

Children's Worlds National Report

ESTONIA



Dagmar Kutsar¹,
Oliver Nahkur², Rein Murakas³

University of Tartu

¹ Associate Professor of Social Policy, Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu

² Junior Research Fellow of Social Indicators Research, Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu

³ consultant, Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

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. In January 2018, children and young people aged 0 to 18 years old numbered 263 867⁴, which is 20% of the population of Estonia. Out of them, 28.7% were children aged 8 to 12. 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.

About 70% of the population are Estonians and the next biggest ethnic group are Russians. 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's GDP per capita has significantly increased during this decade – it was 25 973 USD and 35 796 USD⁵ (current PPPs) in 2012 and 2018, respectively. Annual real GDP growth has been 3.5% or more in the past three years.

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

In Estonia, we used cluster sampling of schools, initially based on data from the 2016/17 study year obtained from the Ministry of Education and Research, and later corrected using 2017/18 study year data.

At the first stage, we stratified the list of schools according to the type of settlement (three strata) and then the random selection of schools in each stratum was made. From selected schools, all children in each age group (2nd, 4th, and 6th classes; 8, 10 and 12 year old respectively) were invited to participate in the survey with one exception: if the number of classes on the same level in a selected school was greater than two, then two classes from the list of all classes were randomly selected.

We also had some limitations in completing the list of schools. Firstly, for reasonability, extremely small schools (number of pupils in the 2nd, 4th and 6th classes together was smaller than 10) we excluded from the sample. Secondly, schools for children with special educational needs we also excluded from the list of all schools because conducting a questionnaire-based study in such schools is very complicated. We also excluded four small international schools. All these schools excluded from the sample comprise about 3% of the total population of schoolchildren under survey.

⁴ Statistics Estonia (http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvastik/01Rahvastikunaitajad_ja_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis/04Rahvaarv_ja_rahvastiku_koosseis.asp)

⁵ OECD Country statistical profile: Estonia 2019/2

Schools of Estonian and Russian instruction were both included in the survey, thus the questionnaire in Estonian we translated into Russian.

From initially selected schools (50), 14 refused to participate. To compensate refusals, we added 6 randomly selected schools to the sample. Totally, we contacted 56 schools and 42 of them participated. Due to some previously planned oversampling, there was no need to add more schools from the list of the reserves.

In selected schools and classes, the total number of students was 3670 and 308 of them missed studies on the day of the survey and so did not participate. Due to parent's refusal, 94 pupils missed the survey and 19 pupils refused to participate themselves. As total we surveyed 3,249 schoolchildren (89%) from 3,670.

General information about population and sample by age groups, see in the Tables 1-3.

Table 1. 8 year olds (2nd grade) population and sample (N)

Stratum	Number of schools	Children in age group	Number of schools approached	Number of schools participating	Number of children participating	Number of children in corrected data file
Tallinn and Tartu (1)	86	5958	15	11	452	429
County centres and Eastern Virumaa cities (2)	57	3101	12	8	276	259
Other towns and villages (3)	269	5726	29	23	396	370
Total	412	14785	56	42	1124	1058

Table 2. 10 year olds (4th grade) population and sample (N)

Stratum	Number of schools	Children in age group	Number of schools approached	Number of schools participating	Number of children participating	Number of children in corrected data file
Tallinn and Tartu (1)	85	5688	15	11	404	396
County centres and Eastern Virumaa cities (2)	57	3014	12	8	272	266
Other towns and villages (3)	267	5517	29	23	361	351
Total	409	14219	56	42	1037	1013

Table 3. 12 year olds (6th grade) population and sample (N)

Stratum	Number of schools	Children in age group	Number of schools approached	Number of schools participating	Number of children participating	Number of children in corrected data file
Tallinn and Tartu (1)	81	5001	15	10*	424	423
County centres and Eastern Virumaa cities (2)	58	2976	11**	8	305	302
Other towns and villages (3)	261	5035	29	23	359	354
Total	400	13012	55	41	1088	1079

*In one approached school, grade 6 did not exist.

**In one participating school, grade 6 did not exist.

2. Results

2.1 The participants

Table 4. Age by gender (N)

	8 year old	10 year old	12 year old	Total
Boy	478	465	548	1491
Girl	576	544	530	1650
Total	1054	1009	1078	3141

Missings 8Y: 4; 10Y: 4; 12Y: 1






2.2 The home and the people children live with

Table 5. Type of home children live in by age group (%)

	I live with my family	I live in a foster home	I live in a children's home	I live in another type of home
10 year old	97.7	0.2	0.4	1.6
12 year old	97.4	0.2	0.2	2.1

Missings 10Y: 12; 12Y: 8; not asked from 8 year-olds

Table 6a. Satisfaction with people living with, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with the people you live with					
8 year old	0.9	1.4	5.9	21.4	70.4

Missings: 18

Table 6b. Satisfaction with people living with by age group (%)

Satisfaction with the people you live with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.6	3.7	1.6	4.5	6.2	12.4	70.5
12 year old	0.4	0	0.2	0.3	0.8	3.8	3.3	7.1	13.1	16.8	54.3

Missings 10Y: 74; 12Y: 62

Table 7. Questions about home and the people you live with by age groups (Means)






	There are people in my family who care about me	If I have a problem, people in my family will help me	We have a good time together in my family	I feel safe at home	My parents / carers listen to me and take what I say into account	My parents and I make decisions about my life together
8 YO	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.1	-
10 YO	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.4
12 YO	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.1

Missings 8Y: 52, 46, 36, 41, 98; 10Y: 36, 37, 20, 24, 50, 171; 12Y: 21, 32, 16, 27, 40, 105. Question 'My parents and I make decisions about my life together' not asked from 8 year-olds

Comment: The biggest number of missing answers was by the Q "My parents and I make decisions about my life together". The reason behind might be the diversity of family structures in Estonia where about one fifth of children live with lone parents (data from Civil Census in 2011). Thus, the joint decision-making of parents may be limited by the fact that parents do not live together or their communication is not dense enough.

2.3 The home where children live

Table 8a. Satisfaction with the home living in, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with the house you live in					
8 year old	1.1	0.6	4.4	13.0	80.9

9 missings

Table 8b. Satisfaction with the house or flat living in by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with the house you live in	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.5	3.1	1.0	2.8	5.7	11.8	73.6
12 year old	0.3	0	0.4	0.9	1.3	2.6	3.0	5.7	8.8	17.4	59.6

Missings 10Y: 22; 12Y: 26






Table 9. Having study place in home by age groups (%)

	Yes	No	Not sure
10 year old	89.2	4.7	6.1
12 year old	90.5	4.7	4.8

Missings 10Y: 7; 12Y: 7; not asked from 8 year-olds

2.4 Friends

Table 10a. Satisfaction with friends, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
Your friends	0.6	1.7	7.4	27.3	62.9

14 missings

Table 10b. Satisfaction with friends by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with friends	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.9	0.7	4.4	3.7	4.8	12.2	22.7	50.2
12 year old	0.4	0.2	0.3	1.1	1.2	3.3	5.6	7.0	16.5	25.3	39.0

Missings 10Y: 34; 12Y: 32

Table 11. Questions about friends (%; all age groups)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I have enough friends	3.0	4.7	6.1	15.2	71.1
My friends are usually nice to me	2.5	6.1	10.3	29.5	51.6
Me and my friends get along well together	1.8	4.9	6.9	25.6	60.7
If I have a problem, I have a friend who will support me	4.7	6.5	9.3	24.4	55.1

141, 125, 126 and 241 missings, respectively






2.5 School

Table 12a. Satisfaction with school related things by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your life as a student											
10 year old	1.4	0.4	1.1	1.7	1.2	6.1	3.0	8.2	10.7	20.1	46.1
12 year old	1.9	0.6	1.2	2.9	4.6	7.8	8.8	16.6	17.0	19.6	19.1
Things you have learned at school											
10 year old	0.5	0.2	0.5	1.2	1.9	4.5	2.8	5.6	8.5	23.1	51.2
12 year old	0.6	0.7	1.6	2.4	3.6	6.7	6.7	11.2	16.3	26.6	23.5
Other children in your class											
10 year old	1.3	0.4	0.4	2.1	2.9	4.8	5.2	9.2	11.9	25.4	36.4
12 year old	1.5	1.5	2.7	4.9	4.0	8.2	10.1	11.9	15.5	19.0	20.6

Missings 10Y: 7, 11, 11; 12Y: 6, 14, 14

Table 12b Satisfaction with school related things, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with ...					
life as a student Your	3.7	3.7	12.6	32.7	47.3
Things you have learned at school	1.5	2.5	10.2	25.2	60.6
Other children in your class	2.9	4.8	14.7	28.4	49.3

19, 17 and 24 missings, respectively

Comment: The ISCWeB 2nd wave revealed that children in Estonia are among the most critical if compared to children of the other ISCWeB countries. It also revealed that satisfaction with school has a clear decreasing trend during four years of studies while the biggest decrease takes place from the 4th to the 6th class (Kutsar & Kasearu, 2017⁶). By ISCWeB 3rd wave we can witness similar trend: only about one fifth of 12 years old children are satisfied with their life as a student. Estonian society across ages has respected education and valued knowledge. The same reveals her: the highest proportion of children compared to the other school-related items admit that they are very much satisfied with things they have learned at school.

⁶Kutsar, Dagmar; Kasearu, Kairi (2017). Do children like school – crowding in or out? An international comparison of children's perspectives. Children and Youth Services Review, 80, 140–148. [10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.052](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.052).

Table 13. Views about school (%; all age groups)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My teachers care about me	4.7	8.0	14.1	25.9	47.4
If I have a problem at school, my teachers will help me	3.9	6.8	9.7	20.0	59.5
If I have a problem at school, other children will help me	7.4	11.1	13.7	31.2	36.7
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	7.4	9.1	13.0	25.1	45.4
At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me¹	5.3	9.1	14.4	30.9	40.3
I feel safe at school	5.1	6.1	9.6	22.2	57.0

357, 213, 312, 308, 241, 212 missings, respectively. ¹At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me' not asked from 8 year-olds.

Comment: Findings in the Table 13 refer to some reasons why children are critical about school in Estonia and why this reveals especially in the 6th grade. By all items, the means of 12-years old children stay lower than that of the 8- and 10-years old children. Table 13 shows that children rely a lot on teachers when they have problems however, not as much that teachers listen to them.

Table 14. Bullying (%; all age groups)




How often:	Never	Once	Two or 3 times	More than three times
Hit by other children in your school	53.1	17.6	12.4	16.9
Called unkind names by other children in your school	46.9	16.1	14.3	22.7
Left out by other children in your class	56.3	18.6	10.0	15.0

244, 217 and 440 missings, respectively

Children experience more verbal and mental bullying than physical bullying at school. From other analyses, we know that hitting occurs more often among younger children.

2.6 The area where children live

Table 15a. Satisfaction with the area living in, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with the area where you live					
8 year old	1.4	1.1	6.4	16.4	74.6

15 missings

Table 15b. Satisfaction with the area living in by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with the area where you live	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.6	1.4	2.7	2.4	4.5	7.5	13.7	65.9
12 year old	0.9	0.4	1.0	1.2	1.4	4.7	4.2	8.8	12.6	17.6	47.4

Missings 10Y: 55; 12Y: 60

Table 16. Views about local area (%; all age groups)

In my area, I live in...	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe when I walk	3.5	3.9	6.3	20.8	65.4
There are enough places to play or to have a good time	5.9	5.8	7.4	14.8	66.1
If I have a problem there are people who will help me	13.7	10.4	10.7	21.2	44.1
Adults are kind to children ¹	4.6	12.8	14.9	25.4	42.3
I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things that are important to me ¹	13.0	15.0	14.3	27.1	30.6
Adults listen to children and take them seriously ¹	12.9	15.5	17.5	26.7	27.5

184, 145, 477, 159, 256, 270 missings, respectively. ¹Three last questions not asked from 8 and 10 year-olds.

Comment: 12-years old children have had problems with answering to the questions about communication with local people – there are many missings. Should be further studied.






2.7 Money and the things children have

Table 17. Frequency of worry about how much money family has by age groups (%)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
8 year old	26.8	30.5	19.3	23.5
10 year old	30.4	40.4	15.9	13.3
10 year old	31.7	44.2	15.6	8.6

Missings 8Y: 210; 10Y: 146; 12Y: 81

Table 18a. Satisfaction with all the things child has, 8 year-olds, 0=the most unhappy face and 4=the happiest face (%)

Satisfaction with all the things you have					
8 year old	0.7	1.2	6.4	23.1	68.7

16 missings

Table 18b. Satisfaction with all the things child has by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with all the things you have	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.1	0	0.2	0.5	0.3	2.2	1.5	2.6	5.6	16.4	70.6
12 year old	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.7	2.5	2.6	5.7	10.3	22.2	54.7

Missings 10Y: 20; 12Y: 15

Table 19. Frequency of having enough food to eat each day by age groups (%)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
8 year old	1.1	4.8	11.0	83.0
10 year old	0.4	2.3	8.2	89.1
12 year old	0.3	1.2	8.8	89.7

Missings 8Y: 71; 10Y: 29; 12Y: 19

Table 20. Having different things by age groups (yes %)


	Clothes in good condition	Enough money for school trips and activities	Access to the internet at home	The equipment/ things you need for sports and hobbies	Pocket money/ money to spend on yourself	Two pairs of shoes in good condition	A mobile phone	The equipment/ things you need for school
8 YO	98.2	89.4	93.4	86.2	80.7	94.5	93.8	97.7
10 YO	99.5	96.6	98.0	92.2	90.0	97.6	97.7	99.7
12 YO	99.4	97.7	99.2	93.3	89.7	98.2	98.7	99.5

Missings 8Y: 11, 30, 19, 19, 28, 17, 11, 14; 10Y: 9, 14, 10, 16, 24, 8, 7, 7; 12Y: 8, 16, 11, 23, 27, 16, 7, 10

The material deprivation scales were not asked in the questionnaire. The main argument was to shorten the questionnaire.

2.8 Time use

Table 21a. Satisfaction with time use (%)

Satisfaction with time use					
8 year old	1.9	1.3	9.6	26.0	61.1

18 missings

Table 21b. Satisfaction with time use by age groups (%)


Satisfaction with...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How you use your time											
10 year old	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.9	3.7	2.6	5.5	10.6	22.6	52.7
12 year old	1.1	0.2	0.7	1.6	2.5	4.7	5.6	11.2	16.5	21.1	34.9
How much free time you have to do what you want											
10 year old	1.4	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.7	4.9	2.9	7.8	11.6	18.9	46.5
12 year old	3.0	1.3	2.5	4.3	6.0	7.7	6.5	9.7	14.3	15.9	28.9

Missings 10Y: 9, 14; 12Y: 11, 13

2.9 Subjective well-being: how children feel about their lives

OLS (Overall Subjective Well-Being)

Table 22a. Satisfaction with life as a whole (OLS) score distribution, 8 year-olds (%)

Satisfaction with your life as a whole					
8 year old	1.6	2.1	6.2	15.1	74.9

9 missings

Table 22b. Satisfaction with life as a whole (OLS) score distribution by age groups (%)

Satisfaction with your life as a whole	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10 year old	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.6	1.4	2.5	1.7	3.2	5.7	11.1	72.7
12 year old	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.7	4.3	3.7	6.3	9.7	18.8	51.9

Missings 10Y: 16; 12Y: 7

CW-SWBS (Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale). The scale is based on the Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Huebner, 1991.

Table 23. Children's Worlds Subjective Well-being Scale (CW-SWBS) items (%; 10&12 year-olds)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I enjoy my life	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.0	2.4	4.5	4.3	7.2	12.0	18.3	47.6
My life is going well	1.2	0.5	0.8	1.6	3.0	4.6	4.1	6.8	11.4	22.0	43.9
I have a good life	1.2	0.8	0.9	1.4	2.1	4.0	3.8	5.4	8.8	15.8	55.9
The things that happen in my life are excellent	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.9	2.9	6.2	6.1	8.7	13.0	25.1	30.9
I like my life	1.7	1.0	0.8	2.1	1.9	3.7	3.4	5.7	7.4	16.6	55.7
I am happy with my life	1.7	0.8	0.9	2.1	2.2	4.1	4.3	6.2	8.8	18.8	50.1

20, 19, 36, 26, 19 and 15 missings, respectively

CW-DBSWBS (Children's Worlds Domain Based Subjective Well-Being Scale), based on the Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Seligson, Huebner & Valois, 2003.

Table 24. Children's Worlds Domain Based Subjective Well-being Scale (CW-DBSWBS) items (%; 10&12 year-olds)

Satisfaction with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The people you live with	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.7	3.7	2.5	5.9	9.8	14.7	62.1
Your friends	0.3	0.1	0.2	1.0	1.0	3.8	4.7	5.9	14.4	24.1	44.4
Your life as a student	1.6	0.5	1.1	2.3	2.9	7.0	6.0	12.5	13.9	19.9	32.2
The area where you live	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.4	3.8	3.3	6.7	10.1	15.7	56.4
The way that you look	2.4	1.4	1.2	1.7	2.1	4.6	4.7	6.7	10.8	16.4	48.1

137, 66, 13, 115 and 53 missings, respectively

Table 25: Children's Worlds Positive and Negative Affect Scale (CW-PNAS; based on Barrett & Russell, 1998) items (%; 10&12 year-olds)

Last two weeks: How often feeling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Happy	0.8	0.6	0.5	2.0	2.4	4.7	4.9	6.6	11.1	20.6	45.9
Calm	1.5	0.7	1.6	1.6	3.2	9.1	6.8	7.9	12.3	17.5	37.8
Full of energy	2.1	1.4	2.3	2.9	3.6	6.2	6.1	7.7	11.4	12.3	44.0
Sad	20.5	16.1	16.4	10.8	7.6	9.0	4.5	4.5	4.1	3.7	2.8
Stressed	17.3	11.4	9.8	8.6	7.4	9.8	7.4	7.3	6.5	6.9	7.7
Bored	24.9	10.4	9.4	10.0	6.4	8.0	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.4	9.1

28, 48, 68, 70, 43 and 49 missings, respectively

CW-PSWBS (Children's Worlds Psychological Subjective Well-Being Scale) based on Ryff, 1989.

Table 27. Children's Worlds Psychological Subjective Well-Being Scale (CW-PSWBS) items (%; 12 year-olds)

How much you agree with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I like being the way I am	1.8	0.6	1.4	2.5	2.4	3.5	5.1	6.4	10.8	18.6	46.9
I am good at managing my daily responsibilities	0.7	0.7	0.8	2.4	4.4	4.7	5.7	10.0	12.1	22.1	36.5
People are generally pretty friendly towards me	0.8	0.4	1.9	1.3	2.8	4.6	6.3	10.0	13.9	21.9	36.1
I have enough choice about how I spend my time	1.9	1.0	0.9	1.6	3.5	4.5	4.4	7.1	12.2	17.0	45.9
I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment	2.3	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	6.5	6.5	8.8	14.7	19.5	33.4
I feel positive about my future	1.4	0.8	0.8	2.1	3.5	3.7	4.4	7.2	12.5	18.8	44.8

15, 9, 22, 19, 10 and 13 missings, respectively

Table 28. Variations in different measures of subjective well-being by age group (10 and 12 year-olds) (Means)

	OLS		CW-SWBS		CW-DBSWBS		PAS		NAS		CW-PSWBS	
	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12	Y10	Y12
Mean	92.7	86.6	87.9	81.3	89.9	82.8	86.0	77.0	32.6	41.2		82.0
Std. Error of Mean	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8		0.6
Std Deviation.	16.3	20.7	18.5	21.3	11.7	14.5	16.4	19.7	25.0	24.6		18.0
N (valid)	997	1072	975	1055	868	941	970	1041	972	1035		1028
N (missing)	16	7	38	24	145	138	43	38	41	44		51

No data for 10 year-olds for CW-PSWBS

2.10 Children perceptions about their country

Table 29. Awareness of the children's rights by age groups (%)

	I know what rights children have			I know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child		
	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes
8 year old	17.9	46.2	35.9	44.6	38.0	17.3
10 year old	8.9	46.4	44.7	43.7	37.4	19.0
12 year old	5.3	40.1	54.6	31.5	34.4	34.1

Missings 8Y: 23, 28; 10Y: 13, 15; 12Y: 14, 12

3. Conclusions

Younger children tend to be more satisfied overall with their life and with different aspects and domains of their life. However, compared to older age groups, 8 year-old children more frequently tend to worry about family financial resources, and less frequently have enough money for school trips and activities, pocket money, the equipment for sports and hobbies, a mobile phone and access to the internet at home.

12 year-olds are less positive about school life than younger children. For instance, they less frequently think that their teachers care about them, help them in the case of need or listen to them. 12 year-olds are also more pessimistic about their opportunities to make important decisions at school, that other children at school will help them if needed and they tend to feel less safe at school. There are proportionally more 12 year-olds who are aware of the children's rights compared to the younger age groups.

Children at all age groups evaluate interpersonal communication in their local area more negatively compared to having enough places to play and have a good time, and feeling safely there.