

Children's Worlds National Report

# BELGIUM

(Flanders)



Fien Van Wolvelaer<sup>1</sup>, Jessica De Maeyer<sup>1</sup>,  
Didier Reynaert<sup>1</sup>, Jessy Siongers<sup>2</sup>, Lieve Bradt<sup>3</sup>,  
Johan Put<sup>4</sup>, Stefaan Pleysier<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HoGent, centre of expertise on Quality of Life (E-QUAL)

<sup>2</sup> VUB

<sup>3</sup> UGent

<sup>4</sup> KULeuven

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Context and population

#### *Population<sup>5</sup>*

On January first 2018, Belgium counted 11.376.070 inhabitants. The Belgian population lives in three regions: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region, and the Brussels Capital Region.

Numbers from 2017 show that there were 6,516,011 people in the Flemish region (about 57.5% of the total population), 1 191 604 people living in the Brussels Capital Region (about 10,5% of the total population), and 3 614 473 people in the Walloon Region (about 32% of the total population).

Belgium has three autonomous education systems: for the Flemish community, the French Community and the German-speaking community (which is a very small community consisting of 76,920 people). The questionnaire was held in schools within the Flemish community, situated in the Flemish region and the Flemish-speaking schools in the Brussels Capital region. The communities are responsible for culture, education, and matters relating to the individual (e.g. youth, social welfare, etc.). Therefore, the survey only covers the Flemish community. This is in line with most international surveys where the three communities are treated separately.

#### *Geography*

Belgium is a small country of 30.528 km<sup>2</sup>, situated in the west of Europe, sharing borders with the Netherlands, Germany, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and France. It is divided into the three regions described above.

#### *Percentage of children<sup>6</sup>*

In 2017, there were 1 264 376 children below 18 years old in the Flemish region, 19.40% of the total population in Flanders. There were 438 558 children between 6 and 12 years old, 6.73% of the Flemish population.

In the last 10 years, there has been a decline in children younger than 3 years old (-2,8%). The percentage of children between 3 and 6 years old has been increasing (+6,6%). The biggest increase was within the group of children between 6 and 12 years: +11,9%.

#### *Religion*

Numbers of 2018 show that there are around 58% of Roman Catholic Christians, 27% of Atheists of Agnosticists, 7% of Non-Catholic Christians, 5% of Muslims and 3% of other beliefs in Belgium<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Ethnicity and ethnic / cultural groups*

The two biggest ethnic/cultural groups in Belgium are the Flemish community and the French-speaking Walloon community. There is also a German-speaking minority.

In 2017, 28.1% of the children that were born in Belgium had a mother that did not have the Belgian nationality at birth. The countries where most mothers were born (besides Belgium) are the following ones: Morocco (4.6%), The Netherlands (2.1%), Turkey (1.9%), Poland (1.5%), Romania (1.5%), Congo (0.8%), Bulgaria (0.8%), and Russia (0.7%). The remaining 14.2% consists of other countries.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Economic context:*

In 2017, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Belgium was worth 492.68 billion US dollars (= approximately 392 billion EURO).<sup>9</sup> Belgium ranks among the ten most competitive countries in Europe, although GDP growth weakened since the global financial crisis in 2007. In general, Belgian citizens enjoy high well-being in many dimensions such as work life balance, health, education and civic engagement<sup>10</sup>.

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

Previous surveys in schools taught us that responses can differ according to the educational network and the pupil population of the schools. Therefore, we used a stratified random sample, based on the following indicators:

- Organizing network, consisting of 1) subsidised privately run education, 2) subsidised publicly run education (organized by Municipalities), and 3) GO! (community education).
- Percentage of pupils whose mother has no secondary school diploma

With regard to the second indicator, the schools were divided, based on percentiles, in three equal groups (each comprising one third of the schools):

- Schools with the lowest percentage of lower educated mothers
- Schools which take in a middle position
- Schools with the highest percentage of lower educated mothers

In the sampling design we took into account two types of non-response: the non-response at school level and the non-response at pupil level.

Non-response at the school level was obviated by drawing a second (and eventually a third) sample which was fully matched with the first sample. For each school in the first sample we selected a back-up school in the same stratum (with the same scores on the two stratifying indicators).

Concerning the non-response at pupil-level, previous school research indicates that the pupil response rate is normally situated within the range of 85% to 90%, indicating that of the registered pupils 85% to 90% actually fill out the survey. The non-response comprises

mostly pupils who were not at school at the moment of the data collection (because of illness, truancy, ...), pupils who were on extracurricular activities or outdoor trips. Besides, the non-response comprises also some non-reliable questionnaires. Based on this estimated non-response, the proposed maximum of 50 surveyed pupils per age group in each school and taken into account a margin of error, we proposed a sample 51 schools.

A number of schools were randomly selected, and the average number of pupils per grade in a school decreases with age (or grade). Since we strive for at least 1000 pupils in each grade, it was advisable to take the mean number of pupils in year 6 as an indicator for defining the number of schools in our sample. In large schools with more than 50 pupils per grade and more than 2 classes per grade, 2 classes were randomly selected with equal probability. In schools with 50 or less pupils per grade, all pupils were surveyed.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 The participants<sup>11</sup>

In total, 3,322 children from the Flemish community took part in the questionnaire. Most children were between 7 and 12 years old. The youngest participant was 6 years old and the oldest was 13 years old.

There were 1,076 children from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, most of them 11 and 12 years old (further referred to as the 12 year olds): 59.6% of them were 11 years old and 36.7% was 12 years old. 50.1% of the children from 6<sup>th</sup> grade were boys and 49.9% were girls.

There were 1,112 children from 4<sup>th</sup> grade taking part in the questionnaire. They were mainly 9 and 10 years old: 55.8% among them were 9 years old and 36.8% were 10 years old (further referred to as the 10 year olds). Just as in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, there was a balanced gender distribution: 50.5% of the participants from 4<sup>th</sup> grade were boys and 49.5% of them were girls.

Lastly, 1,134 children from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade participated in the questionnaire. Most of them were 7 and 8 years old (further referred to as the 8 year olds): 60.8% of them were 7 years old and 34.7% were 8 years old. In this group, there were proportionally more boys, but the difference was not significant: 52.6% of the children in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade were boys and 47.4% were girls

Table 1. Children's gender by age (Numbers, (%))

	8 year old	10 year old	12 year old	Total
<b>Boy</b>	586 (52.6)	548 (50.5)	529 (50.1)	1663 (51.1)
<b>Girl</b>	529 (47.4)	537 (49.5)	526 (49.9)	1592 (48.9)
<b>Total</b>	1115 (100)	1085 (100)	1055 (100)	3255 (100)

Missing: 67 (2%)

The numbers in this section differ from the numbers in the final sample because of weighting and cleaning processes. <sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 The home and the people children live with

Table 2. First home only (n=1899) (10yo and 12yo) (%)

First home %	
Mother and father	89.7
Mother and partner	1.8
Father and partner	0.4
Lone mother	5.1
Lone father	0.5
Other	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

89.7% of children (10yo and 12yo) who live in one home indicate that they are living with their mother and father. 5.1% lives with their mother only, and 0.5% lives with their father only. There are 1.8% of the children that live with their mother and partner, and 0.4% that live with their father and partner. 2.4% indicates to have another family situation.

Table 3. Children who live in two houses (n=316) (10yo and 12yo) (%)

First home		Another home	
Mother and father	6	Mother and father	5
Mother and partner	35.0	Mother and partner	6.3
Father and partner	5.1	Father and partner	38.2
Lone mother	40.9	Lone mother	9.7
Lone father	8.8	Lone father	37.1
Other	4.2	Other	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most of the children who live in two houses respond that, in their first home, they live with their mother (40.9%) or with their mother and partner (8.8%). In the second home, most indicate to live with their father only (37.1%) or their father and partner (38.2%).






Table 4. The home you live in (%)

First home	
Family	97.2%
Foster home	0.7%
Children's home	0.3%
Another type of home	1.7%

Missing: 39 (1.8%)



Table 5. a. Satisfaction with the people you live with (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
The people you live with	1.5	1.4	4.5	19.4	73.1

Missing: 23 (2%)

Table 5. b. Satisfaction with the people you live with (10yo and 12yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The people you live with	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.05	0.09	3.4	2.2	4.9	13.6	20.7	53.1

Missing: 79 (3.6%)

A majority of children reports to be (very) satisfied with the people they live with. 92.5% of the 8 year olds indicate to be (very) satisfied, and 92.3% of the 10 year olds and 12 year olds gives a 7 out of 10 or more on satisfaction with the people they live with.

Table 6. a. Family experience (all age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
There are people in my family who care about me	2.4	2.8	6.6	13.3	74.9
If I have a problem, people in my family will help me	2.7	3.8	8.1	15.9	69.7
We have a good time together with my family	1.9	2.6	9.4	17.8	68.3
I feel safe at home	2.7	2.8	4.8	12.0	77.7
My parents listen to me and take what I say into account	4.2	4.5	14.5	26.8	50.1

Missing: 221 (6.7%), 142 (4.3%), 109 (3.3%), 133 (4%), 206 (6.2%)

In general, children in the Flemish community are positive about their family life: 89.7%<sup>12</sup> indicates that they feel safe at home, 88,2% says that there are people in their family who care about them, 86.1% agrees with the sentence 'we have a good time together with my family' and 85.6% feels that they can count on help of their family when they have a problem. Children are less convinced about the sentence 'My parents listen to me and take what I say into account', however, there is still a majority that agrees (76.9%).

10 year old and 12 year old children were given two extra items about decision making. The results show that in general, children feel that their parents involve them in decisions: 77.2% of the children (totally) agree with the statement that they make decisions together with their parents about their life and 65.9% (totally) agrees with the sentence that they can make decisions together within their family. Hence, children are more involved in decisions concerning themselves, and less in decisions that don't concern them directly.

We take the categories 'agree a lot' and 'totally agree' together<sup>12</sup>

## 2.3 The home where children live

A majority of the children reports to be satisfied with the house they live in: 88.1% of the 8 year olds indicate to be (very) satisfied, and 94.5% of the 12 year olds score a 7 out of 10 or more on the house they live in.

75.6% of the 10 year olds and 12 year olds sleeps in his/her own room, 24,2% shares his/her room with somebody else. Only 0.1% of the children reports not to have a bed of their own, 3.8% shares a bed with other people.

6.4% of the 10 year olds and 12 year olds reports not having a quiet place to study, 10.6% indicates that they are not sure, and 83.3% of them report to have a quiet place to study in their home.

Table 7.a. Satisfaction with the house or flat where you live (8 yo) (%)






Satisfaction with ...					
the house or flat where you live	2.7	2.2	7.0	14.7	73.4

Table 7.b. Satisfaction with the house or flat where you live (10 yo & 12 yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the house or flat where you live	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.4	1.9	1.7	3.6	9.8	19.1	62.0






Table 8. Things you have (%)

Whether you have ...	10 & 12 year-old
Own room	75.5
Own bed	96.2
Place to study	83

Missing: 40 (1.8%), 24 (1.1%), 24 (1.1%)

## 2.4 Friends

Table 9. a. Satisfaction with friends (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
Your friends	2.3	2.1	7.0	20.4	68.3

Missing: 28 (2.5%)

Table 9. b. Satisfaction with friends (10yo and 12yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your friends	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.7	1.0	3.0	3.3	8.4	16.5	22.4	43.3

Missing: 49 (2.2%)

Table 9 .a. shows that 88.7% of the 8 year olds is (very) satisfied with his/her friends, while table 9. b. illustrates that 90% of the 10 and 12 year olds give a score of 7 out of 10 or more on satisfaction with friends.



Table 10. Sentences about friends (all age groups) (%)






	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I have enough friends	5.6	4.6	7.1	15.7	67
My friends are usually nice to me	3.4	5.4	13.8	26.8	50.5
Me and my friends get along well together	3.4	4.7	13.2	26.8	51.7
If I have a problem, I have a friend who will support me	4.1	5	11.9	21.5	57.4

Missing: 172 (5.2%), 112 (3.4%), 144 (4.3%), 181 (5.4%)

Generally, children are positive about their friends. 82.7% (totally) agrees with the sentence 'I have enough friends', 78.9% reports that they have a friend who will support them if they have a problem, 78.8% thinks they get along well with their friends, and 77.3% says that their friends are usually nice to them. Although small, there is still a meaningful number (about 10%) of children that does not agree with these sentences. Approximately one tenth does experience problems in terms of friendship.

## 2.5 School

Table 11. a. Satisfaction at school (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
Life as a student	4.5	4.4	14.4	29.1	47.6
Things you have learned at school	2.9	3.5	11.6	26.9	55.2
Other children in your class	2.4	3.2	12.2	21.3	60.8

Missing: 21 (1.9%), 27 (2.4%), 19 (1.7%)

Table 11. b. Satisfaction at school (10yo and 12yo) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Life as a student	1.4	0.4	1.1	1.1	2.0	5.2	5.2	11.3	22.2	24.6	25.6
Things you have learned at school	0.6	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.4	3.1	3.1	8.8	19.4	25.3	36.2
Other children in your class	0.7	0.6	0.8	1.3	2.4	5.0	6.3	12.4	19.2	23.8	27.5

Missing: 24 (1.1%), 40 (1.8%), 63 (2.9%)

Table 11.a. shows that approximately 8 out of 10 children are (very) happy with the things they learn at school (82.1%), with other children in their class (82.1%) and with his/her life as a student (76.7%).

The 10 year olds and 12 year olds scored a 7 out of 10 or more on every item: things learned at school (89.7%), life as a student (83.7%) and other children in their class (82.9%).

Table 12. a. School experience (all age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
<b>My teachers care about me</b>	4.2	4.2	13.8	28.9	48.8
<b>If I have a problem at school, my teachers will help me</b>	2.7	3.6	10	23	60.6
<b>If I have a problem at school, other children will help me</b>	4.3	4.9	15	30.3	45.5
<b>There are a lot of arguments between children in my class</b>	17.2	18.5	26.3	17.3	20.8
<b>My teachers will listen to me and take with I say into account</b>	4.3	5.6	14.5	27.6	48
<b>I feel safe at school</b>	4.3	4.1	8.4	20.5	62.7

Missing: 421 (12.7%), 121 (3.6%), 203 (6.1%), 253 (7.6%), 261 (7.9%), 163 (4.9%)

Table 12. b. School experience (10yo and 12yo) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
<b>At school, I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me</b>	16.1	12.9	23	26.7	21.4
<b>At school, I can participate in decisions that are made (extra question)</b>	4.4	6.4	16.1	33	40.1

Missing: 216 (90.9%), 255 (11.7%)

Just as sentences about family, friends and neighbourhood, children are generally positive about their life at school. More than three quarters of the children (totally) agrees with the following sentences: 'if I have a problem at school, my teachers will help me' (83.6%), 'I feel safe at school' (83.2%), 'my teachers care about me' (77.7%), 'if I have a problem at school, other children will help me' (75.8%) and 'my teachers listen to me and take what I say into account' (75.6%). There is more disagreement about arguments between children. More than one third of the children says that there are a lot of arguments between children in their class.

10 year old and 12 year old children got two extra items about decision making at school. 73.1% of them (totally) agrees with the statement 'at school, I can participate in decisions that are made'. They respond less pronounced on the sentence 'at school, I can participate in decisions that are made': 48.1% (totally) agrees.

Table 13. How often in the last month have you been... (All age groups) (%)






How often in the last month have you been...	Never	One time	Two or three times	More than three times
<b>... hit by other children in your school (not including fighting or play fighting)</b>	56.7	19.1	11.9	12.3
<b>... called unkind names by other children in your school</b>	44.3	22.1	16.2	17.4
<b>... left out by other children in your class</b>	60.5	17.9	11.2	10.4

Missing: 421 (12.7%), 403 (12.1%), 386 (11.6%)

The numbers of physical and verbal aggression at school are noteworthy: 43.3% reports to be hit at least once in the last month, 55% says they have been called unkind names and 39.5% says they were left out at least once during the last month.

## 2.6 The area where children live

Table 14. a. Satisfaction with local area (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
The area where you live	3.7	2.5	8.0	18.5	67.3

Missing: 51 (4.5%)

Table 14. b. Satisfaction with local area (10yo and 12yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The area where you live	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.7	1.0	3.0	3.3	8.4	16.5	22.4	43.3

Missing: 99 (4.5%)

Table 14. a. shows that 85.8% of the 8 year olds is (very) satisfied with their local area. Table 14. b. shows the results of the 10 year olds and 12 year olds: 89.2% gives their local area a score of 7 out of 10 or more.

Table 15. a. Local area experience (all age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe when I walk around the area I live in	5.5	5.1	12.2	24.2	53
In my area, there are enough places to play and have a good time	9	6.7	11.4	16.6	56.4
If I have a problem, there are people in my local area who will help me	13.3	8.8	13.4	19	45.4
Adults in my local area are kind to children	3.9	4.1	10.7	21.4	59.9
Adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously	10.4	8.6	18	23.2	39.8

Missing: 176 (5.3%), 164 (4.9%), 364 (11%), 298 (9%), 626 (18.8%)

Table 15. b. Local area experience (10yo and 12yo) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things that are important to children	25.1	13.7	29.5	19.9	21.9

Missing: 406 (18.6%)

The above tables (15. a. & 15 .b.) show how children experience their local area. The majority of the children agrees with the following sentences: 'adults in my local area are kind to children (81.3%)', 'I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in' (77.2%) and 'In my area, there are enough places to play and have a good time' (73%).

Their opinions are less pronounced on the statement that there are people in their local area who will help them if they have a problem (64.4%) and that the adults in their area listen to

children and take them seriously (63%). More than one tenth does not agree with those statements.

Taking those numbers in mind, we could say that children would evaluate their local area as a nice place to spend their time. However, when it comes to their area as a place where children are listened to and where they will receive help if they have a problem, we observe a more moderate score.






## 2.7 Money and the things children have

Table 16. Worries about money (all age groups) (%)

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old	Total
<b>Never</b>	39.8	45.9	56.2	47.3
<b>Sometimes</b>	24.9	33.9	33	30.6
<b>Often</b>	12.8	10.7	8.2	12
<b>Always</b>	22.4	9.6	2.6	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Missing: 179 (5.4%)

Table 17. a. Satisfaction with the things you have (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
<b>all the things you have</b>	1.2	0.9	3.1	15.3	79.5

Missing: 66 (5.8%)

Table 17. b. Satisfaction with the things you have (10yo and 12yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>all the things you have</b>	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	1.4	1.0	2.5	7.8	19.1	67.1

Missing: 46 (2.1%)

It is remarkable that 20.4% of the children often or always worries about how much money their family has, although the satisfaction scales show a more positive image: 94.8% of the 8 year olds is (very) satisfied with the things they have. Among the 10 and 12 year olds, 96.5% gives a score of 7 out of 10 or more on their satisfaction with the things they have.

Table 18. Food to eat (all age groups) (%)

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old	Total
<b>Never</b>	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.5
<b>Sometimes</b>	3.6	2.4	0.6	2.2
<b>Often</b>	12.1	8.7	4.9	8.6
<b>Always</b>	82.9	88.7	94.5	88.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Missing: 179 (5.4%)

Table 19. Things children have (all age groups) (%)

Which of the following do you have	8 year-old		10 year-old		12 year-old		Total	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Clothes in good condition</b>	24	76	23.7	76.3	16	84.0	21.2	78.8
<b>Enough money for school trips and activities</b>	18.4	81.6	3.7	96.3	1	99	7.7	92.3
<b>Access to the Internet at home</b>	10.7	89.3	2.1	97.9	0.8	99.2	4.5	95.5
<b>The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies</b>	14.6	85.4	6	94	2.9	97.1	7.8	92.2
<b>Pocket money/ money to spend on yourself</b>	28.9	71.1	26.8	73.2	30.1	69.9	28.6	71.4
<b>Two pairs of shoes</b>	19.9	80.1	14.2	85.8	6.4	93.6	13.5	86.5
<b>A mobile phone</b>	53.9	46.1	44.2	55.8	16.4	83.6	38.2	61.9
<b>The equipment/things you need for school</b>	7	93	2.2	97.8	0.9	99.1	3.4	96.6

Missing: 128 (3.9%), 135 (4.1%), 120 (3.6%), 116 (3.5%), 138 (4.2%), 122 (3.7%), 125 (3.8%), 108 (3.3%)

Table 20. Things at home (10yo and 12yo) (%)

	None	One	Two	More than two
<b>How many bathrooms (rooms with a bath/shower or both) are in your home?</b>	0.7	64.4	28.6	6.2
<b>How many cars, vans or trucks does your family own?</b>	4.4	27.2	53.4	15
<b>How many computers, laptops and/or tablets does your family own?</b>	1.3	10.3	17.8	70.6

Missing: 31 (1.4%), 30 (1.4%), 34 (1.6%)

Table 21. Washing machine at home (12yo and 12yo) (%)

<b>Have a washing machine</b>	98.9
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Missing: 31 (1.4%)

89.2% of the children always has enough food to eat. 2.6% of them reports that they never or sometimes have enough food, and 8.2% says they usually have enough food to eat every day.

At least 80% of the children has the following things: access to the internet at home (95.8%), the things they need for school (93%), things they need for sports and hobbies (92.8%), enough money for school trips and activities (92.7%), two pairs of shoes in good condition (86.9%). The last item shows a difference with the item on clothes in good condition: more than 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the children reports that they don't have clothes in good condition (78.9% does have). 71.4% of the children has pocket money. There are fewer children that have a mobile phone, yet 61.7% of the children reports to have one.

Table 22. Family vacations (10yo and 12yo) (%)




	Not at all	Once	Twice	More than twice
<b>In the last 12 months, did you travel away on holiday with your family ?</b>	11.3	23.2	25.5	39.8

Missing: 46 (2.1%)

11.3% of the children have not been on a vacation with their family during the last year. On the other hand, 40% of the children have been more than twice on a vacation. 11.1% of them report that these vacations were not outside of Belgium, and 30% of them says that two or more of these vacations were abroad.

## 2.8 Time use

Table 23. Satisfaction with time use (8yo) (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
<b>How you use your time</b>	2.5	1.3	5.8	22.1	68.4

Missing: 92 (8.1%)

Table 24. Satisfaction with time use and amount of free time (10yo and 12yo) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Time use</b>	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6	2.0	2.3	6.2	16.8	29.0	41.8
<b>Amount of free time</b>	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.8	1.4	2.5	3.2	6.8	15.5	22.6	45.8

Missing: 55 (2.5%), 67 (3.1%)

The above tables show that 90.5% of the 8 year olds reports to be (very) satisfied with the way they spend their time. Amongst the 10 and 12 year olds, 93.8% scores a 7 out of 10 or more on their time use. They were also asked about how satisfied they are with the amount of free time they have (=time in which they can do what they want). 90.7% of them gave this item a 7 out of 10 or more.

## 2.9 Subjective well-being: how children feel about their lives (10yo and 12yo)

**OLS (Overall Subjective Well-Being)** – One question about satisfaction with life as a whole.

Table 25. OLS

	10yo	12yo
Mean	89.7	90.8
Percentage below 50	6.2%	3.1%

Children were asked how satisfied they are with their life as a whole. The mean percentage on a scale from 0-100 for the 10 year olds is 89.7%, and 90.8% for the children in the oldest age category. More children in the 10 year old category report a low well-being (score below 50) than children from the 12 year old category: respectively 6.2% and 3.1%.

**CW-SWBS (Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale)** – 6 items measuring cognitive subjective well-being (Based on the Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Huebner, 1991)

Table 26. CW-SWBS (%)

	10yo	12yo
Mean	86.7	87.9
Percentage below 50	6.9	3.9

Taking together the items measuring cognitive subjective well-being results in comparable results for both age categories: a satisfaction score of 86.7% for the 10 year olds and 87.9% for the 12 year olds. Again, we see some differences in low well-being: almost 7% within the category of the 10 year olds compared with almost 4% in the category of the 10 year olds.

**CW-DBSWBS (Children's Worlds Domain Based Subjective Well-Being Scale)** – 5 items measuring domain based cognitive subjective well-being (based on the Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Seligson, Huebner & Valois, 2003)

Table 27. CW-DBSWBS (%)

	10yo	12yo
Mean	85.8	85.5
Percentage below 50	3.9	1.3

Taking together the satisfaction on the different life domains, we observe almost the same mean satisfaction scores within the two age categories: 85.8% (10yo) and 85.5% (12yo).

Again, low well-being is higher among the 10 year olds (3.9%) than among the 12 year olds (1.3%).

**CW-PNAS (Children's Worlds Positive and Negative Affect Scale)** - 6 items measuring affective subjective well-being: positive and negative affect (based on Barrett & Russell, 1998)

Table 28. PAS (%)

	10yo	12yo
Mean	80.7	78.5
Percentage below 50	5	4

The items measuring positive affect result in a mean score of 80.7% (10yo) and 78.5% (12yo). 5% of the 10 year olds gives a score below 50, and 4% of the 12 year olds gives a score below 50.

Table 29. NAS (%)

	10yo	12yo
Mean	41.4%	37.6%
Percentage below 50	67.3%	74.9%

The negative affect scale results in a mean score of 41.4% for the 10 year olds, and 37.6% of the 12 year olds.

**CW-PSWBS (Children's Worlds Psychological Subjective Well-Being Scale)**- 6 items measuring psychological subjective well-being (based on Ryff, 1989)

Table 30. CW-PSWBS (%)

	12yo
Mean	86.9
Percentage below 50	2.2

The 12 year olds were asked about their psychological subjective well-being, resulting in a mean score of 86.9%. A score lower than 50 is reported by 2.2% of the 12 year olds.

## 2.10 Children perceptions about their country



Table 31. Children's rights (all age groups) (%)

	No	Not sure	Yes
I know what rights children have	18.4	38.5	43.1
I know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	36.2	39.3	24.5

Missing: 210 (6.3%), 235 (7.1%)

In the Flemish community, knowledge and understanding of children's rights is part of the education goals in primary education. However, the way in which these goals are met varies per school. The above table shows that a substantial part of the children knows what rights they have (43.1%). 18.4% does not know what rights they have. The knowledge about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is more limited: approximately one quarter reports to know something about the convention, 40% is not sure about it and 36.2% of the children say they don't know anything about it.

### 3. Conclusions

In general, we could say that the results of the questionnaire present a positive image of the subjective well-being of children in Flanders. Flemish children report to be (very) satisfied with specific life domains as well as with their life in general. They are satisfied with the house they live in, the relationships with people they live with, their friends and school. They feel safe in their local area, have a lot of material things (e.g. computers) and are satisfied with the things they have.

However, this conclusion needs some nuances. Firstly, the data show some specific points of attention. The numbers of physical (fights) and psychological (being left out and called unkind names) violence is quite high. One out of three children (33.2%) reports that there are several physical fights per week at school, and 20-30% of the children reports that children were being called unkind names or left out during the last month. All age categories report lower satisfaction scores on the domain school then on other life domains. Given the drastic impact this can have on the functioning and development of children, these percentages should not be ignored.

Secondly, when it comes to children's well-being, we should not only focus on mean scores. A part of the children grows up in vulnerable and difficult situations. The results show that 16.7% of the children does not have a quiet place to study, 3-10% of the children does not have (a good relation with) friends, 10% is not very satisfied with life at school, more than 20% often worries about money and more than 10% is not sure if they have enough food to eat every day. Depending on the item, numbers vary, and there can be specific reasons found why some of the children report high scores without living in deprived circumstances. Nevertheless, these numbers globally correspond with other statistics about deprivation and poverty that show that, in a wealthy region like Flanders, too much children grow up in

suboptimal circumstances<sup>13</sup>. Given the extensive survey that shows (1) how crucial this life stage is for aspects such as school success and general psychosocial development of children and (2) how poverty and deprivation have a sustainable impact on people, these numbers are a clear signal to continuously take these difficulties into account and be aware of the persistent influence of migration background and economic situation. Seen from a children's rights perspective, we should not only take *average* children into account, but *every* child, and especially those in specific vulnerable situations.

Lastly, the results show that life satisfaction among 10 and 12 year olds strongly correlates with satisfaction about how they are being listened to by adults<sup>14</sup>. Numbers of the 12 year olds show that 25,9% of them often or always worries about things that happen in Belgium.

In policy design, it will be of great importance to listen to children's opinions and to approach them as full citizens who are able to express their own feelings of well-being as well as to participate in decision-making in their own lives and in the broader society.

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This conclusion is based on initial regression analyses and thus goes further than descriptive analyses<sup>14</sup>