

Children's Worlds National Report

Turkey



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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

Turkey is an independent state in Southeast Europe, lying between Europe and the Middle East. Turkey's surface area is 783 562 km², and the Turkish population is 86 063 945 at the end of May 2022. Children accounted for 26.9 percent of Turkey's entire population, and there were 22.7 million children aged between zero and 17.

Turkey is a multi-ethnic country composed of Turks and Kurdish origin citizens. Turkey's gross domestic product is \$806.804 million as of 2021, and GDP/per capita is \$9.327 (nominal) and \$32.278 (PPP). The country has been experiencing an economic crisis since 2018 and economic conditions have worsened since December 2021.

Turkey currently hosts some 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees along with close to 320,000 persons of concern from other nationalities. It is known that about 1.6 million Syrians are under 19 years old.

Context of COVID-19 in individual country contexts

In Turkey, the first COVID-19 case was confirmed on March 11, 2020. At the end of 2021, Turkey's population was 84 million, 880 thousand 273 people. The total number of children was 26.9% of the total population. As of March 25, 2022, 14,775,634 COVID-19 cases and 97,666 COVID-19 deaths were reported. Turkey ranks the tenth country globally in the total number of COVID-19 cases.

First, it is necessary to talk about Turkey's total lockdown/curfew due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Because these regulations directly affect the length of stay of children at home. Following the "voluntary quarantine" period on April 3, 2020, a lockdown for individuals under the age of 20 was declared. After this, starting from April 10 and on the weekend of 11-12 April, the government declared universal lockdowns for 15 metropolitan cities and the city of Zonguldak. Starting from the first day of June, with the normalization period, lockdowns for 20 and under were changed to 18 and under. Following this regulation change, the age group of 0-18 could move freely on Wednesdays and Fridays between 14:00 and 20:00. Starting from June 10, 2020, lockdowns for 18 and under were lifted on the condition that children are to be chaperoned by their parents.

On November 20, 2020, the Ministry of Health reinstated the curfew on people aged 65 and older and twenty and younger. Curfews for children, which started in November 2020, continued until March 2021. At the beginning of March 2021, restrictions were lifted or stretched depending on the risk situation in the regions. According to the circular of the Ministry of Interior on 'Partial Shutdown' dated April 14, 2021, young people and children under the age of 18 could go out on the street only between 14.00-18.00 on weekdays. On April 29 - May 17, 2021, a complete lockdown process was started again in Turkey.

The fact that caregivers continued to work when there were curfews for children also caused difficulties in care issues. Within Circular No. 8483 dated 29.05.2020, children were permitted to go to caregivers, family elders, kindergartens, or daycare homes and travel under the supervision of their parents/guardians within the restricted time zones. While this circular

helped to solve some childcare problems, it is essential to question whether it was sufficient or not.

One of the most critical issues affecting children's well-being was the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 epidemic in their educational processes. In Turkey, 12 years of education is compulsory. Turkish public schools are free for all children, including immigrants. However, the quality of education and the conditions of schools can vary. There are also private schools. Thus all schools operate under the auspices of the Turkish Ministry of Education. During the pandemic, limited access to the Internet and technological resources such as computers/phones multiplied existing inequalities. Distance learning was difficult for all, but it also widened the educational gap between different socio-economic groups due to unequal access to resources.

Following the closing of schools on March 13, 2020, the week of 16-20 March was declared the winter break. Afterward, 23-27 March was declared to be the date when the distance education through EBA would commence in the first phase. Distance education was prolonged twice. During this period, education was provided through EBA TV channels (TRT EBA TV Elementary School, TRT EBA TV Middle School, TRT EBA TV High School) and via the Internet. On June 19, 2020, it was decided to complete distance education. Between March and June 2020, "volunteer" and between September 2020 and June 2021, "mandatory" distance education was implemented. The 2020-21 academic year started with "mandatory" distance education for all levels on August 31, 2020. On September 21, 2020, it was announced that a phased and diluted face-to-face education would be introduced. However, face-to-face education could not be fully implemented. Various methods such as distance education and face-to-face education in diluted classes were tried during this academic year.

On March 1, 2021, the Ministry of National Education announced that the status of schools would be decided according to the risk level of the provinces they are located in. Schools in all regions and levels were closed for 44.4% of the academic year, 87 days. (All schools were closed between 31 August-18 September 2020, November 23, 2020-February 12, 2021, and 29 April-14 May 2021) Between March 2 and April 28, 2021, the status of schools was decided according to the risk level of the provinces. Preschool level (109 days), 1st grades (99 days), village schools (95 days), and special education schools (94 days) were the levels and institutions that remained open the longest. The 6th, 7th, 10th, and 11th grades were the stages that continued face-to-face education for the shortest time.

In the 2021-2022 academic year, face-to-face education started in Turkey after approximately 1.5 years.

In distance education, the technological equipment of children in their homes was also vital for children's access to education. According to "the Distance Education by Numbers" data shared by the Ministry of Education General Directorate of Innovation and Education Technologies (YEĞİTEK), 12,873,739 students became active in EBA between September 21, 2020, and June 18, 2021. According to the EBA usage data in this study, 31% of the students access distance education via computer and 9% via tablet, while 60% of the students use mobile devices.

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

We used two different methods of data collection, online and face to face, between June and August of 2021.

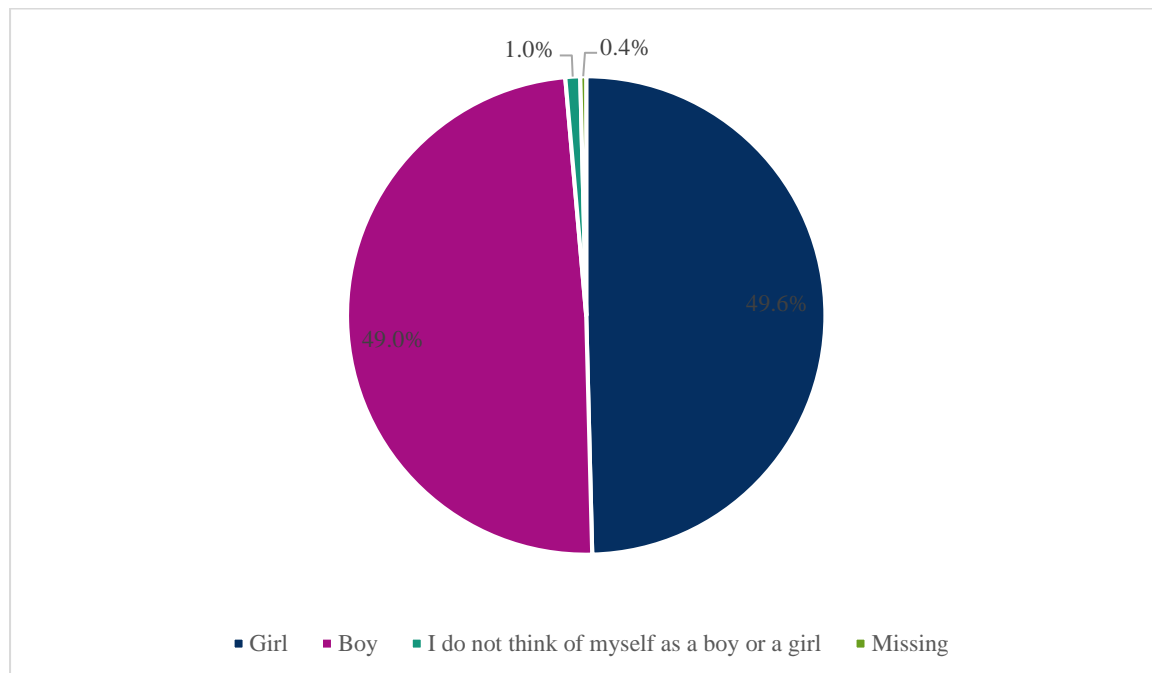
The sampling strategy of the online version was purposive sampling. We distributed the link of the survey to municipalities, civil society organizations, and social media. But participation remained low.

In the representative sampling, we draw a representative sample of Istanbul neighborhoods using the PPS methodology. We tried to collect data from 10 to 12 years old children with the consent of their parents. Interviewers used a Kish table to select the streets. Then, by using a random walk method, they visited houses and tried to find children between 10-12 years old and to get parental consent. All interviews are conducted under COVID-19 measures.

2. Results

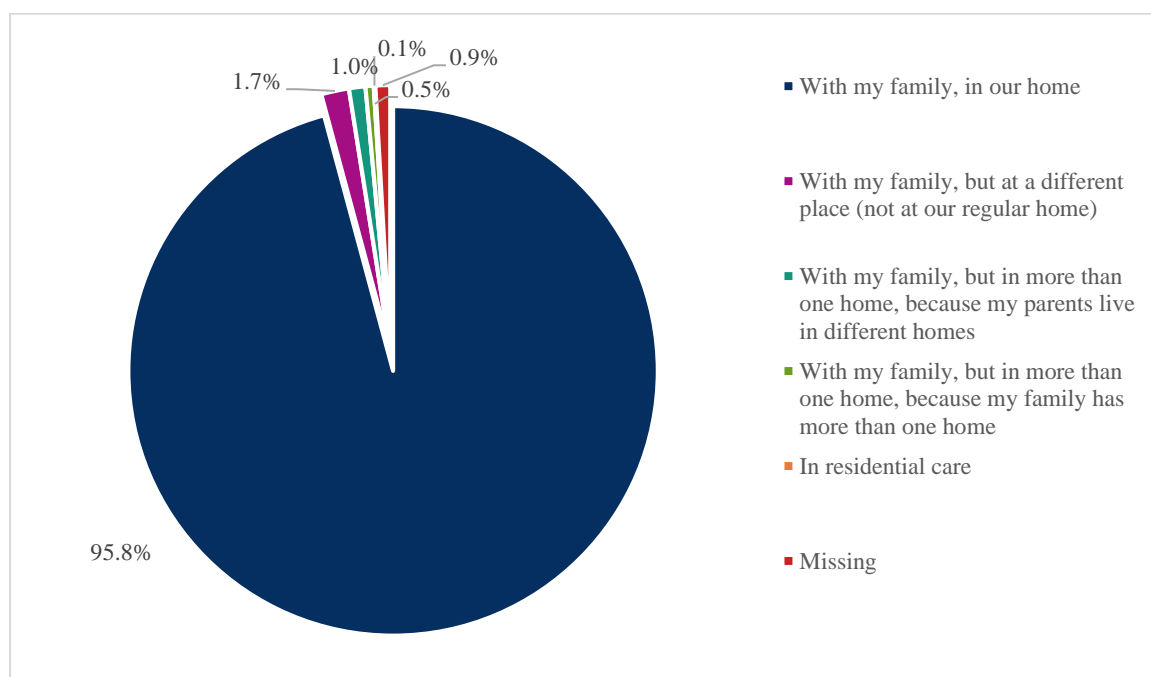
2.1 About you:

Figure 1. Gender Distribution



The above figure shows that the gender distribution of our sample is almost equal, including 1% rejecting to answer the question and three respondents didn't give any answer. The average age of participating children is 11,1 with a standard deviation of 0,81.

Figure 2. "At present, with whom do you live?"



Our sample comprises children living with their families in their homes, about 1,7% lives with their families, but in a different place, most probably because of the pandemic conditions.

Table 1. How the Children are Affected (%)

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Everybody in my city/town/village was in lockdown for many days	72,9%	14,3%	12,8%
Me or somebody in my home got infected with Coronavirus	22,8%	75,6%	1,6%
Somebody in my family (not living with me) got infected with Coronavirus	49,4%	47,2%	3,4%
Somebody I know got infected with Coronavirus (e.g., from my neighborhood or in a friend's family)	76,5%	17,1%	6,4%
At home, we had to be very careful because somebody was considered at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected with the Coronavirus	53,0%	38,3%	8,8%
I had to stay at home for many days	84,1%	12,8%	3,1%
I could not attend school for many days	93,6%	4,5%	1,9%

Table 1 presents how children are affected by the pandemic conditions. According to these figures, the Coronavirus affected one-quarter of participating children directly or indirectly. When other family members who don't live with the participating children are included, this score becomes 50%, and 77% of them say that someone they know got infected. More than half of children stated that they had to be very careful against the Coronavirus risk. These scores show that most children directly or indirectly witnessed this infection.

Three-quarters of children stated that everybody in their towns was in lockdown for many days, and 84% said they had to stay at home, indicating widespread isolation.

About 94% of responding children stated that they could not attend school for many years, showing another indicator of isolation during the Coronavirus days.

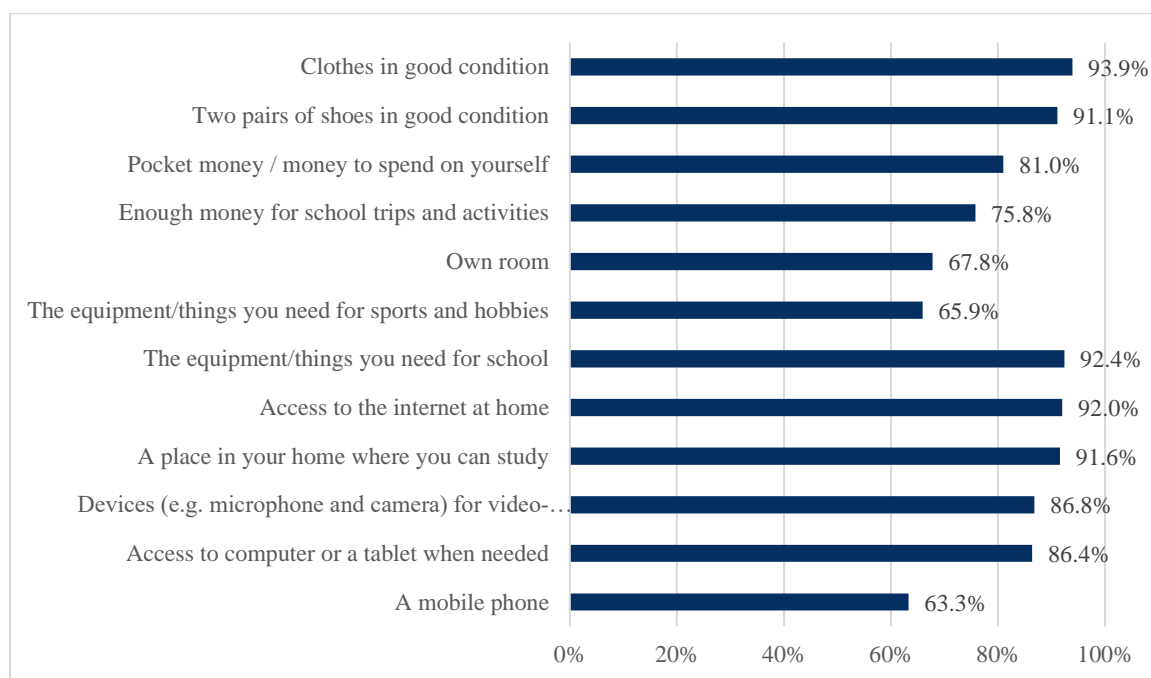
Table 2. Safety Concerns of the Children (%)

	I do not agree	I Agree a little	I Agree somewhat	I Agree a lot	I Totally agree	“I agree a lot” and “I totally agree”
I feel safe at home	1,0%	4,1%	11,0%	25,3%	58,6%	83,9%
I feel safe at school	7,4%	16,8%	30,4%	24,2%	21,3%	45,5%
I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in	6,2%	21,3%	30,1%	27,9%	14,5%	42,4%
I feel safe with my friends	5,1%	14,4%	27,9%	28,1%	24,5%	52,6%
I feel alone	18,2%	20,6%	30,3%	17,7%	13,2%	30,9%
I feel protected from the Coronavirus	3,3%	12,4%	21,2%	32,0%	31,1%	63,1%
I feel bored	4,8%	11,9%	25,0%	23,2%	35,1%	58,3%
I miss my friends	3,7%	3,0%	8,7%	35,6%	48,9%	84,5%
I miss my relatives	2,9%	3,9%	14,5%	31,2%	47,5%	78,7%
I have problems with siblings	17,7%	21,0%	27,3%	14,6%	19,4%	34,0%

The most important outcome of the isolation of children is observed in their safety concerns. According to Table 2 above, a home is a safe place for 84% of children (sum of “I agree a lot” and “I totally agree” answers). Meanwhile, only less than half of children feel safe in their school and neighborhood, and the percentage of those feeling safe with their friends is 53%. These figures show that the children have security concerns outside their homes at the expense of feeling secure against the Coronavirus.

This isolation and the feeling of insecurity have been crystallized in a high level of boredom (58%), and children stated that they missed their friends (85%) and their relatives (79%). But, it seems that children have good relations with their siblings and don't feel alone (percentages of those who agree are 34% and 31%, respectively).

Figure 3. Material Conditions (incl. Technological Infrastructure)

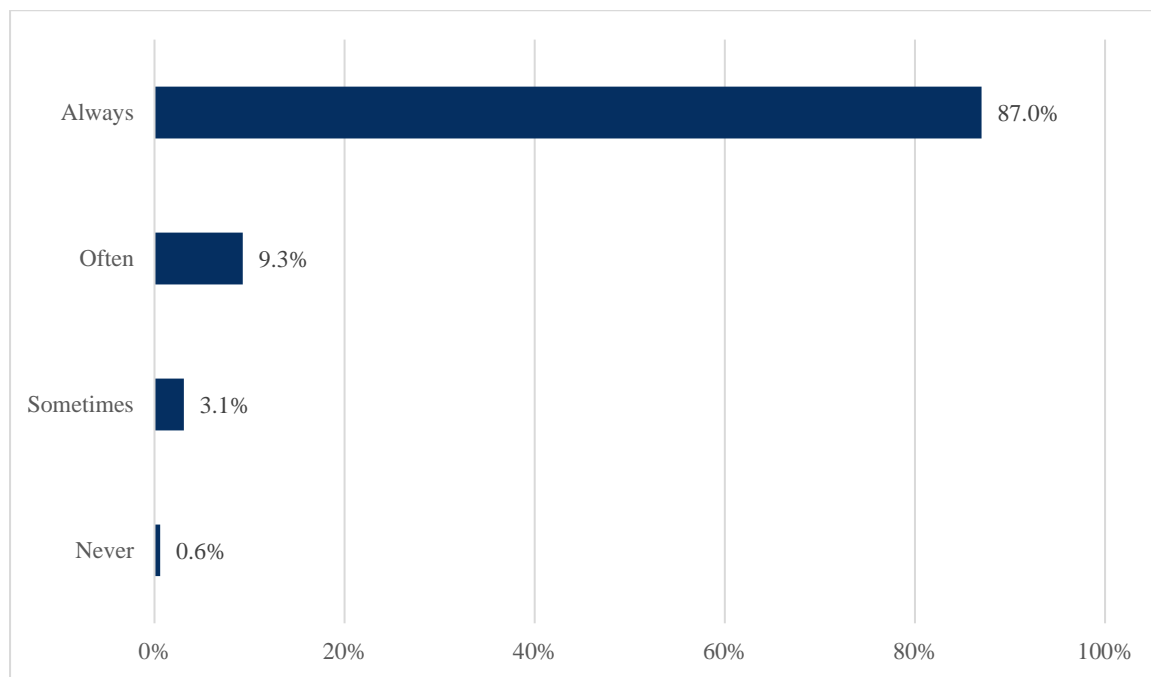


The above table presents the material conditions of participating children. More than 90% of children have clothes and two pairs of shoes in good condition, whereas 80 percent have pocket money and enough money to spend on school trips and activities. Whereas two-thirds of children have their room and another two-thirds have the equipment things they need for sports.

The technological infrastructure needed for school also presents an optimistic figure. 92% of children have access to the Internet at home, and a similar percentage have a quiet place in their home to study. 87% of participating children have access to necessary devices, computers, or tablets. The same figure shows that 63% of children have a mobile phone.

These figures present a more optimistic view of children's material belongings and technological infrastructure than figures given in the context part of this report.

Figure 4. During the lockdown, did you have enough food to eat each day?



Our findings show that almost 90% of children had enough food to eat each day, and only 4 percent of children stated that they had difficulties accessing enough food regularly.

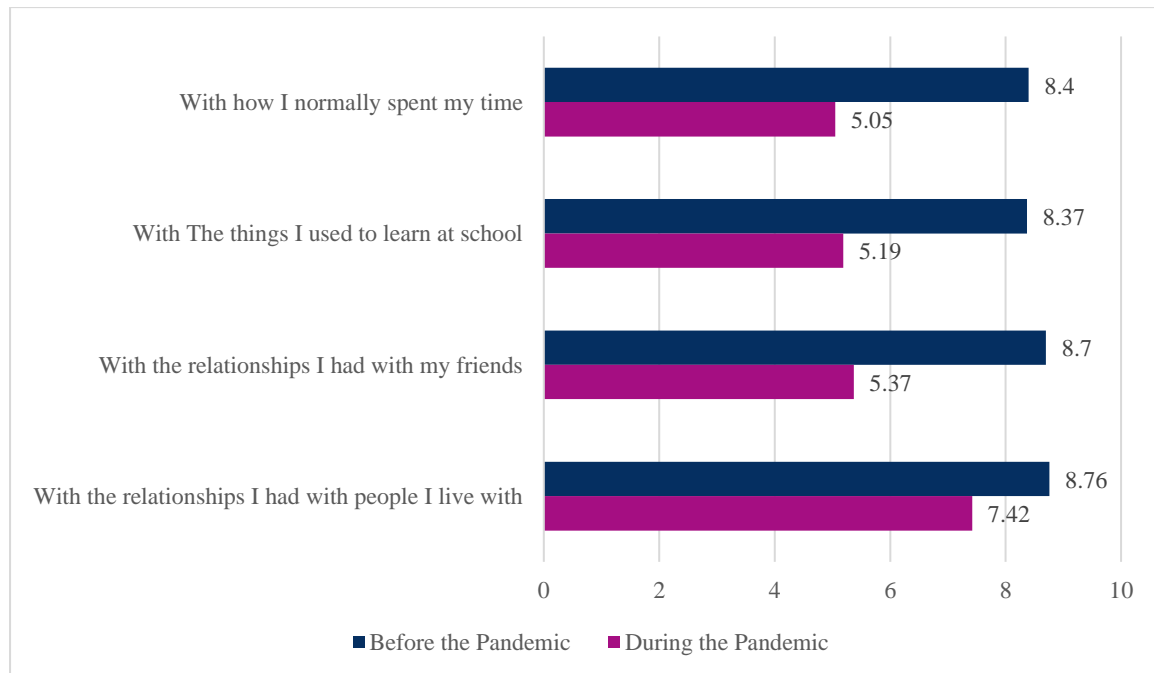
2.2 Your life during the Coronavirus: Q11-14

Table 3. Exposure to the Coronavirus Information (%)

	I do not agree	I Agree a little	I Agree somewhat	I Agree a lot	I Totally agree	Agree a Lot & Totally Agree
I have enough information about the Coronavirus	1,1%	8,5%	19,2%	32,0%	39,1%	71,1%
We speak together about the Coronavirus in my home	3,4%	11,3%	21,9%	33,8%	29,6%	63,4%
My opinions about the Coronavirus are taken seriously in my home	2,4%	14,4%	20,7%	33,9%	28,6%	62,5%
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus from my family members or caregivers	1,0%	10,3%	19,1%	31,3%	38,2%	69,5%
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus from other children	10,8%	23,3%	34,8%	19,9%	11,2%	31,1%
I received a lot of information about Coronavirus from teachers	2,3%	9,7%	19,8%	30,9%	37,3%	68,2%
I received a lot of information about Coronavirus through social media (Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.)	13,3%	11,2%	16,4%	28,0%	31,0%	59,0%
We watch news about the Coronavirus at my home	3,2%	9,1%	18,7%	35,5%	33,6%	69,1%
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus through the news	3,3%	6,8%	20,2%	28,5%	41,2%	69,7%
I think that a lot of the news about the Coronavirus are unreliable	12,8%	26,5%	31,2%	14,5%	15,0%	29,5%

Table 3 shows that the children feel informed about the Coronavirus (71%). They said they speak together about the Coronavirus in their homes (63%), and their opinions are taken seriously (63%). Consequently, the family members or caregivers are the major sources of information about the Coronavirus (70%) and their teachers (68%). Social media is another popular source of information (59%), whereas their friends do not have that kind of function (31%). The same table shows that they watch news about the Coronavirus in their homes (69%), and they received a lot of information through the news (70%). However, children present skeptical views against the news, and about 30% of children think that most news is unreliable.

Table 4. Satisfaction with... (Average, Before and After the Pandemic)



The pandemic has negative consequences on children's satisfaction with different aspects of their lives. Average satisfaction with spending their time declined to 5.1 from 8.1 after the pandemic. This decline is also observed in the things they used to learn at school (8.4 to 5.2) and their relationships with their friends (8.7 to 5.4). Meanwhile, this drop is relatively smaller in the case of their relationships with the people they live with (8.4 to 7.4).

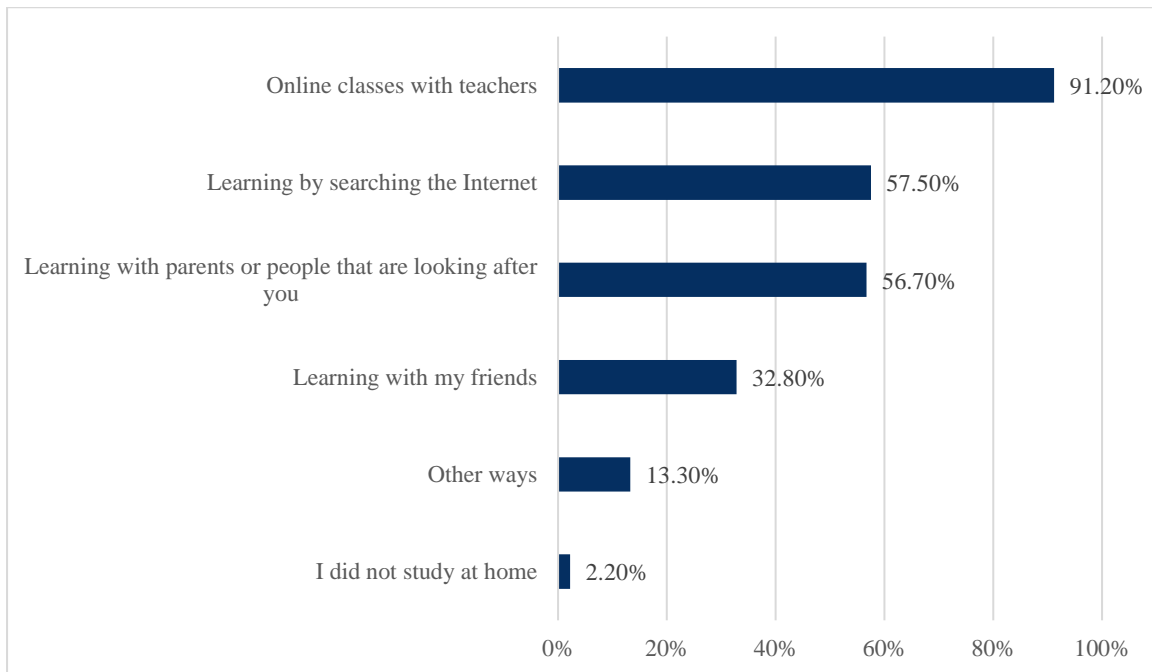
Table 5. Timeuse during the pandemic (%)

	Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day
Watching movies or series on the TV, computer or another device	1,5%	6,3%	13,7%	23,7%	22,4%	32,5%
Playing or hanging out inside the house	1,0%	6,0%	11,5%	29,8%	19,1%	32,5%
Speaking with people on the phone or any other way (such as using WhatsApp)	6,2%	6,9%	19,3%	22,5%	16,3%	28,8%
Learning and doing homework	1,0%	5,0%	11,0%	27,5%	27,7%	27,7%
Playing games on the computer, mobile phone or devices (such as PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo, etc,)	8,9%	7,4%	14,3%	24,1%	18,3%	26,9%
Using social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc ,) on the computer, mobile phone or other devices	16,6%	8,4%	12,2%	18,9%	18,5%	25,4%
Spending time on my own	4,5%	8,9%	16,8%	28,4%	18,7%	22,7%
Helping out in the house (household chores)	6,6%	13,4%	22,7%	25,4%	10,6%	21,3%
Reading	4,1%	12,0%	22,9%	29,0%	15,2%	16,8%
Taking care of siblings (brothers/sisters) or other family members	26,7%	13,6%	18,8%	15,8%	8,7%	16,3%
Meeting with your friends online (e,g, on the computer, zoom or any other way)	8,6%	11,4%	16,7%	31,8%	16,9%	14,5%
Doing things I did not do for a long time (such as hobbies, games etc,)	6,1%	10,3%	29,3%	28,0%	13,3%	13,1%
Playing sports or doing exercise	10,0%	12,4%	33,7%	23,8%	7,2%	13,0%
Playing or hanging out outside	6,3%	16,2%	29,5%	26,3%	10,0%	11,6%
Doing new things I did not do before the Coronavirus (such as new hobbies, games etc,)	11,6%	17,8%	28,4%	23,0%	9,3%	9,9%

The above table shows how the children spend their time during the pandemic. Most popular activities were watching movies, playing, or hanging out inside the house, playing games on the computer and speaking with friends, and doing homework, among the other most frequently done activities. A significant percentage of children stated that they were helping put in the house and taking care of siblings, an indicator of the increased housework burden of children during the pandemic. Meanwhile, the isolation of children seems to restrict outside activities of children such as playing sports or doing exercise or playing or hanging out outside. Another psychological consequence of the pandemic may be observed in the relatively rare frequency of doing new things or old habits.

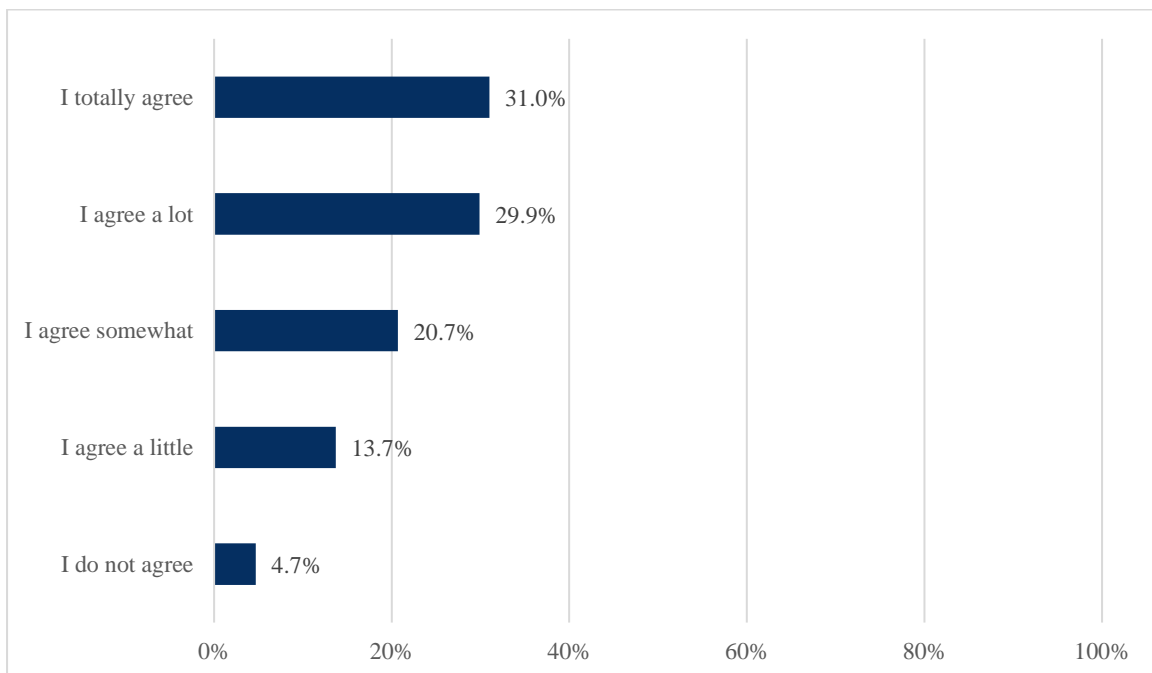
2,3 school and relationships: Q16-19, Q22-23

Figure 5. "How did you learn at home?"



During the pandemic, online classes with teachers became the major source of learning (91%), and Internet searching is the second most popular answer (57%). Meanwhile, the above figure shows that parents had an equally active role in the learning of children (57%). Only one-third of children stated that they worked with their friends (33%).

Figure 6. "During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home"



The above figure confirms previous findings, 60% percent of participating children agreed with the proposition, “During the Coronavirus when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home”.

Table 6. Relations with the School and Teacher (%)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often did you have access to the Internet?	3,10%	9,60%	18,10%	69,20%
How often did it happen that you could not access the Internet for an entire day?	48,40%	38,20%	8,30%	5,10%
How often did you have problems with the Internet connection while having a class over the web?	34,90%	50,30%	9,80%	5,10%
How often did you miss your teacher’s advice?	8,80%	16,60%	36,40%	38,30%
How often did you miss your classmates?	3,80%	10,80%	24,90%	60,50%
How often did you wish that you could go back to school?	4,50%	20,10%	25,10%	50,30%
How often did your parent or a sister/brother help you with schoolwork?	9,40%	32,00%	23,50%	35,10%

According to the above table, most children had regular access to the Internet (87%). In contrast, about 13% of the children lost their internet access for an entire day, and 14% had internet connections.

Distance education had some psychological effects on the children. Three-quarters of the children stated that they missed their teacher’s advice, and 85% missed their classmates. The percentage of those who wished to go back to school is 75%, and one-quarter of the children didn’t have such a wish. 56% of the children stated that they got the help of their parents or sisters/brothers with their schoolwork.

Table 7. Support during the Coronavirus Times (%)

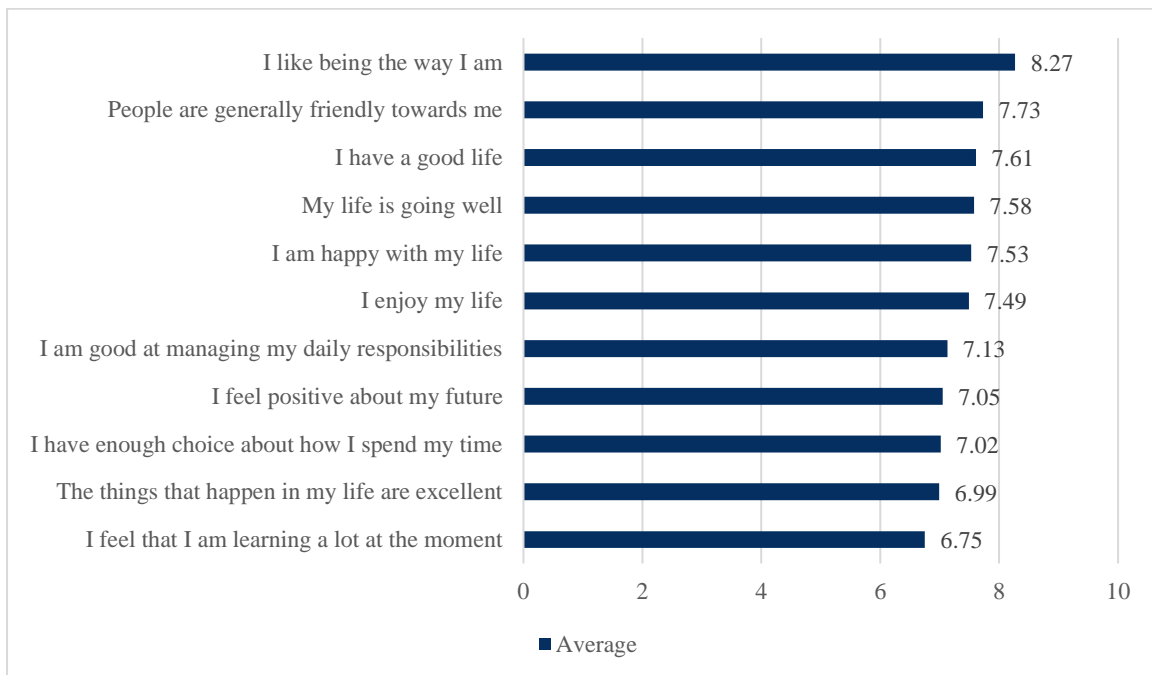
	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree	Agree a lot & Totally agree
During the Coronavirus, I felt well-supported by some of my friends	10,0%	14,0%	34,3%	27,2%	14,6%	41,8%
During the Coronavirus, I felt well-supported by some of my teachers	5,1%	7,0%	22,1%	33,8%	32,1%	65,9%
During the Coronavirus, I felt well-supported by some people I live with	3,5%	3,4%	9,4%	31,2%	52,6%	83,8%
During the coronavirus, I became closer to some members of my family	9,6%	9,3%	16,6%	32,1%	32,4%	64,5%
My relationships with my friends was affected during the Coronavirus	6,1%	9,3%	16,9%	32,5%	35,2%	67,7%
I made new friends with other children online during the Coronavirus	33,3%	22,0%	18,1%	13,7%	12,9%	26,6%

Above table shows that the major source of psychological support was the family for children (84%), and teachers come second with a percentage of 66%. The crucial role of the support of the family was also observed, as two-thirds of children stated that they had closer relations with their families. On the other hand, it seems that their relations with their friends changed

a lot (68%), and the psychological support of their friends remained limited (42%). The same table shows that children failed to have new friends during the Coronavirus.

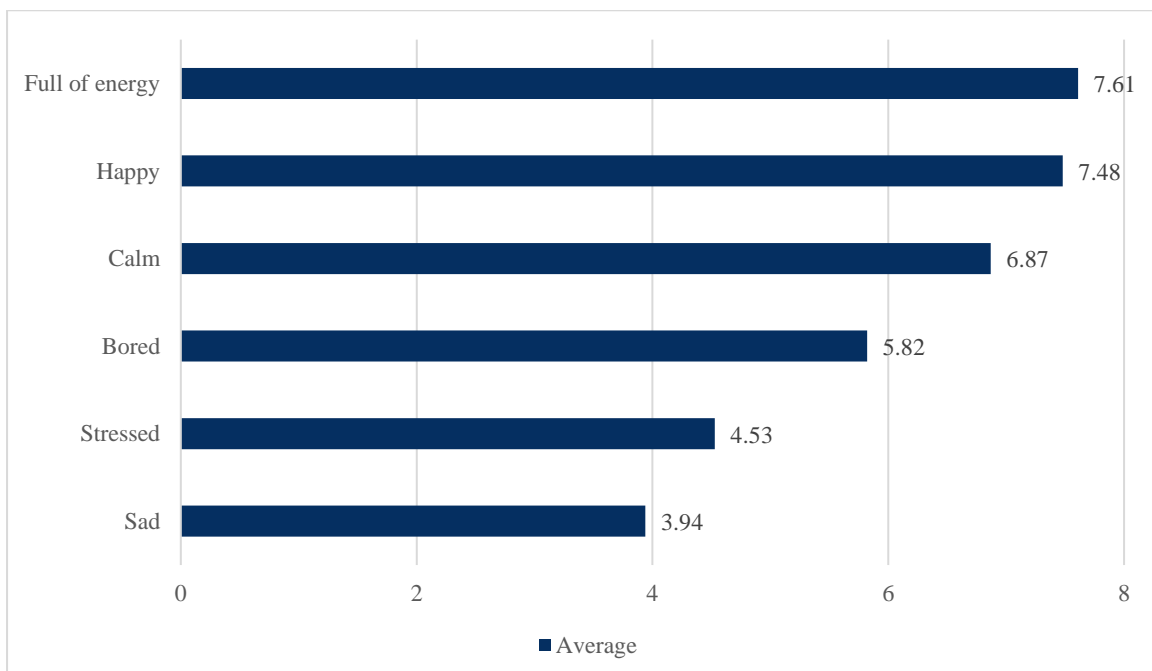
2,4 How do you feel about life: Q24-28

Figure 7. How do you feel about life... (Average)



The above table shows that participating children are generally satisfied with their lives and subdomains. Average scores change between 8,3, and 6,8, and the lowest score is in education (6,8).

Figure 8. "During two last week, how often feeling"... (Average)



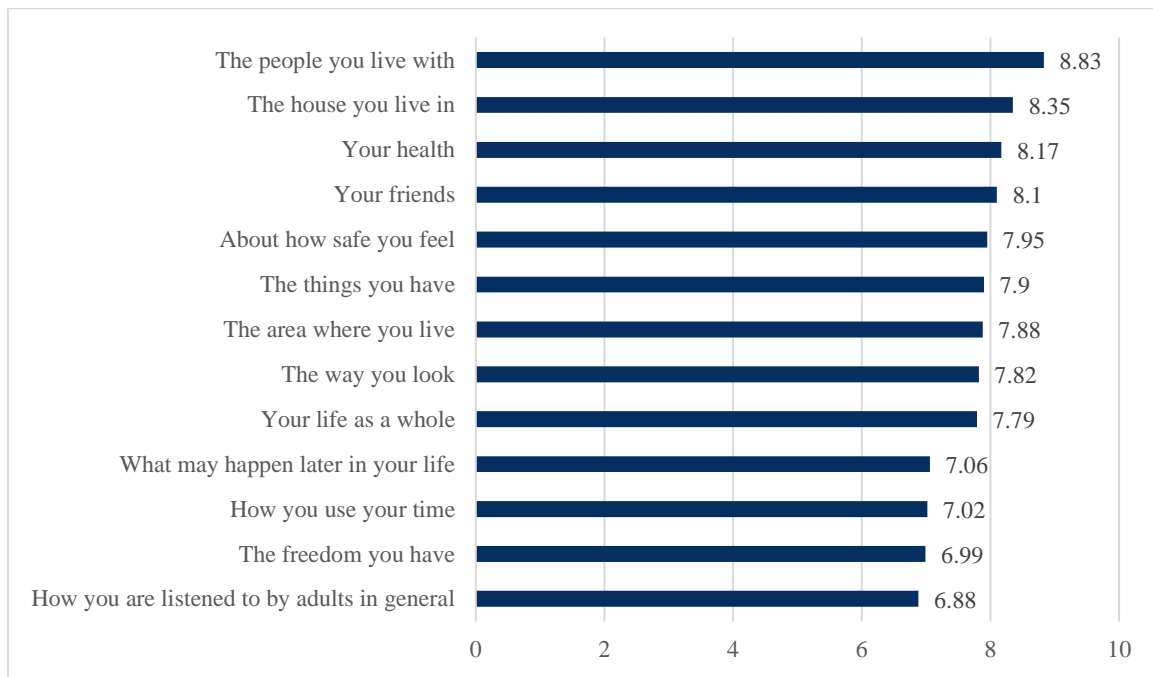
According to the above table, participating children had positive feelings during the last two weeks, and feeling bored, stressed, or sad were not common experiences.

Table 8. Coronavirus Concerns of the Children (%)

	Agree a lot & Totally agree	I Totally agree	I Agree a lot	I Agree somewhat	I Agree a little	I do not agree
I am very afraid of the Coronavirus	51,2%	23,4%	27,8%	22,00%	14,50%	12,40%
It makes me uncomfortable to think about the Coronavirus	44,3%	21,2%	23,10%	27,40%	16,80%	11,50%
My hands become sweaty when I think about the Coronavirus	13,3%	5,9%	7,40%	13,20%	17,60%	55,90%
I am afraid of losing my life because of the Coronavirus	33,4%	14,6%	18,80%	23,70%	17,60%	25,30%
When I watch news and stories about the Coronavirus on the TV and on social media, I become nervous or anxious	25,5%	10,3%	15,20%	25,20%	20,30%	29,10%
I cannot sleep because I'm worried about getting the Coronavirus	13,5%	5,3%	8,20%	12,50%	17,90%	56,20%
My heart races (beats very fast) when I think about getting the Coronavirus	19,8%	8,90%	10,90%	20,40%	22,00%	37,70%

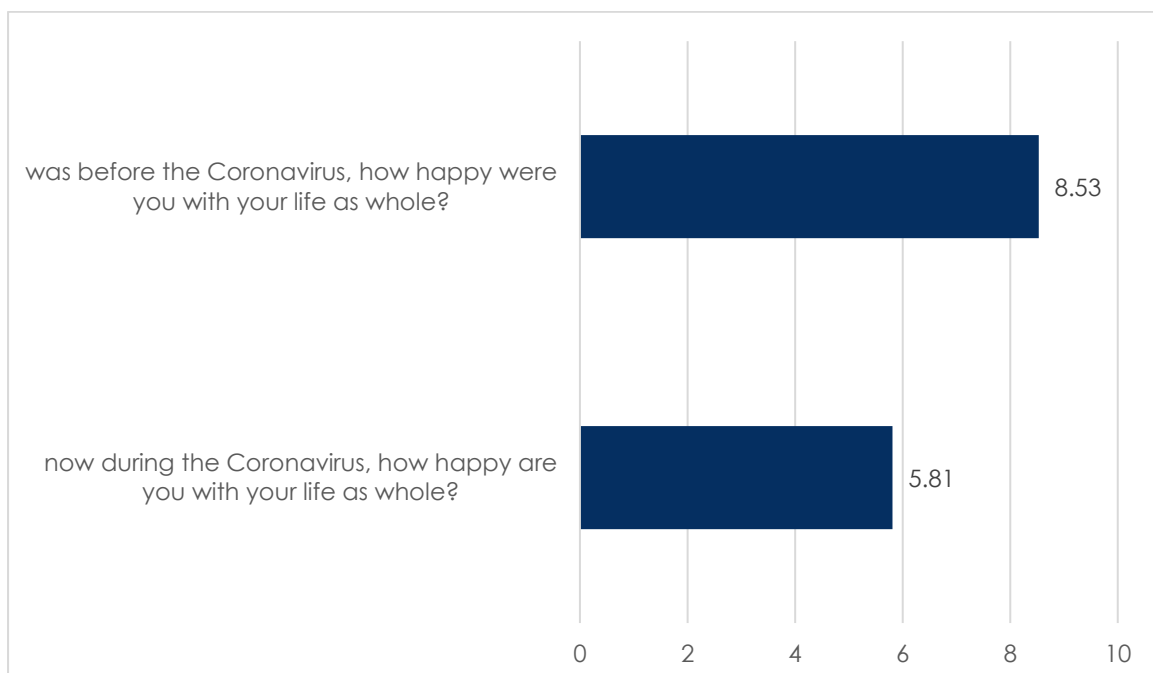
Our findings show that the pandemic experience led to the rise of psychological concerns on the children. More than half of participating children think that they are very afraid of the Coronavirus, 44% says thinking about it makes them uncomfortable whereas one third states they are afraid of losing their lives because of the Coronavirus. Meanwhile, this anxiety has not been reflected in physical reactions such as loss of sleep, rising heart rates, having sweaty hands, all these percentages are lower than 20%. However all these answers are self-reported, and may not reflect the actual situation.

Figure 9. "Satisfaction with"... (Average)



According to the above figure, participating children have relatively higher scores on different dimensions of their lives. Their satisfaction with the people they with (8,8), the house they live in (8,35), with their health (8,17), and with their friends (8,1) are domains that have higher scores in terms of satisfaction. Meanwhile, our findings show that the level of satisfaction of the children in terms of freedom they have is relatively low. Average satisfaction scores of how adults listen to them (6,88), freedoms they have (6,99), and how they use their time (7,01) are relatively lower compared to other items. On the other hand, satisfaction with their expectations for the future is also relatively low (7,06). These scores indicate that the isolation led to pessimism among the children.

Figure 10. "Thinking about how your life"... (Average)



The above figure confirms that the Coronavirus negatively affected children's overall happiness from a retrospective approach. Participant children stated that their overall happiness was 8,5 before the pandemic, and it declined to 5,8 during the pandemic.

3, Conclusions

This report presents the findings of an initial descriptive analysis of Turkey's Children's Worlds dataset. Our findings show that the Coronavirus pandemic directly or indirectly affected the interviewed children. More than three-quarters of children stated that someone they know got infected. The pandemic's most important consequence for the children is the isolation; about 90% of children had to stay at home for many days and didn't attend school. Hence, the home became the safest place for them, and the importance of family relations increased. The lack of physical presence in the school and lowered interaction opportunities with friends led children to miss their friends.

According to our findings, the children have access to the necessary instruments to participate in distance education; however, we need to underline that our sample's economic profile is better than the rest of the country, as other studies present a more pessimistic picture.

For the children, the family became the most important source of information about the Coronavirus, but also they provided psychological support to their children. This led to warmer relations within the family. Meanwhile, teachers also contributed to the well-being of the children. Less than half of the participants stated that their friends support them.

As a result of the isolation and distance education, the psychological pressures led to the decline of children's satisfaction in different domains of life, especially in relationships with friends. Children are also less satisfied with their education than in the days before the pandemic.

Children who participated in our survey presented a high level of anxiety about the Coronavirus; one-third of them stated they were afraid of losing their lives because of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, our findings show that the children we interviewed are generally satisfied with their lives, but the lowest score is in the education domain. On the other hand, the children have lower levels of satisfaction in terms of their freedoms and their participation in the home, the safest place on earth. This may attract our attention to the rising expectations of children OStill, and we need to underline that these higher scores of satisfaction may result from our culture.

Our first analyses show that the isolation and distance education and anxiety about the pandemic led to a decline in the overall well-being of children. Meanwhile, it is possible to say that the family relations partly compensated for these losses.

Our data gives some clues about the inequalities in the capabilities of children; consequently, in future analyses, we are planning to focus on these inequalities in different domains.