

Children's Worlds National Report

Wales



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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

Wales is a nation in southwest Great Britain that has an eastern border with England. The Irish Sea borders it on the west, and the Bristol Channel on the south. It is sparsely populated, accounting for 8.4 % of UK land (just under 21,000 km²) but just 5.6 % of total population (an estimated 3,169,586 people) (mid-year estimate; ONS, 2020). Children aged 0 to 15 years old compose 17.8 % of the total population, while children aged 9 to 14 years old account for 7 % (mid-year estimate; ONS, 2019).

Wales is divided into 22 unitary authorities (single-tier local government authorities) of varying sizes, each of which oversees a variety of public services, including education. The Welsh population's self-reported religious affiliation is predominantly Christian (57.6 %), with the second largest group being Muslim (1.5 %) and 32.1 % claiming no religion (National Census, 2011). The majority of the population report their ethnicity as White (96 % in 2011 – National Census, 2011)

Context of COVID-19 in individual country contexts

The first coronavirus case in Wales was confirmed on February 28, 2020, and the first recorded case of community transmission was announced on March 11, 2020. On March 23, 2020, a strict lockdown was imposed, restricting people from leaving their homes for non-essential travel and limiting outside exercise to once per day. The relaxation of restrictions began in June 2020, however by September 2020, the easing of restrictions had been reversed, as cases began to rise again. A second national lockdown was imposed from late October to mid-November 2020, when the restrictions began to ease, only to be tightened again in mid-December when the First Minister of Wales announced a new lockdown with the entire nation being placed under the highest level of restrictions, which was then reviewed every three weeks.

In terms of number of cases, as of 24 May 2022, 874,373 cases of the virus have been detected and 7,467 deaths registered. The overall case rate per 100,000 population as of the same date is 26,458.4. Finally, for the year 2020, as of 01 January 2021, 157,726 cases had been detected (Public Health Wales).

In order to stop the spread of the coronavirus, schools across Wales were closed by 20 March 2020, and the national examinations were also cancelled. Schools remained open for the children of key workers and those deemed vulnerable, but the majority of pupils did not return to the classroom until late June 2020. While the amount of time spent out of school varied across the school-aged population during this first period of lockdown, it is believed that pupils in Wales were absent for 13 weeks on average, with the timing of national school closures and partial reopening identified by three distinct periods:

- Fully open: 2nd September 2019 – 20th March 2020
- National closure: 20th March 2020 - 29th June 2020
- Partially re-open: 29th June 2020 - 17th July/ 24th July 2020

As a result of the school closures, concerns have been voiced about the risks of widening already existing attainment gaps. Pupils from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds were disproportionately affected due to unsuitable home learning environments and higher levels of digital exclusion. The forced transition to digital learning and teaching brought to attention the existing issue of digital exclusion, which is believed to have exacerbated the education attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

Children were sampled from primary and secondary schools across Wales. The sampling frame consisted of all state-maintained primary and secondary schools in Wales, excluding special schools. This followed the sampling protocol of the study, which cited three points of justification for their exclusion. Namely, the complication of including all-through schools in the sampling framework; the nature of the 'exceptional' circumstances these schools represent, with educational provision for children with the most severe learning difficulties; and the small proportion of the total schools that special schools represent (2.5%). The exclusion of special schools and independent schools means that approximately 3% of the school-going population were excluded from the sampling frame. The sampling strategy involved stratification in two domains: socio-economic geography (four strata: Rural North, Rural Heartland, Metropolitan Wales, and Valleys) and the proportion of pupils in each school eligible for free school meals (dichotomised into low/high).

The sampling strategy was based on the previous wave (Wave 3) of the Children's Worlds study in 2018. As such, only schools that participated (or agreed but did not submit data) in 2018 were invited to complete the survey for 2021 data to provide longitudinal comparisons, pre- and during COVID. The final sample contains responses from 694 pupils from 18 schools (293 from 11 primary schools and 434 from 7 secondary schools).

2. Results

This report compares the responses from the two age groups, with the findings displayed in the form of tables or charts. Categories with less than five responses have been excluded, and hence do not appear on the graphs, in order to preserve the children's anonymity and confidentiality. Finally, all results are derived from valid responses, with missing and 'I do not know' responses eliminated before calculation.

2.1 About you: Q1-2, Q5-10

Table 1: Participants by age and gender (Frequency (%) – Q1-2)

	9 – 11 yrs. old	12 – 14 yrs. old	Total
Boy	132 (47.7)	222 (53.2)	354 (51)
Girl	138 (49.8)	178 (42.7)	316 (45.5)

I do not think of myself as a boy or a girl	7 (2.5)	17 (4.1)	24 (3.5)
Total	277 (100)	417 (100)	694 (100)

Table 2: Your situation during Coronavirus pandemic (Frequency) (Q6)

Age 9 -11

	Yes	No	Not sure
Everybody in my city/town/village was in lockdown for many days	198	24	50
Me or somebody in my home got infected with Coronavirus	35	201	28
Somebody in my family (not living with me) got infected with Coronavirus	71	145	48
Somebody I know got infected with Coronavirus (e.g.: from my neighbourhood or in a friend's family)	133	80	53
At home we had to be very careful because somebody was considered at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected with Coronavirus	91	123	53
I had to stay at home for many days	234	25	12
I could not attend school for many days	211	43	17

Age 12 - 14

	Yes	No	Not sure
Everybody in my city/town/village was in lockdown for many days	290	43	79
Me or somebody in my home got infected with Coronavirus	92	281	33
Somebody in my family (not living with me) got infected with Coronavirus	151	194	61
Somebody I know got infected with Coronavirus (e.g.: from my neighbourhood or in a friend's family)	263	85	60

At home we had to be very careful because somebody was considered at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected with Coronavirus	189	161	58
I had to stay at home for many days	356	35	19
I could not attend school for many days	321	63	26

Table 3: Your situation during Coronavirus pandemic (Q7)

Age 9 -11

	Yes	No	Not sure
My family had to move to another home	10	257	-
I had to self-isolate once	136	113	23
I had to self-isolate more than once	54	188	28
At least one of my parents had to stop working and received money from the government (had furlough)	50	170	49
At least one of my parents was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government (no furlough)	12	207	50
My school was closed during lockdown	243	17	10
During lockdown, I still went to school most days	206	33	30
There were times where I had to be in my home all day (including in your own garden, yard or balcony, if you have one) because of the Coronavirus	152	69	46
There were times where I was only allowed to leave my home for a few hours during the day because of the Coronavirus	10	257	-

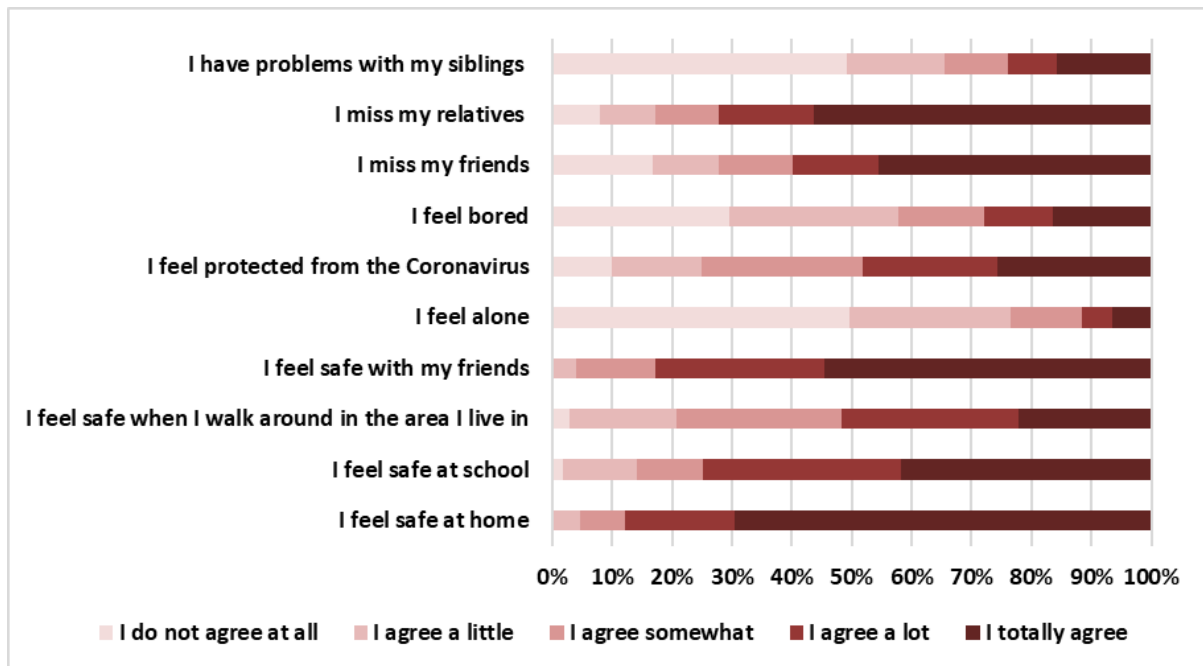
Age 12 - 14

	Yes	No	Not sure
My family had to move to another home	8	389	7
I had to self-isolate once	273	125	12
I had to self-isolate more than once	153	241	18
At least one of my parents had to stop working and received money from the government (had furlough)	81	266	59
At least one of my parents was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government (no furlough)	22	331	53
My school was closed during lockdown	386	15	12
During lockdown, I still went to school most days	333	52	26

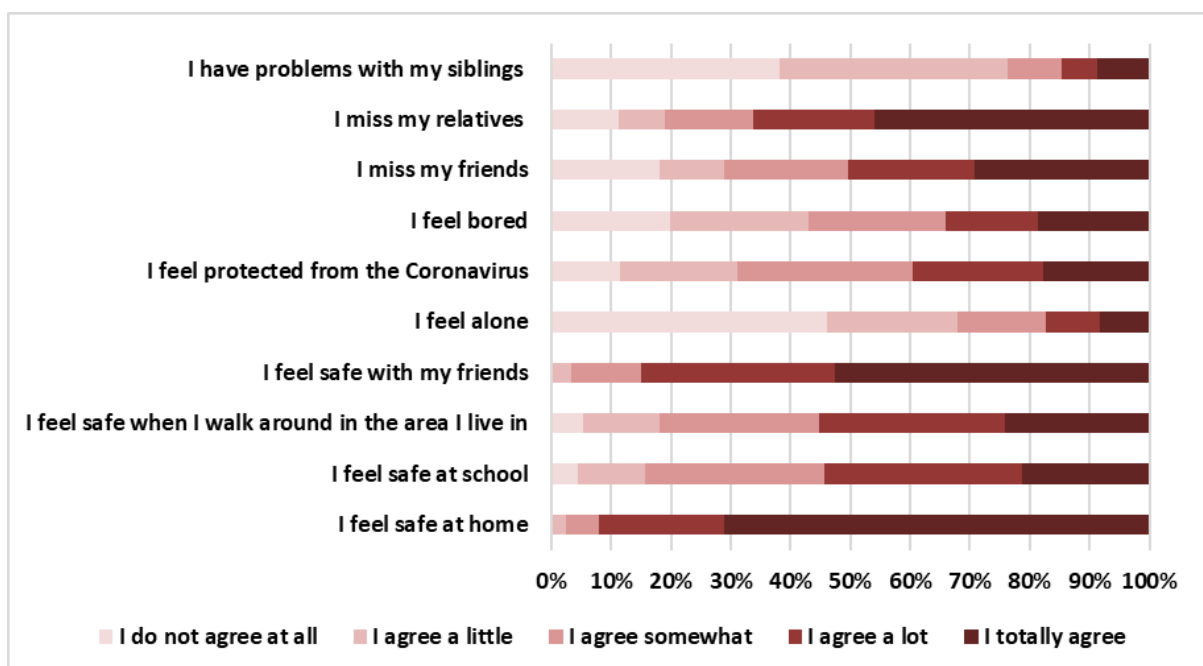
There were times where I had to be in my home all day (including in your own garden, yard or balcony, if you have one) because of the Coronavirus	296	75	41
There were times where I was only allowed to leave my home for a few hours during the day because of the Coronavirus	8	389	7

Figure 1: Your feelings during Coronavirus pandemic (%) (Q8)

Age 9 -11



Age 12 – 14



When questioned about their feelings during the Coronavirus pandemic, both age groups mentioned missing their families and friends. Almost half of them stated that they do not feel isolated. In terms of safety, they reported feeling most secure at home and with their friends. Only around 20% of students said that they did not feel safe at school.

Table 4: Things you have (%) (Q9)

Age 9 -11

	Have (%)
Own room	86
Clothes in good condition	100
Enough money for school trips and activities	100
Access to the internet at home	100
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies	95
Pocket money / money to spend on yourself	85
Two pairs of shoes in good condition	96
A mobile phone	88
The equipment/things you need for school	98
Access to computer or a tablet when needed	96
Equipment (e.g. microphone and camera) for online classes	85
A place in your home where you can study	92

Age 12-14

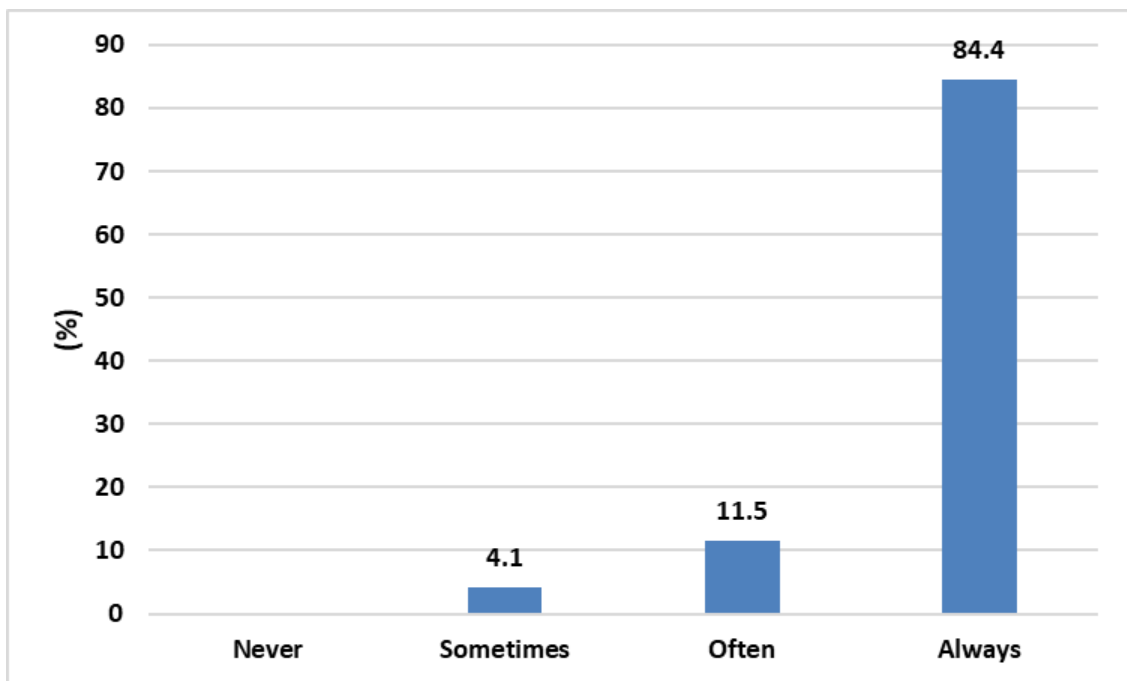
	Have (%)
Own room	90
Clothes in good condition	100
Enough money for school trips and activities	96
Access to the internet at home	100
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies	97
Pocket money / money to spend on yourself	88
Two pairs of shoes in good condition	98
A mobile phone	98
The equipment/things you need for school	98

Access to computer or a tablet when needed	98
Equipment (e.g. microphone and camera) for online classes	86
A place in your home where you can study	91

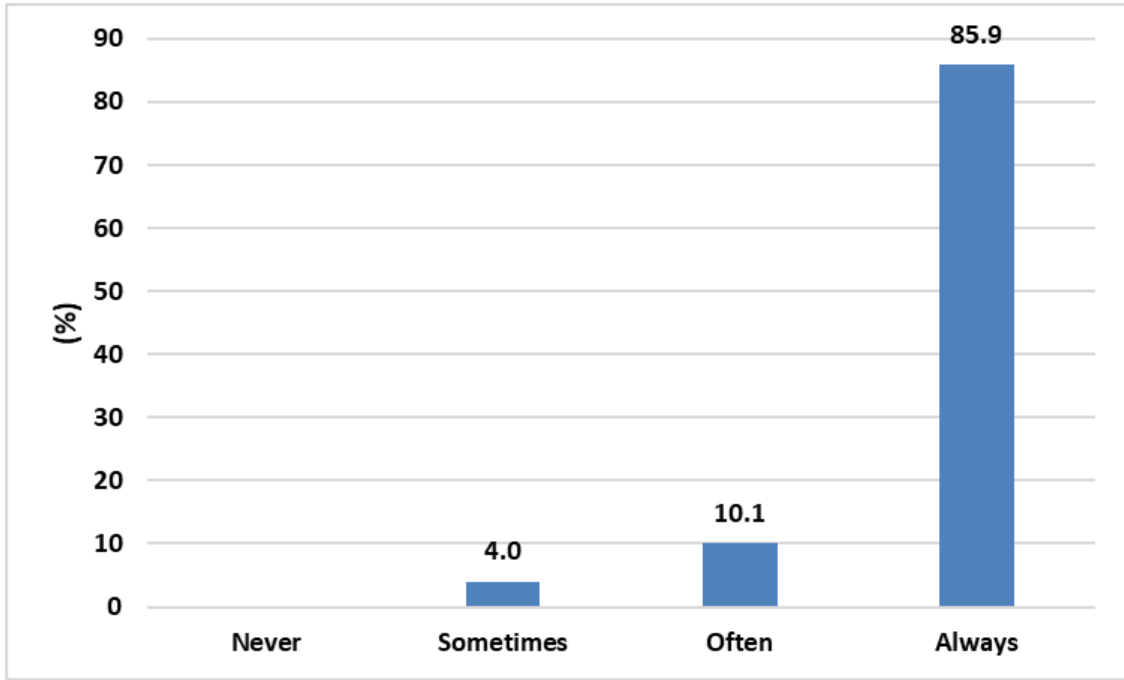
When asked about things they have, 100% of both age groups reported having home internet connection, but only 85% (9-11 years old) and 86% (12-14 years old) said that they had the necessary equipment for online classes. Nevertheless, 96% (9-11 years old) and 98% (12-14 years old) stated that they had access to a computer or a tablet when needed. Furthermore, over 90% stated that they had a place in their home to study, with 86% (9-11 years old) and 90% (12-14 years old) stating that they had their own room.

Figure 2: During the lockdown did you have enough food to eat each day? (%) (Q10)

Age 9 -11



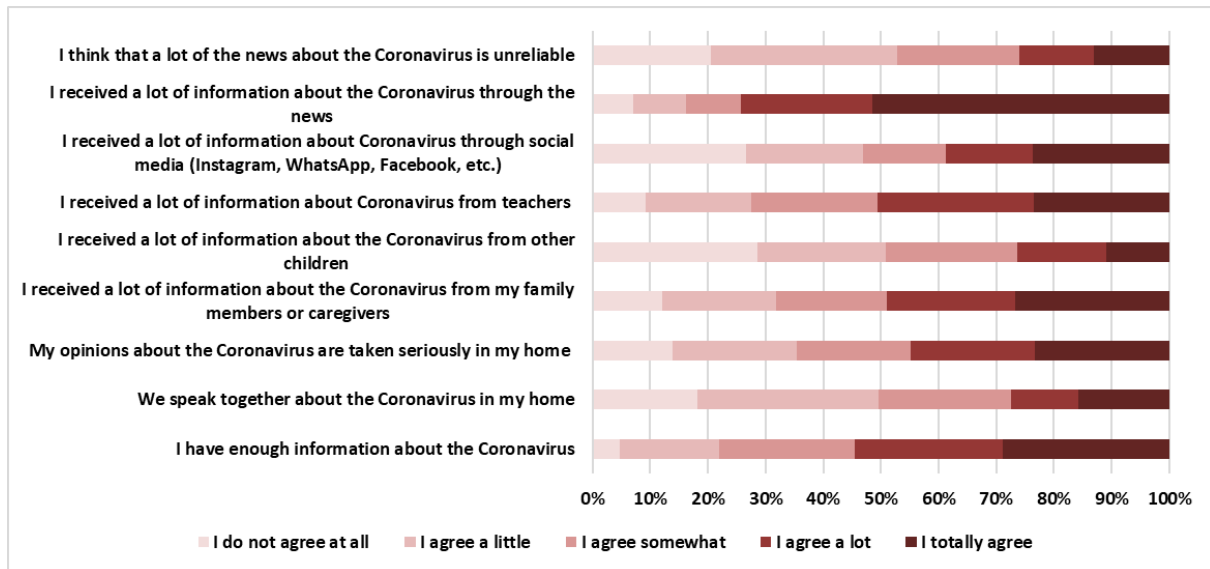
Age 12-14



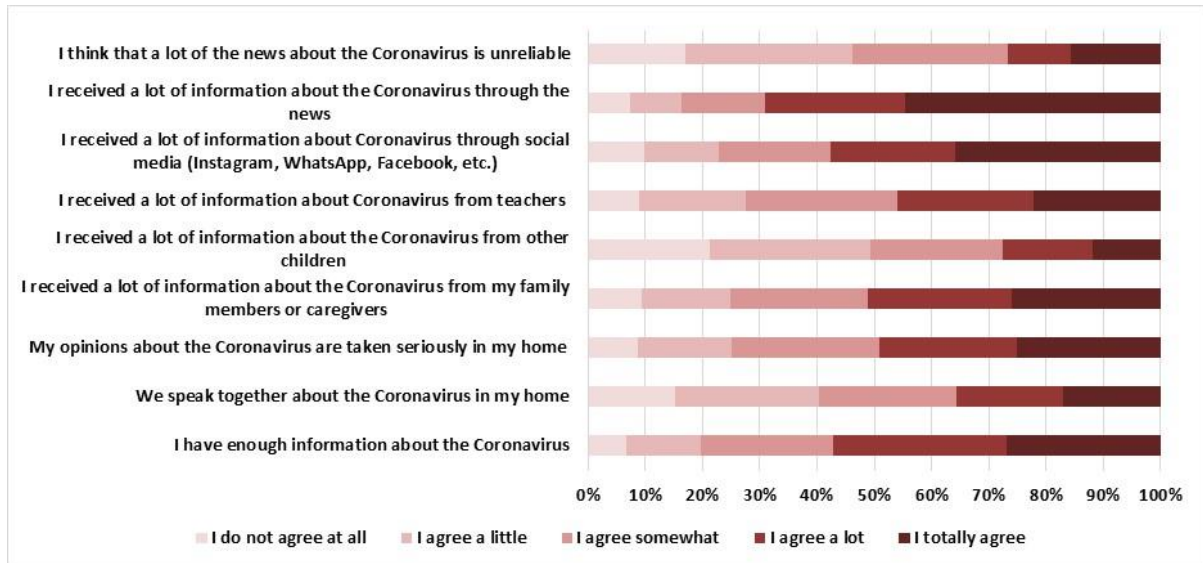
2.2 Your life during the Coronavirus: Q11-14

Figure 3: Information about Coronavirus (%) (Q11)

Age 9 -11



Age 12-14



Children aged 9 to 11 reported receiving a lot of information about the coronavirus pandemic from the news, whereas children aged 12 to 14 years old usually cited social media as well. Both age groups generally agree that they have enough information on the coronavirus.

Table 5: How satisfied were you with each of the following things in your life BEFORE the Coronavirus? Mean(SD) rating on a 1-10 scale (Q12)

Age 9 -11

Item	Total
With how I normally spend my time	8.25 (2.3)
With the things I learn at school	7.9 (2.3)
With the relationships I have with my friends	8.8 (1.9)
With the relationships I have with people I live with	8.9 (2.0)

Age 12-14

Item	Total
With how I normally spend my time	7.8 (2.2)
With the things I learn at school	7.0 (2.5)
With the relationships I have with my friends	8.2 (2.3)
With the relationships I have with people I live with	8.5 (2.4)

Table 6 :How satisfied are you with each of the following things in your life now DURING the Coronavirus rating on a 1-10 scale? M(SD) (Q13)

Age 9 -11

Item	Total
With how I normally spend my time	6.4 (2.9)
With the things I learn at school	6.6 (2.7)
With the relationships I have with my friends	7.5 (2.7)
With the relationships I have with people I live with	8.2 (2.4)

Age 12-14

Item	Total
With how I normally spend my time	6.2 (2.9)
With the things I learn at school	5.5 (2.9)
With the relationships I have with my friends	7.0 (2.9)

When asked how satisfied they were with various things before and during the coronavirus pandemic, both age groups showed a significant drop in satisfaction with how they normally spent their time, followed by what they learned in school, with older children being more dissatisfied than their younger peers.

Table 7: During the last month, how worried have you been about the following things in your life? M(SD) rating on a 1-10 scale (Q14)

Age 9 -11

Item	Total
By the Coronavirus situation	4.7 (3.4)
That I may get infected by the Coronavirus	4.3 (3.6)
That people I know may get infected by the Coronavirus	5.5 (3.6)
That I may infect other people with the Coronavirus	4.2 (3.7)
That I may get bad school marks because of the Coronavirus situation	4.3 (3.8)
The money my family has during the Coronavirus period	4.1 (3.8)
The changes in my life as a student because of the Coronavirus situation	4.9 (3.6)

Age 12-14

Item	Total
By the Coronavirus situation	4.3 (3.1)
That I may get infected by the Coronavirus	4.0 (3.2)
That people I know may get infected by the Coronavirus	5.7 (3.1)
That I may infect other people with the Coronavirus	4.9 (3.4)
That I may get bad school marks because of the Coronavirus situation	5.6 (3.7)
The money my family has during the Coronavirus period	3.8 (3.5)
The changes in my life as a student because of the Coronavirus situation	5.2 (3.3)

When asked how worried they have been about various things in their lives, both age groups were most concerned about the possibility that people they know would become infected with the coronavirus. The older children were also more concerned about receiving poor grades than their younger counterparts, whereas both groups were

concerned about the changes in their lives as students as a result of the coronavirus situation.

2.3 School and relationships: Q16-19, Q22-23

Table 9: During the Coronavirus lockdown(s), when schools were closed to most pupils, how did you learn at home? (%) (Q16)

Age 9 -11

Item	%
Online classes with teachers	78.0
Learning by searching the Internet	27.4
Learning with parents or people that are looking after you	44.0
Learning with my friends	22.4
Other ways (please say)	14.8
I did not study at home	4.7

Age 12-14

Item	%
Online classes with teachers	76.3
Learning by searching the Internet	35.7
Learning with parents or people that are looking after you	28.5
Learning with my friends	20.4
Other ways (please say)	10.6
I did not study at home	9.6

Table 9 During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home (%) (Q17)

Age 9 -11

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home	2.2	9.4	16.6	20.6	40.4

Age 12-14

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home	7.4	16.1	23.7	24.0	24.2

When asked if they were able to continue their learning at home, older children appeared to have greater difficulties than their younger peers, with 7.4% reporting that they were unable to continue their learning at home when schools were closed. Only 2.2% of younger children were unable to continue learning at home.

Table 10 : Please, answer the following questions. During Coronavirus... (%) (Q18)

Age 9 -11

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often did you have access to the Internet?	0.0	3.6	20.9	64.6
How often did it happen that you could not access the Internet for an entire day?	51.3	27.4	4.7	5.1
How often did you have problems with the Internet connection while having a class online?	30.3	43.7	9.4	5.4
How often did you miss your teacher's advice?	18.8	37.5	19.1	12.6
How often did you miss your classmates?	3.6	17.0	21.3	46.2
How often did you wish that you could go back to school?	6.9	25.6	23.5	31.8
How often did your parent, the person looking after you, or a sister/brother help you with schoolwork?	9.0	31.4	27.8	20.2

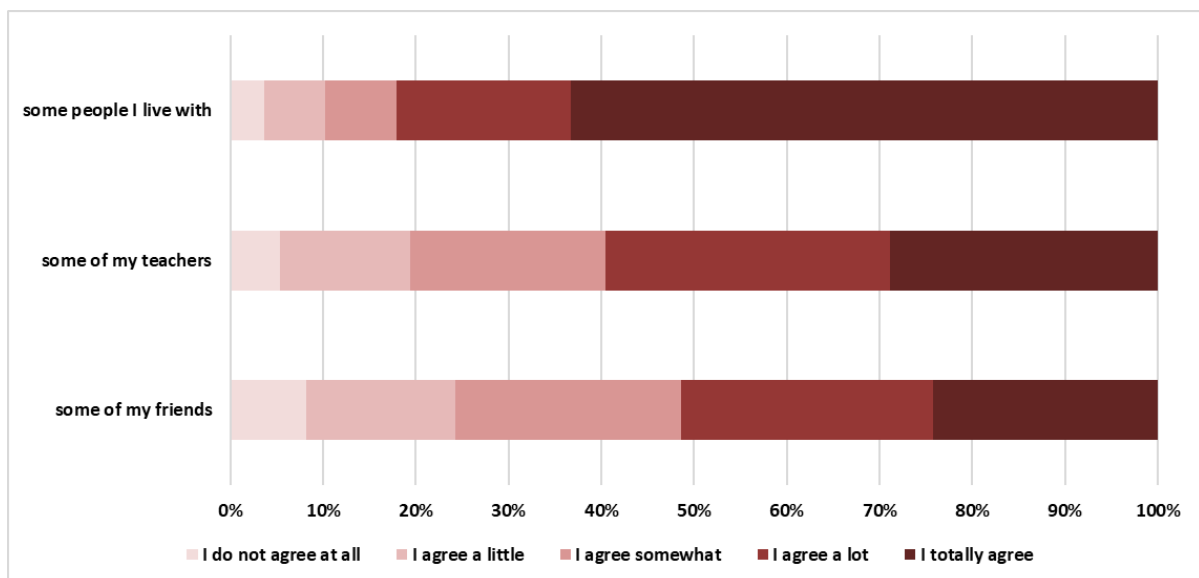
Age 12 - 14

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often did you have access to the Internet?	0.0	2.2	9.4	84.2
How often did it happen that you could not access the Internet for an entire day?	60.4	26.6	2.9	5.8

How often did you have problems with the Internet connection while having a class online?	36.5	41.5	12.9	4.6
How often did you miss your teacher's advice?	26.1	40.8	19.7	9.1
How often did you miss your classmates?	13.9	25.9	27.1	27.8
How often did you wish that you could go back to school?	22.5	34.5	21.6	16.8
How often did your parent, the person looking after you, or a sister/brother help you with schoolwork?	13.4	35.0	30.2	16.8

Figure 4: During the Coronavirus, I felt well-supported by ... (%) (Q22)

Age 9 -11



Age 12 - 14

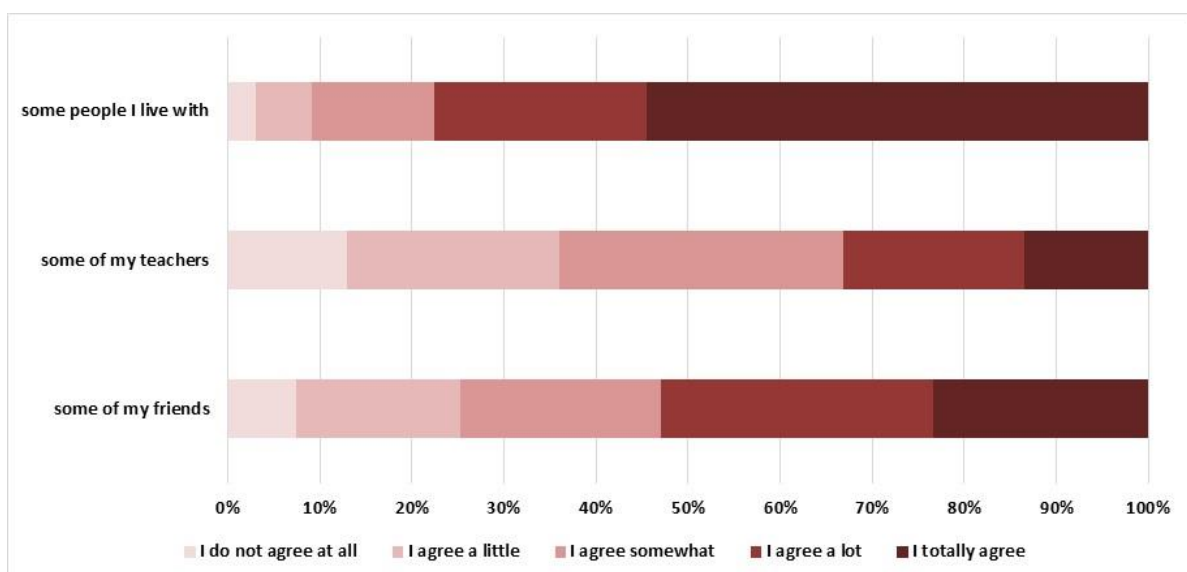
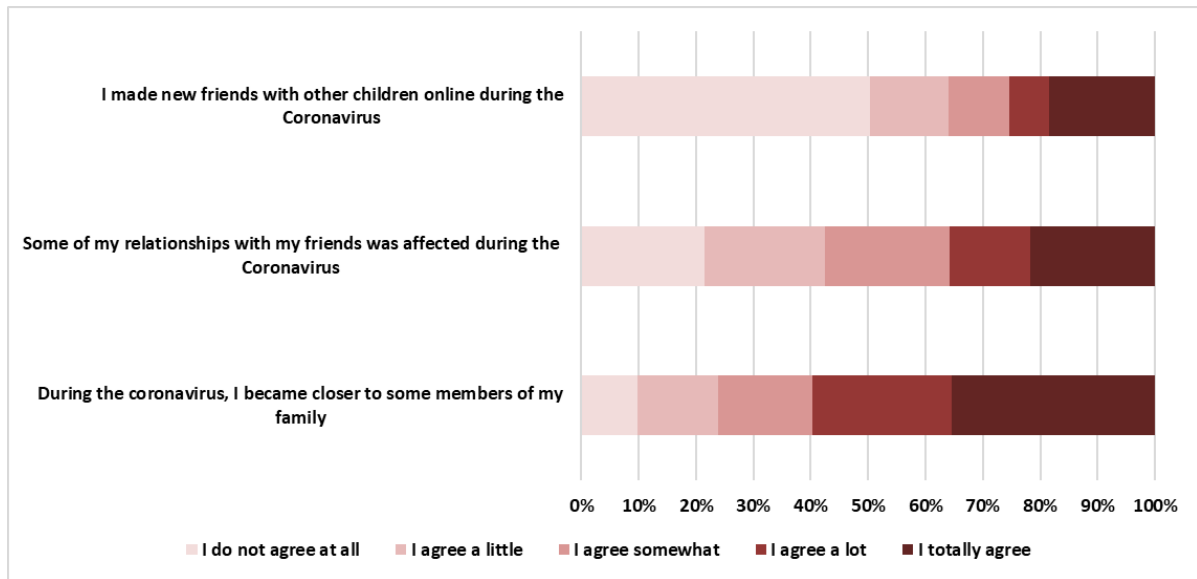
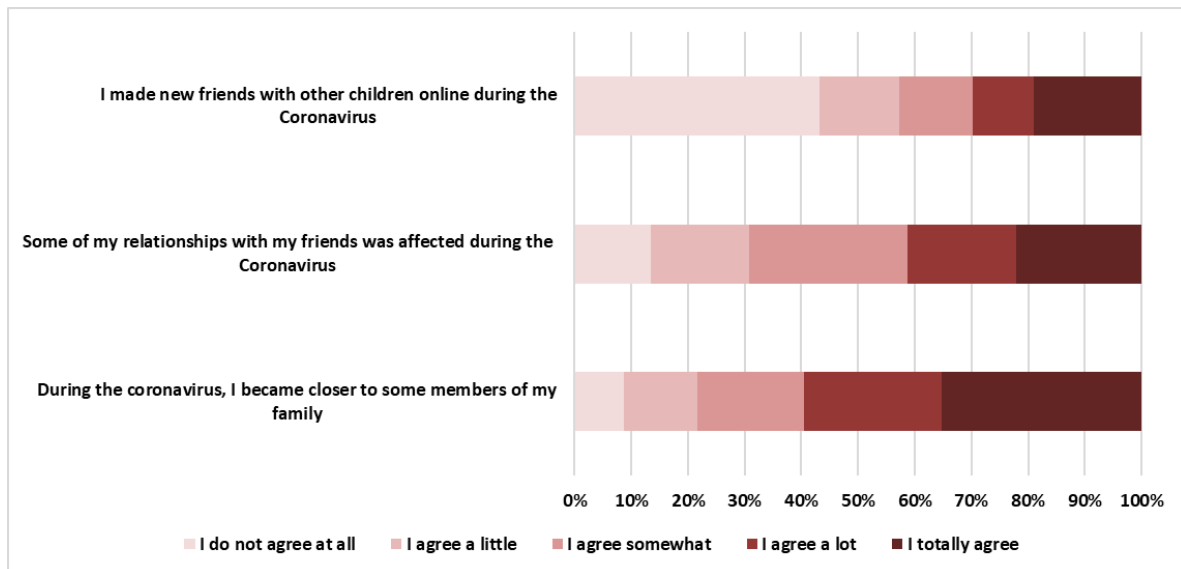


Figure 5: How much do you agree with each of the following sentences... (%) (Q23)

Age 9 -11



Age 12 - 14

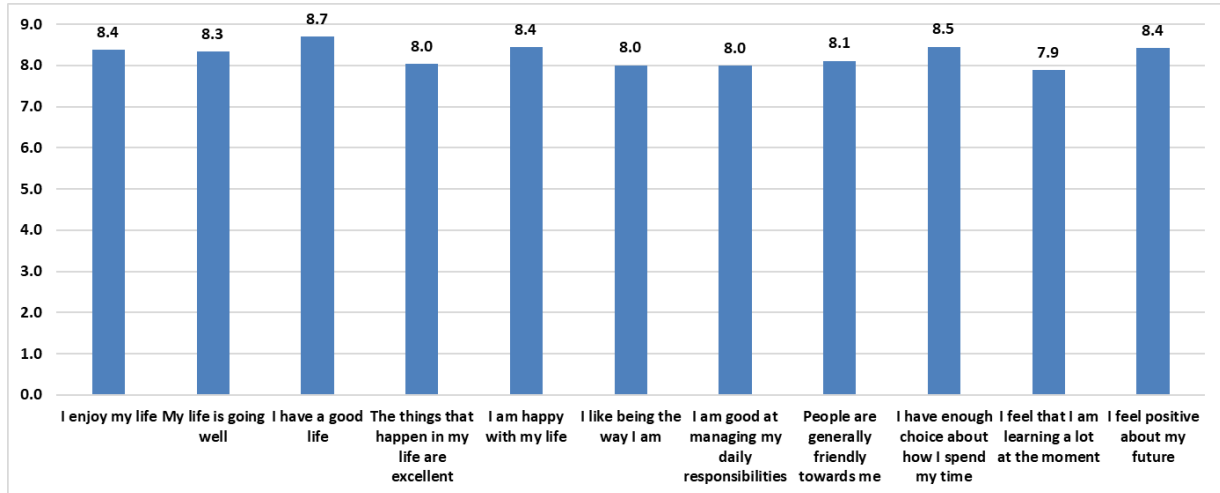


During the coronavirus, both age groups reported becoming closer to some of their family members but have more difficulty in making new friends online.

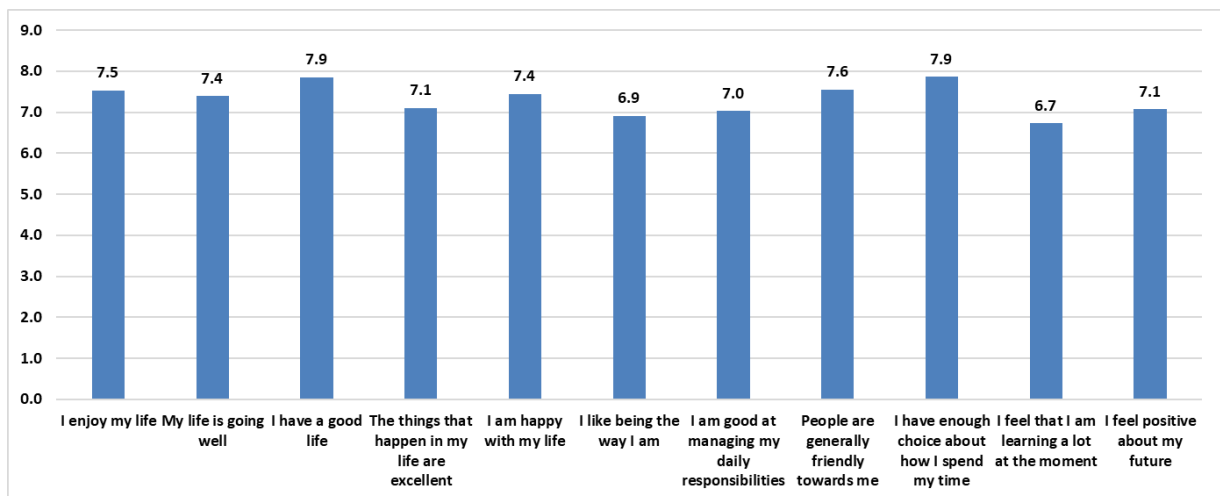
2.4 How do you feel about life: Q24-28

Figure 6: How much do you agree with each of the following sentences... (M)) rating on a 1-10 scale (Q24)

Age 9 -11



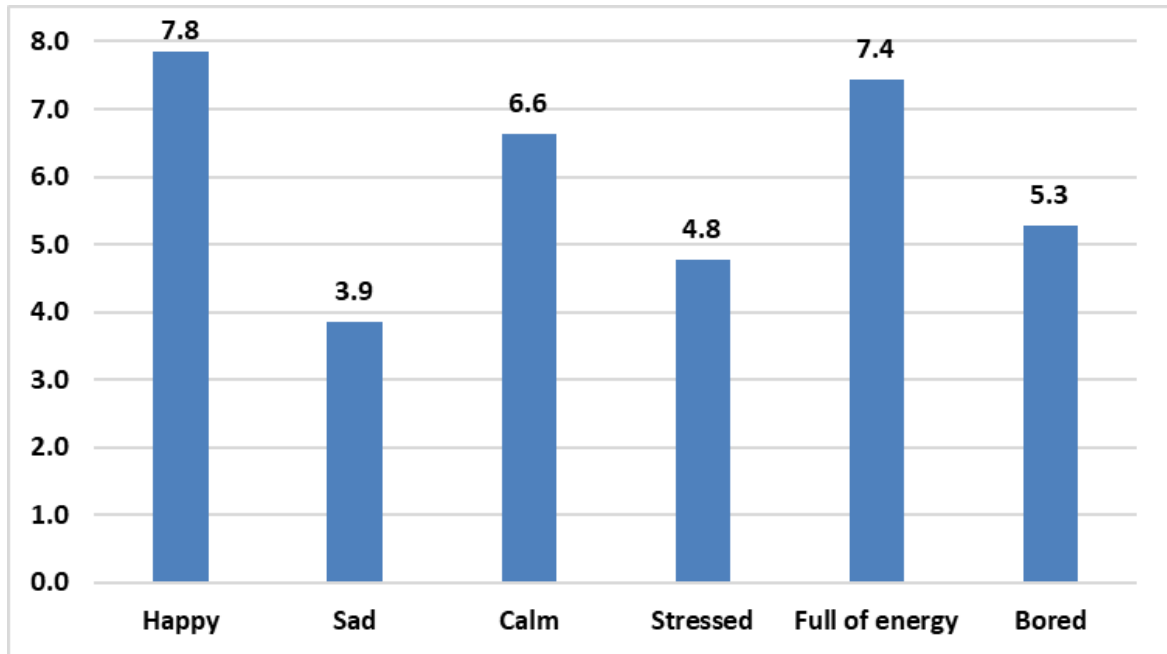
Age 12 – 14



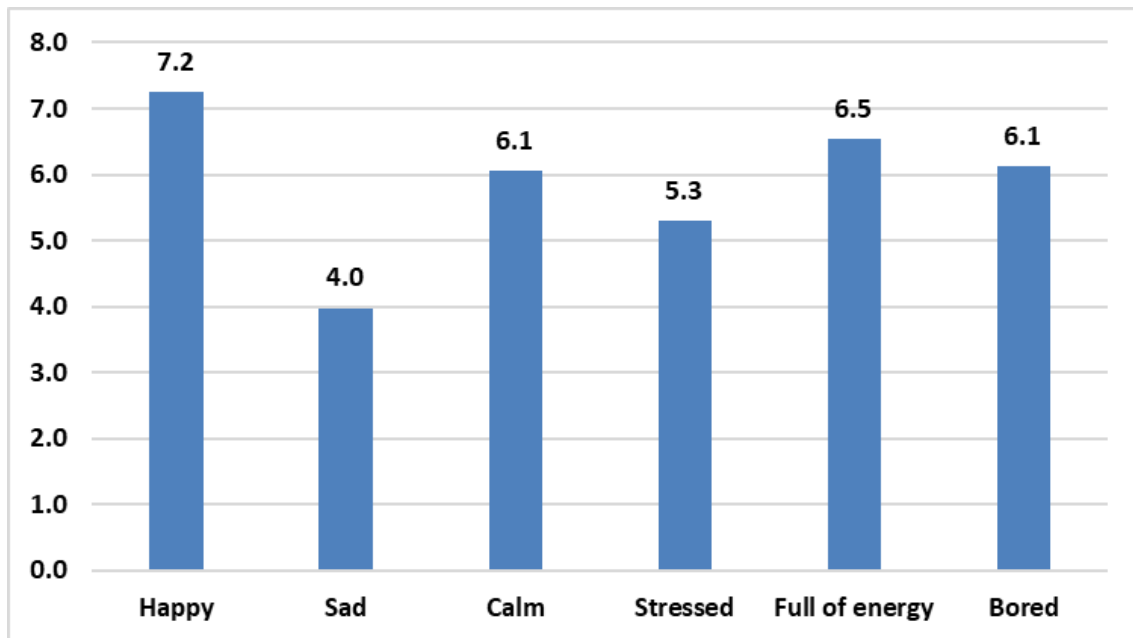
When asked about their satisfaction with various things, both age groups seemed to be most unhappy with what they were learning at that time. Overall, children aged 12 to 14 tended to be less content than their younger peers.

Figure 7: Below is a list of words that describe different feelings. Please read each word and then tick a box to say how much you have felt this way during the last two weeks rating on a 1-10 scale (M) (Q25)

Age 9 -11



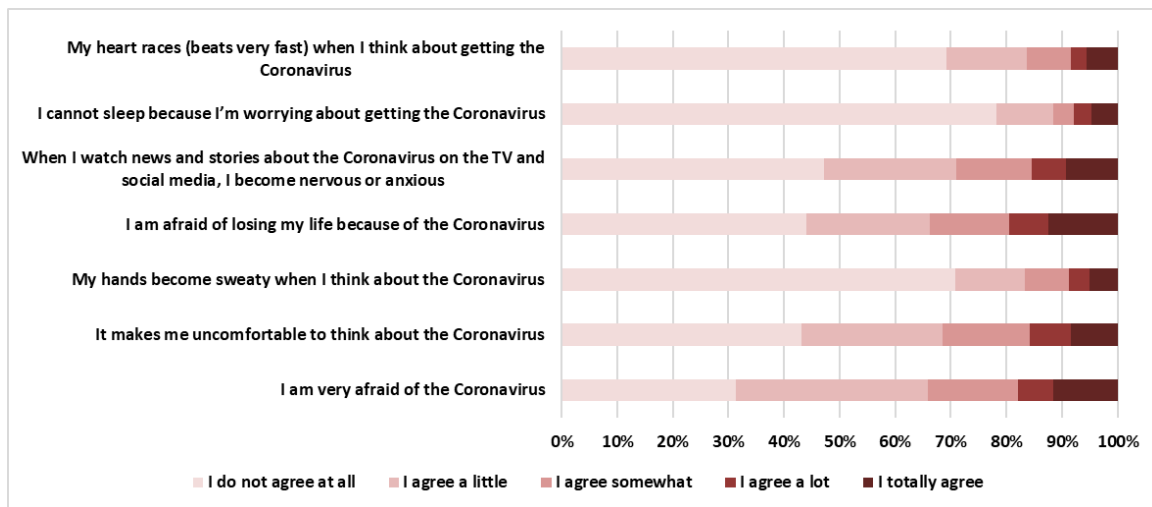
Age 12 – 14



When asked how they felt in the previous two weeks, both age groups appeared to be mostly happy, full of energy and calm. Older children however, more frequently reported being bored and rated lower on being full of energy. Both age groups register the lowest means in the case of stress and sadness.

Figure 8: How much do you agree with the following sentence? (%) (Q26)

Age 9 -11



Age 12 – 14

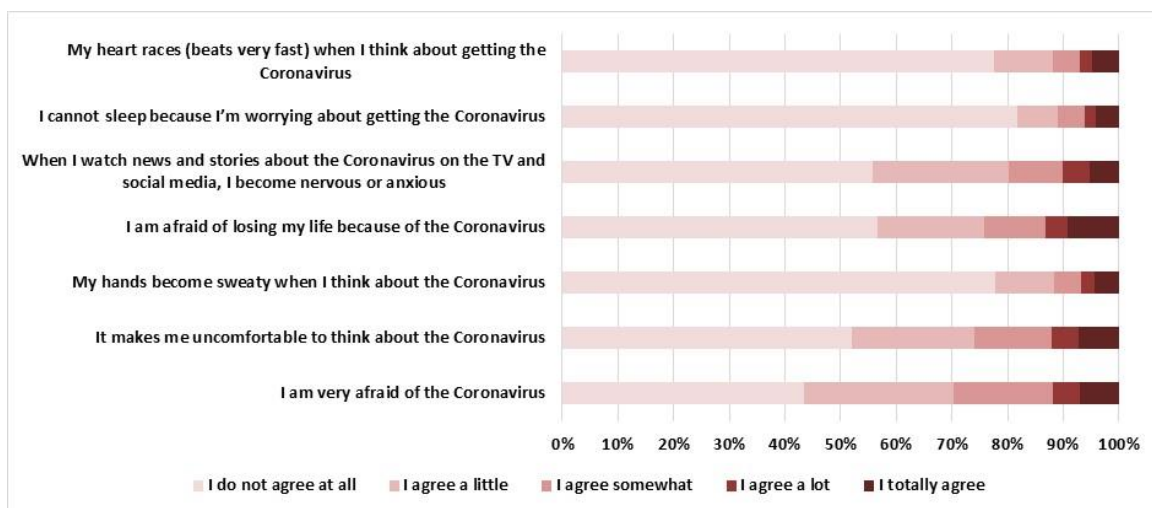
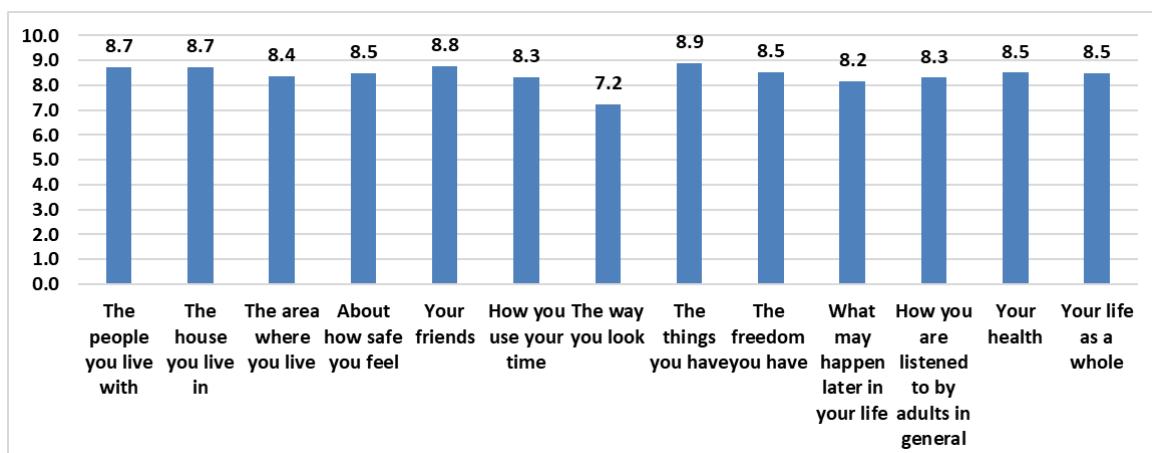
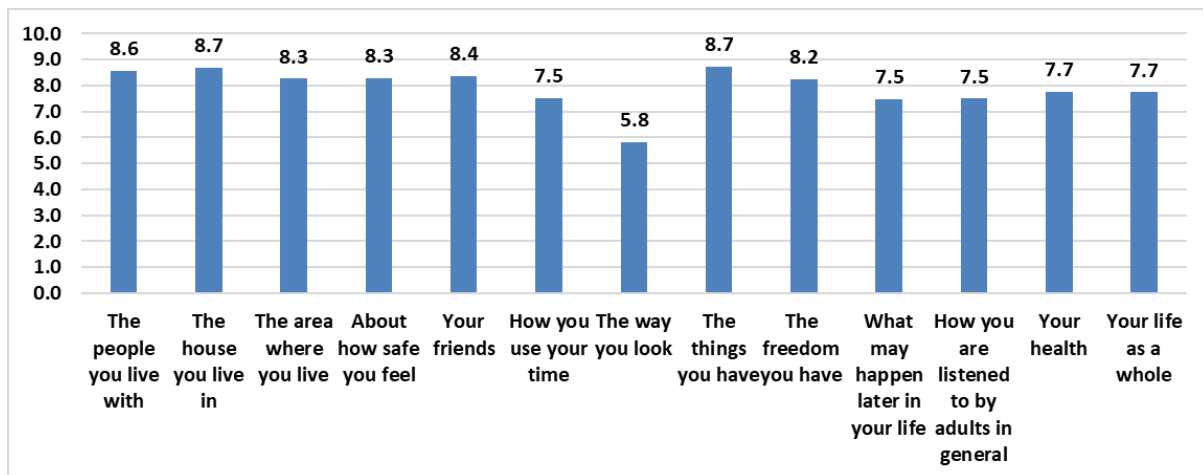


Figure 9: How satisfied are you with each of the following things in your life) rating on a 1-10 scale (M) (Q27)

Age 9 -11





When it came to their satisfaction with different aspects of their lives, a considerable gap between the two age groups in terms of how they look is evident, and not only is the gap wider than for the other measures, the levels are also considerably lower overall.

Table 11: Please, answer the following questions) rating on a 1-10 scale M(SD) (Q28)

Age 9 -11

Item	Total
Thinking about how your life was <u>before</u> the Coronavirus, how happy were you with your life as whole?	8.6 (2.2)
Thinking about how your life <u>during</u> the Coronavirus, how happy are you with your life as whole?	6.9 (2.6)

Age 12 - 14

Item	Total
Thinking about how your life was <u>before</u> the Coronavirus, how happy were you with your life as whole?	7.9 (2.4)
Thinking about how your life <u>during</u> the Coronavirus, how happy are you with your life as whole?	6.4 (2.8)

Both age groups indicate a significant drop in overall happiness before and during the Coronavirus pandemic, with younger children experiencing the biggest drop.

3. Conclusions

The outcomes of an initial descriptive analysis of the Wales Children's Worlds dataset are presented in this report. We observed that while there appears to be satisfactory levels of well-being, material goods, and satisfaction overall, there are some differences between the two age groups surveyed, with older children responding less positively than their younger peers.

ABOUT

WISERD Education Data Lab undertakes independent analysis of administrative education data, survey data and data linkage, alongside knowledge exchange and public dissemination of findings to inform national debate on some of the most contemporary and pressing educational issues facing Wales.

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