	8.54	8.56	8.80	8.40
Total	8.23	8.43	8.81	8.31	8.14	8.53	8.52	8.78	8.88	8.93	8.39

In Estonia, around a half of the children are aware of children's rights and they also know about the children's rights convention (table 38). They agree that in Estonia adults in general respect children's rights. Interestingly they were more aware of having rights than about the children's rights convention. However, quite a big proportion of children were not sure what children's rights are, and did not know about the convention. Moreover, during the piloting of the questionnaires it appeared that some children did not know what 'convention' means. In the main study it appeared that the highest proportion of children (12%) admitted that they do not know about the convention.

Table 38: Children's rights (All age groups) (%)

	No	Not sure	Yes
I know what rights children have	6.2	43.2	50.5
I know about the children's rights convention	12.3	43.0	44.6
I think in my country adults in general respect children's rights	6.6	36.4	57.0

Children of the two older groups were also asked a set of questions about changes that may have happened to them in the past year. In Estonia, children had much stability in their lives: a vast majority of them lived in the same local area, went to the same school and lived with the same parents or carers (table 39). Most change occurred with their living place: 14% of children reported that they had moved house during the past year. However, not all of them changed local area.

Almost one in ten children said that they had experienced changes in family structure: they do not live with the same adults they used to live with a year ago.

Table 39: Changes in children’s lives in the past year (10 and 12 years-old) (%)

	No	Yes
Moved house	86.1	13.9
Changed local area?	91.6	8.4
Changed schools	92.7	7.3
Lived in another country for more than a month	93.2	6.8
Change in parents or carers	8.5	91.5

2.9 Overall subjective well-being

Overall life satisfaction (OLS)

The Children’s Worlds survey tried a variety of different measures asking about overall subjective well-being. The simplest was to ask how much the child is satisfied with life as a whole. This single item was measured on five-point scale in case of the youngest group and on an eleven-point scale in case of the rest. Because of the difference in the length of the applied measurement scales, the youngest age group is not comparable with the two older age groups. However, we can look at the percentages of children who have given the highest grades. It appears from figures 2 and 3 that 76% of children from the 8 year-old group were totally satisfied with life (the mean score was 90.9 points) while 68% of children from the 10 year-old group and 50% of children from the 12 year-old group scored the maximum. The decrease in overall satisfaction with life from the youngest to the oldest age group of children is evident, and it is more clearly observable in the case of the 10 and 12 age groups (the mean scores were respectively 91.6 and 87.7 points) (figure 3).

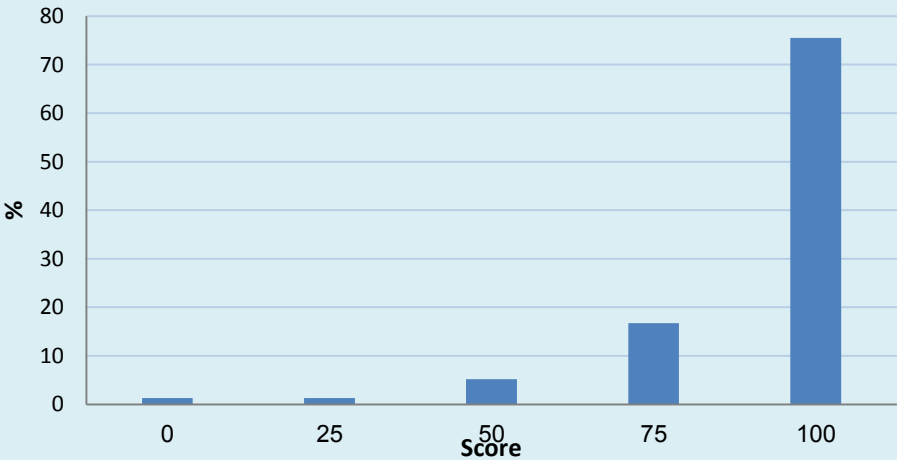


Figure 2: Distribution of OLS scores (8 year olds) (%)

If the threshold of the score is set at 80 and higher, a similar trend is observed: 89% of 10 year old children compared to 83% of the 12 year old children report a high level of overall life satisfaction.

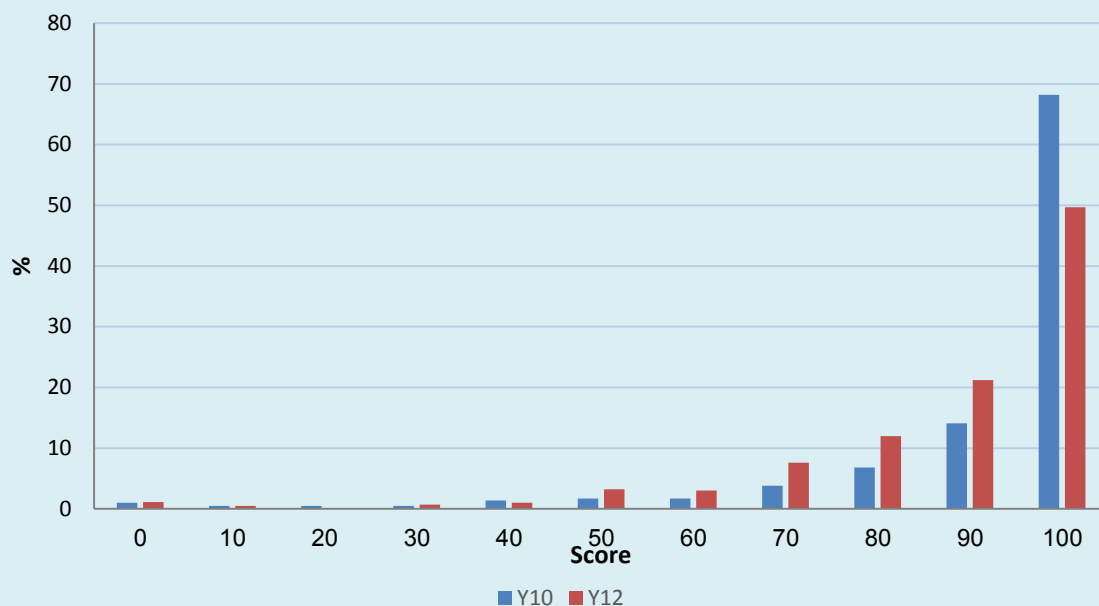


Figure 3: Distribution of OLS scores (10 and 12 year olds, %)

The Student’s Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)

Another measure applied in the survey was The Student’s Life Satisfaction Scale. The Scale is based on five statements about overall life satisfaction and children were asked to indicate how far they agree with each statement (for more detailed information about the scale see the Methods section in the General Introduction on page 2). For the 8 year-old group the scale was constructed on 5 points and for the older two groups, on 11-points ranging from ‘do not agree’ to ‘totally agree’. Again, we cannot make direct comparisons between the younger age group with the rest due to these different scales.

Most often the youngest children (8 years-old) totally agreed with the statement that they ‘have a good life’ and their ‘life is going well’ (table 40) but they hesitated to agree with the statement that their life ‘is just right’. From the fieldwork notes it appeared that children from the youngest age group had some problems by answering to this question – what “just right” means. Every tenth child did not agree that they have what they want from life and eight per cent did not agree that ‘the things in their life are excellent’.

Table 40: SLSS items (8 years-old) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My life is going well	2.5	3.0	6.5	17.0	71.0
My life is just right	3.2	5.5	8.4	31.7	51.2
I have a good life	2.5	2.9	4.4	14.0	76.2
I have what I want in life	4.8	5.5	8.7	20.7	60.3
The things in my life are excellent	3.2	4.7	6.1	18.8	67.2

Children from the two older groups (10 and 12 year-old groups) compared to children from the youngest group (8 years-old) seem to be (although no straightforward comparisons are possible) less in agreement for almost all the items (table 41). The only exception is 'I have what I want in life' for which the proportion of those with high agreement (points 9 and 10 summed up) was higher than that among the youngest children ('totally agree'). Similarly to the youngest children, they generally agree with 'I have a good life'; however, only about a half agree strongly that their 'life is going well' and 'their 'life is just right'. Interestingly the older age groups seem to be more in agreement than the youngest age group with the statement 'The things in my life are excellent'.

Table 41: SLSS items (10 and 12 years-old) (%)

	0	1	2	4	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
My life is going well	0.6	0.2	1.6	2.4	3.1	7.0	6.1	11.5	17.0	23.0	26.6
My life is just right	1.1	0.6	1.6	2.4	3.1	7.0	6.1	11.5	17.0	23.0	26.6
I have a good life	0.8	0.4	1.0	1.5	1.5	3.4	3.1	5.7	10.1	18.2	54.1
I have what I want in life	1.8	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.9	4.5	4.1	7.2	11.1	22.0	44.5
The things in my life are excellent	2.1	1.2	1.0	1.4	2.4	4.9	5.3	7.3	11.4	22.6	40.3

Next, we formed a scale by summing all of the items and transforming the scale from 0-100. The distribution of scores is demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4. It appears that 35% of children from the youngest age group had the highest score and 7% had a low score (less than 50) on the SLSS scale (figure 4). The mean score for this age group was 84 points.

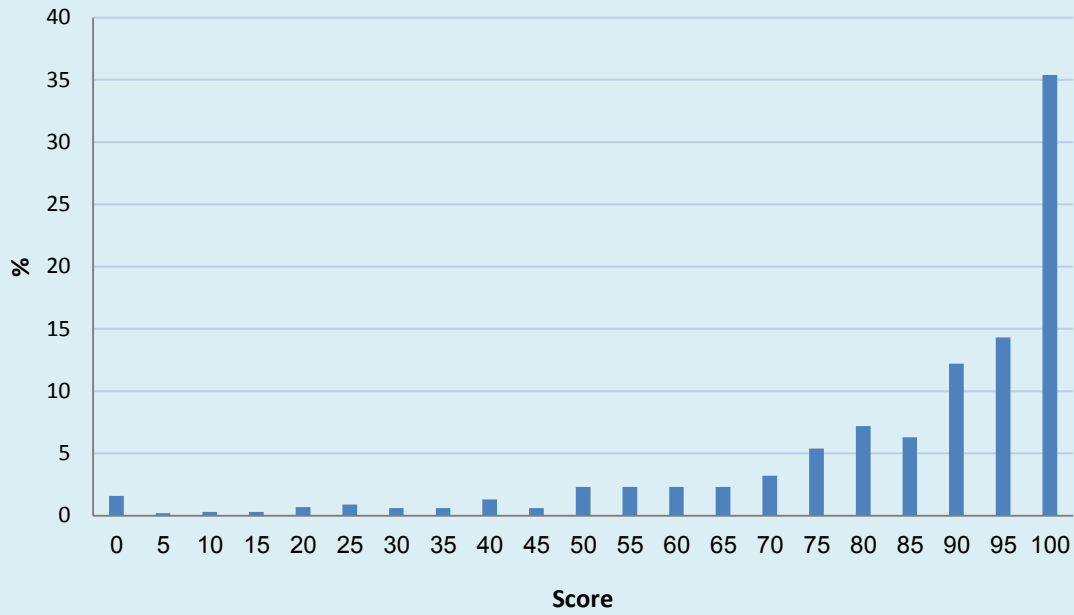


Figure 4: Distribution of SLSS5 scores (8 year olds) (%)

The older groups of children demonstrated a diverse picture of life satisfaction scores. Putting the threshold of high life satisfaction at 90 and more points, for 10 year olds 64% were found to have high satisfaction compared to 42% of the older group, with the mean scores of 86 points (10 years old) and 81 points (12 years old). Low scores (less than 50 points) were reported by 5% of the 10 year olds and 7% of the 12 year olds (figure 5).

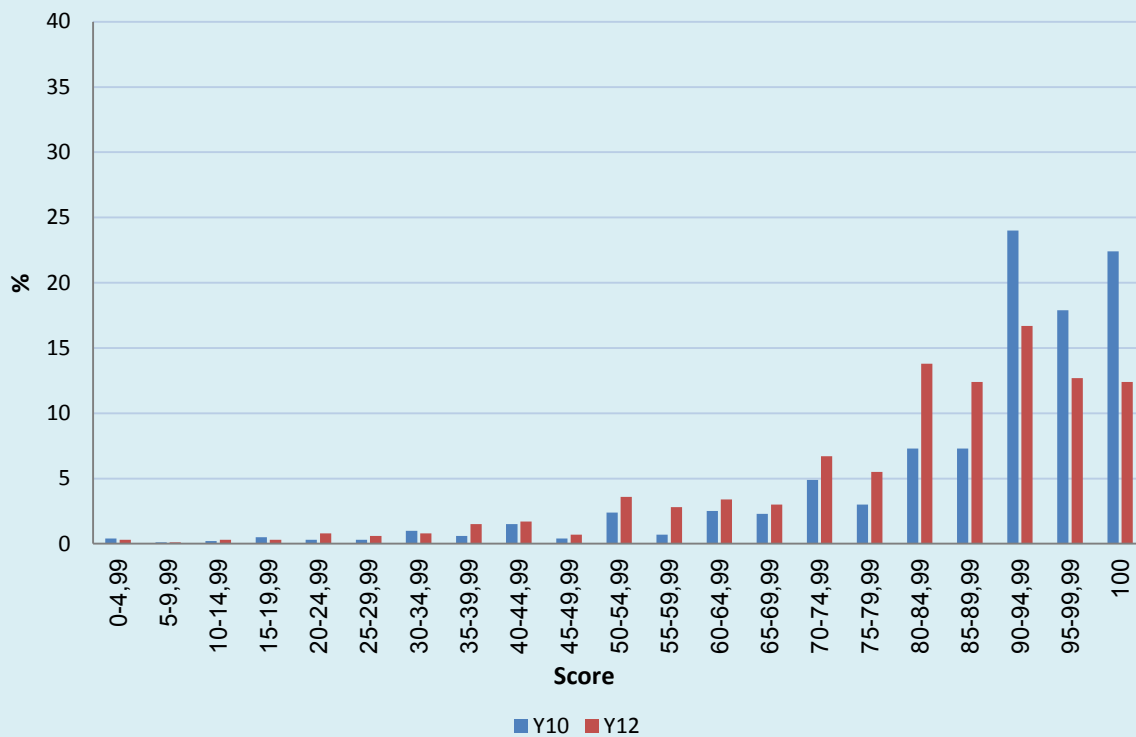


Figure 5: Distribution of SLSS5 scores (10 and 12 year olds) (%)

Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)

The Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale consists of five domains – family life, friends, school experience, local area and body. The scale is a sum of these five scores transformed so that it ranges from zero to 100 (for more detailed information see the Methods section in the General Introduction on page 2). The distribution of scores is shown in Figures 5 and 6.

The findings show that 30% of children from the youngest age group (8 years-old) had the highest score (100 points) and 3% had a low score (50 points or less) in BMSLSS scale. If the threshold of high life satisfaction is put at 90 or more points it represents 62% of children (figure 6). The mean score of this age group was 87 points.

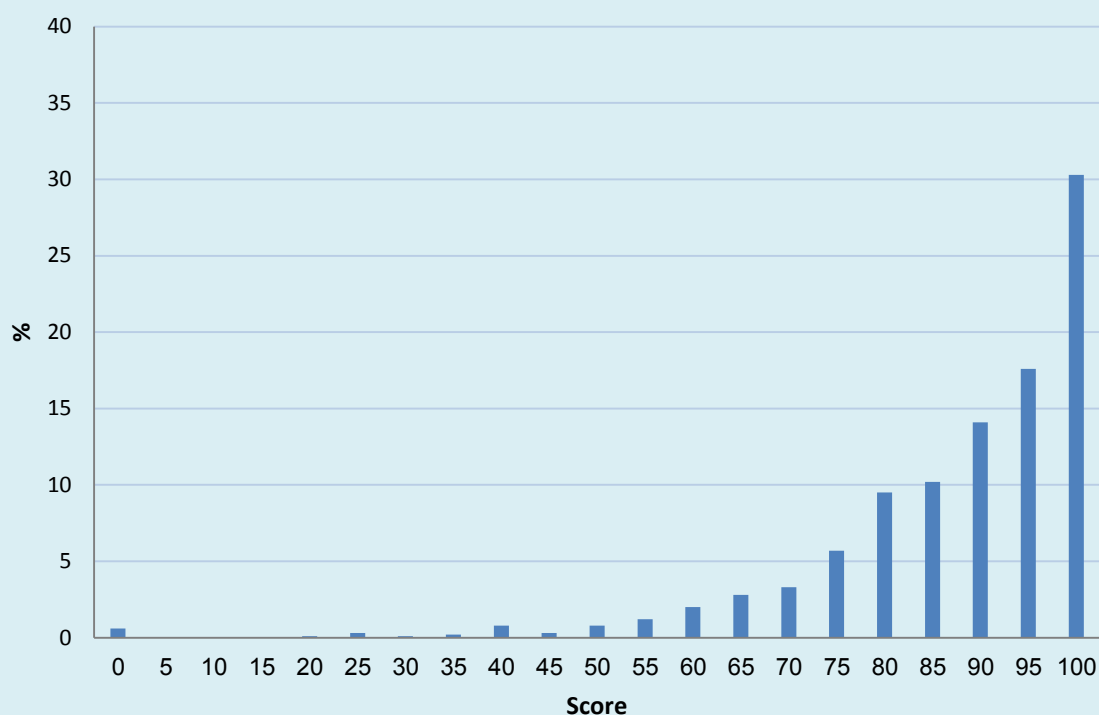


Figure 6: Distribution of BMSLSS scores (8 year olds, %)

The older groups of children demonstrated diverse picture of life satisfaction scores. It appeared that 23% of 10 year olds and only 7% of the 12 year olds had the highest score (100 points) for life satisfaction. Putting the threshold of high life satisfaction at 90 and more points, in the group of 10 year olds 61% can be found here compared to 43% of the older group, with mean scores of 88 points (10 years old) and 83 points (12 years old). Low scores (less than 50 points) represented 2% of the 10 year olds and 4% of the 12 year olds (figure 7).



Figure 7: Distribution of BMSLSS scores (10 and 12 year olds, %)

Personal Well-being Index – School Children (PWI-SC7)

The seven items making up the Personal Well-being Index – School Children were included in the 10 and 12 year-old surveys. We again created a score by summing the seven item scores and then transforming it into a score ranging from zero to 100. The distribution of scores is shown in Figure 8.

The mean score was higher again for the younger age group (88.8 points, 10 years old) than for the older group (86.1 points, 12 years old) – a similar descending trend of wellbeing emerged in the older age group of children as measured by the BMSLSS scale. 17% of the younger group and 9% of the older group had the maximum score while based on the threshold of 90 or more points gained 65% of children in the younger group and 52% of children in the older group. The low score (less than 50 points) represented less than two per cent of children of both age groups.

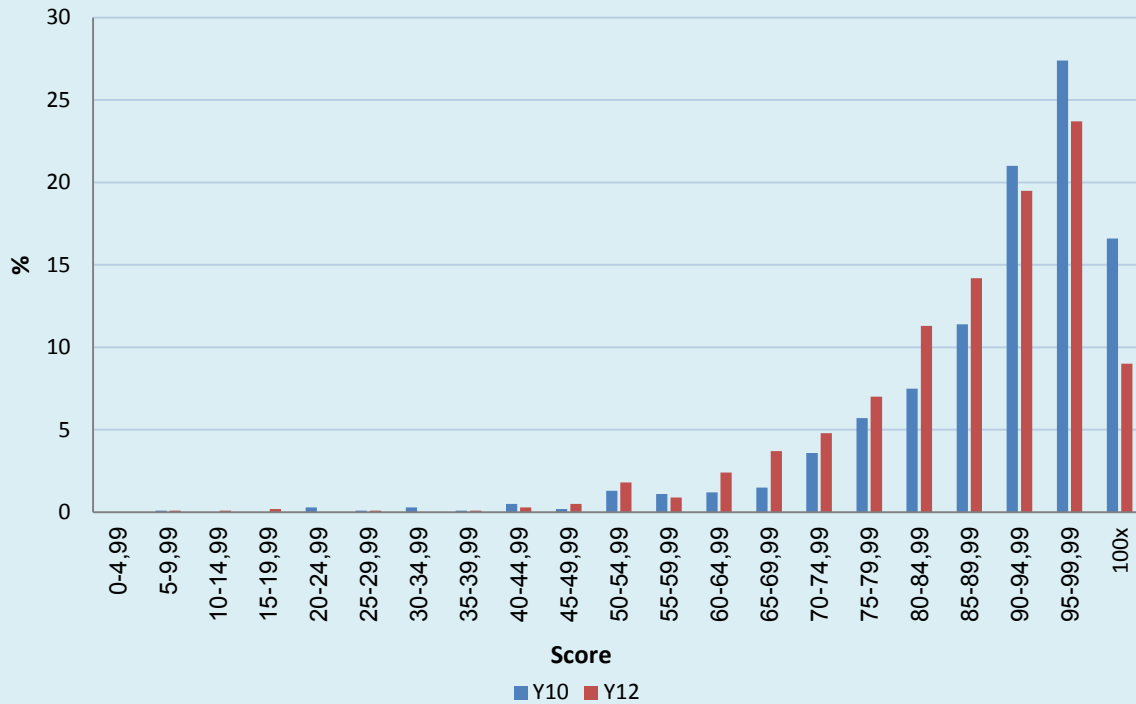


Figure 8: Distribution of PWI-SC7 scores (10 and 12 year olds) (%)

Positive Affect

This measurement included six questions on positive affect in the survey of 10 and 12 year old children. The children were asked how often in the last two weeks they had felt satisfied, happy, relaxed, active, calm and full of energy. Each item was scored 0-10 and the overall scale was created by summing the item scores and then transforming the scale so that it ranges from 0 to 100. The overall distribution is shown in figure 9.

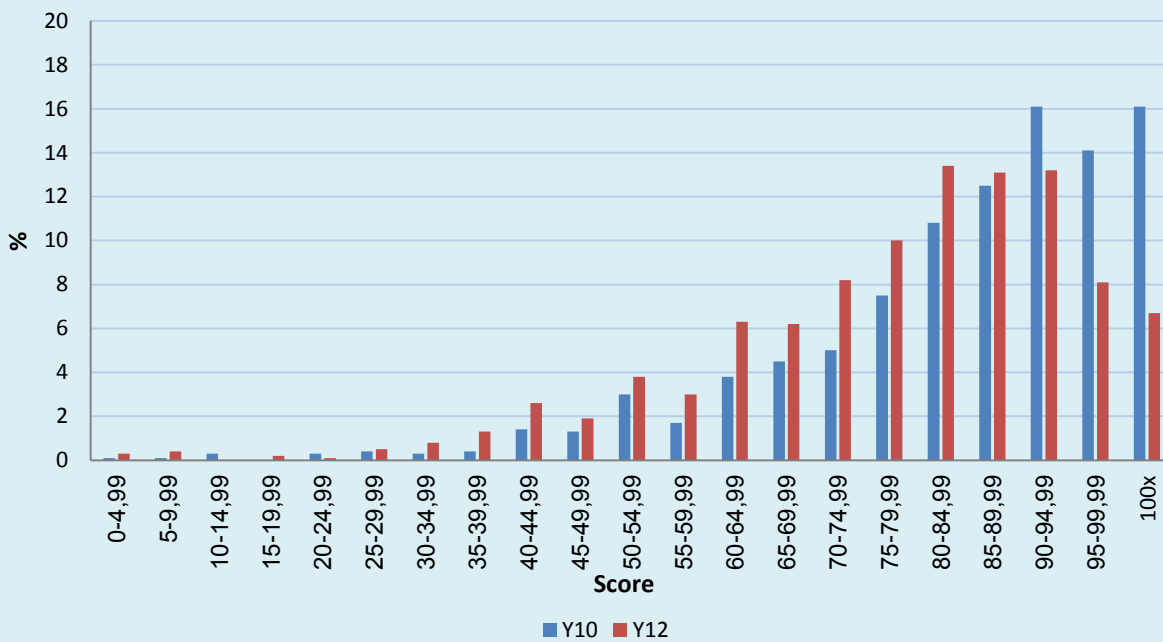


Figure 9: Distribution of positive affect scores (10 and 12 year olds) (%)

The mean score was again higher in the younger age group (83.2 points, 10 years old) than in the older group (76.9 points, 12 years old). 16% of the younger group and 7% of the older group had the maximum score while the threshold of 90 or more points was obtained by 46% of the younger and 28% of the older group. Low scores (less than 50 points) were obtained by less than ten per cent of children of both age groups.

Overall happiness

Finally the children in the two older age groups were asked about their overall happiness: how often in the past two weeks they had felt happy. We transformed the scale so that it ranged from 0 to 100. The distribution is shown in Figure 10.

The mean score was higher again in the younger age group (81.7 points, 10 years old) than in the older group (77 points, 12 years old) – a similar descending trend of wellbeing emerged in the older age group of children by using this scale. 34% of the younger group and 20% of the older group had the maximum score while the threshold of 90 or more points was obtained by 57% of children of the younger age group and 43% of the older group. Low scores (less than 50 points) were obtained by less than ten per cent of children of both age groups.

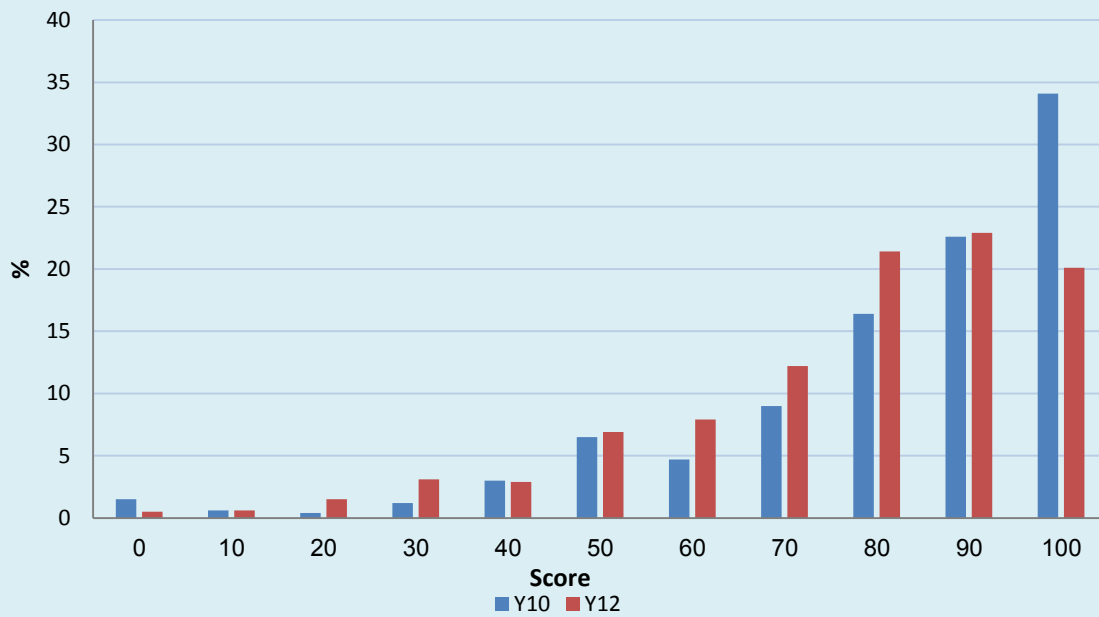


Figure 10: Distribution of overall happiness in the last two weeks scores (10 and 12 year olds) (%)

The descriptive statistics of all Psychometric Scales are presented in the table 42.

Table 42: Descriptive statistics of Psychometric scales

	SLSS5			BMSLSS			OLS			PWI-SC7			Positive affect			Overall happiness		
	Y8*	Y10	Y12	Y8*	Y10	Y12	Y8*	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	
Mean	84,06	86,35	81,10	87,36	88,26	83,00	90,94	91,64	87,71	88,76	86,09	83,15	76,93	81,66	76,96			
Std. Error of Mean	0,72	0,57	0,59	0,48	0,44	0,47	0,58	0,56	0,58	0,41	0,42	0,55	0,57	0,68	0,66			
Std. Deviation	21,81	18,01	18,79	15,26	13,53	14,53	18,90	17,71	18,44	12,64	13,20	17,01	17,80	21,43	21,04			
Quartiles																		
25%	80	82	74	80	82	76	100	90	80	84,29	80	75	66,67	70	70			
50% (Median)	90	92	86	90	92	86	100	100	90	92,86	90	88,33	80	90	80			
75%	100	98	96	100	98	94	100	100	100	97,14	95,71	96,67	90	100	90			
N																		
Valid	910	988	1015	1010	946	973	1066	1003	1025	955	987	962	994	997	1015			
Missing	166	25	14	66	67	56	10	10	3	58	42	51	35	16	14			

* Was measured on a 5-point scale thus, not directly comparable with Y10 and Y12 (11-point scale)

2.10 National questions

The Estonian team was pleased to include several country specific items in the questionnaires. Next, we shall detail the main findings.

Children of parent(s) working abroad

In Estonia children left behind by job migrant parents has emerged as a social issue during recent years. This is why we decided to include an item in the survey to study the impacts of parents' job migration on children's wellbeing from the children's perspective. First, we were interested in children who had

one or both parents working in some other than the home country during the last year. It appeared that of 10 year olds, 20% reported one or both parents working/living abroad at least a month during last year; among 12-year olds the respective percentage was 22. One parent more often than both, worked abroad, and this was much more likely to be the father; around eight per cent were those children had both parents having worked abroad (table 43). Several noticeable differences in the wellbeing of children with parent(s) working abroad and of those without emerged. Children with parents living/working abroad report less safety in all life spheres; more often they lack contact and attention from adults (especially from family members); they have clearly more pessimistic views about their future opportunities (Talves and Kutsar, 2014).⁴

Table 43: Parent(s) working abroad (10 and 12 years-old) (%)

	Only father	Only mother	Both parents
10 years-old	77.2	14.3	8.5
12 years-old	84.4	7.3	8.3

Things you have: smartphones and tablets/laptops

The state program called ‘The Tiger’s Leap’ was introduced early 1990s with the aim to “computerise” the whole country. This programme had a special focus on the education system. Today Estonia is well-known as a country with widespread IT. In our survey we were additionally interested in smartphones and tablets/laptops that children have. In table 44 it appears that owning these items is generally common: among the older group (12 years-old) 80% of children have their own smartphones and 65% own a tablet or a laptop. The frequency of owning these items is gradually increasing with children’s age.

Table 44: Things you have (All age groups) (%)

	8 years-old	10 years-old	12 years-old
Own smartphone	70.6	70.3	79.6
Own tablet or laptop	47.5	59.1	64.8

Internet safety and bullying

Parents can control the computer use of children at home, but controlling the use of smartphones and tablets/laptops is more difficult because children can use them elsewhere. Another problem is how knowledgeable the parents are and whether they are competent to give children advice, for instance about internet safety. In the ISCWEB study we were additionally interested in children’s views on internet safety and bullying over internet as a new form of maltreatment.

⁴ Talves, K. & Kutsar, D. ‘I Miss My Mum and Dad.

Children’s Well-Being and Parents’ Job Migration in Estonia.’ Paper presented at XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology, 13-19 July 2014 Yokohama, Japan.

Children were asked how much they feel safe when spending time on the internet, and whether parents can advise them how to use the internet safely (table 45). In general girls receive more advice from parents how to use the internet safely than boys in all age groups. Asking for advice is less common among older age groups. In the youngest age group girls feel less safe than boys when spending time on the internet; there are no significant variations by gender in the older age groups; however, the means for boys stay slightly higher (they feel safer on average).

Table 45: Internet safety (All age groups) (Means)

		Parents can advise me how to use internet safely	I feel safe when I spend time on the internet
8 years-old	Boy	3.26	3.12
	Girl	3.49	2.83
	Total	3.36	2.99
10 years-old	Boy	3.31	3.37
	Girl	3.48	3.00
	Total	3.39	3.19
12 years-old	Boy	2.81	3.34
	Girl	3.24	3.16
	Total	3.02	3.25

We were also interested in a new form of bullying among peers, which we addressed by asking whether and how often they have been bullied by other children on the internet. It appeared that bullying on the internet is not common among children. Interestingly boys of the two younger groups (8 and 10 years-old) report being bullied more than girls, and girls of the older age group (12 years-old) report higher frequencies of been bullied than boys (table 46).

Table 46: Variations in bullying (All age groups) (Means)

		Bullied by other children on the internet
8 years-old	Boy	0.51
	Girl	0.36
	Total	0.44
10 years-old	Boy	0.31
	Girl	0.26
	Total	0.29
12 years-old	Boy	0.21
	Girl	0.30
	Total	0.25

3. Conclusions

Children in Estonia live most often with two parents, out of whom one can be an “obtained” or non-biological parent (more often mother’s and less often father’s partner). According to children, their lives have been rather stable during last year; however, 14% moved house and almost one in ten children faced changes in their family structure (not living with the same adults as they used to live with a year ago).

Home and its surroundings is a safe place for children and they are satisfied with the area where they live. However, children are more critical about how much they are listened to, how much their opinions are taken seriously and how fairly they are treated at home. Moreover, living with both biological parents forms the most favoured home atmosphere according to children, and living in a single parent household is favoured over living with a step-parent in a two parent family.

Children are more satisfied with relationships with other people than the material environment at home: they are less content with having their own place at home and they expressed worry about money in the family. However, in our study there were fewer children who live in an unemployed household (at the highest risk of material poverty) compared to children of all age groups, compared to national statistics. About six per cent of children answered that they never receive pocket money. This proportion is less than the proportion of all children in national statistics living in extreme material poverty (9%)⁵. However, this finding may not clearly refer to absolute material poverty of the family only but also to the parental strategies of more well-off parents.

The majority of children have enough friends and they spend time together, less often studying together but more often having fun. Similarly they study less often with family members but talk (talking together happens more often than having fun together).

Children in Estonia are critical concerning going to school and how they are treated at school. How much they are listened and how far what they say is taken into account by teachers is a negative aspect of children’s school lives. Over ten per cent of children admitted that they do not like going to school. Boys were more critical than girls and we know from national statistics that school dropout as an indicator of severe school problems (incl school bullying) is higher for boys than girls. In Estonia we have had public debates over how to make schools more boy friendly and the whole educational system less success-oriented; how to start paying more attention to social and psychological aspects of the school environment besides marks. The findings from the present survey will add more evidence to this debate and could function as a supportive argument to change the conception of contemporary school in Estonia (more focus on social aspects in school; trust in children’s perspectives; reframing teacher training with the issues of professional ethics; higher value of support personnel).

Children are active in extra-curricular activities: only one out of ten is rarely or not at all involved in any. However, they also spend long hours with TV and IT (music devices, computer, tablet, smart phone, etc) and do homework given at school. The least common activity among children in Estonia is reading for fun.

⁵ Laes, T.-L., Krusell, S., Reinomägi, A., Toros, K. (2013). ‘The child in different environments’. Kutsar, D. (Ed). Child Well-Being. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, pp: 13–41.

Children in Estonia are satisfied with doing things out of home and the things they are good at, while they are critical towards their body, how much self-confidence they have and how much they are listened to by adults. While testing children's wellbeing with different subjective well-being scales we found a clear pattern: subjective well-being decreases in older age groups. We are looking forward learning more about the determinants and factors behind this. We are also most interested in further international comparisons of the data from this impressive Children's Worlds survey.