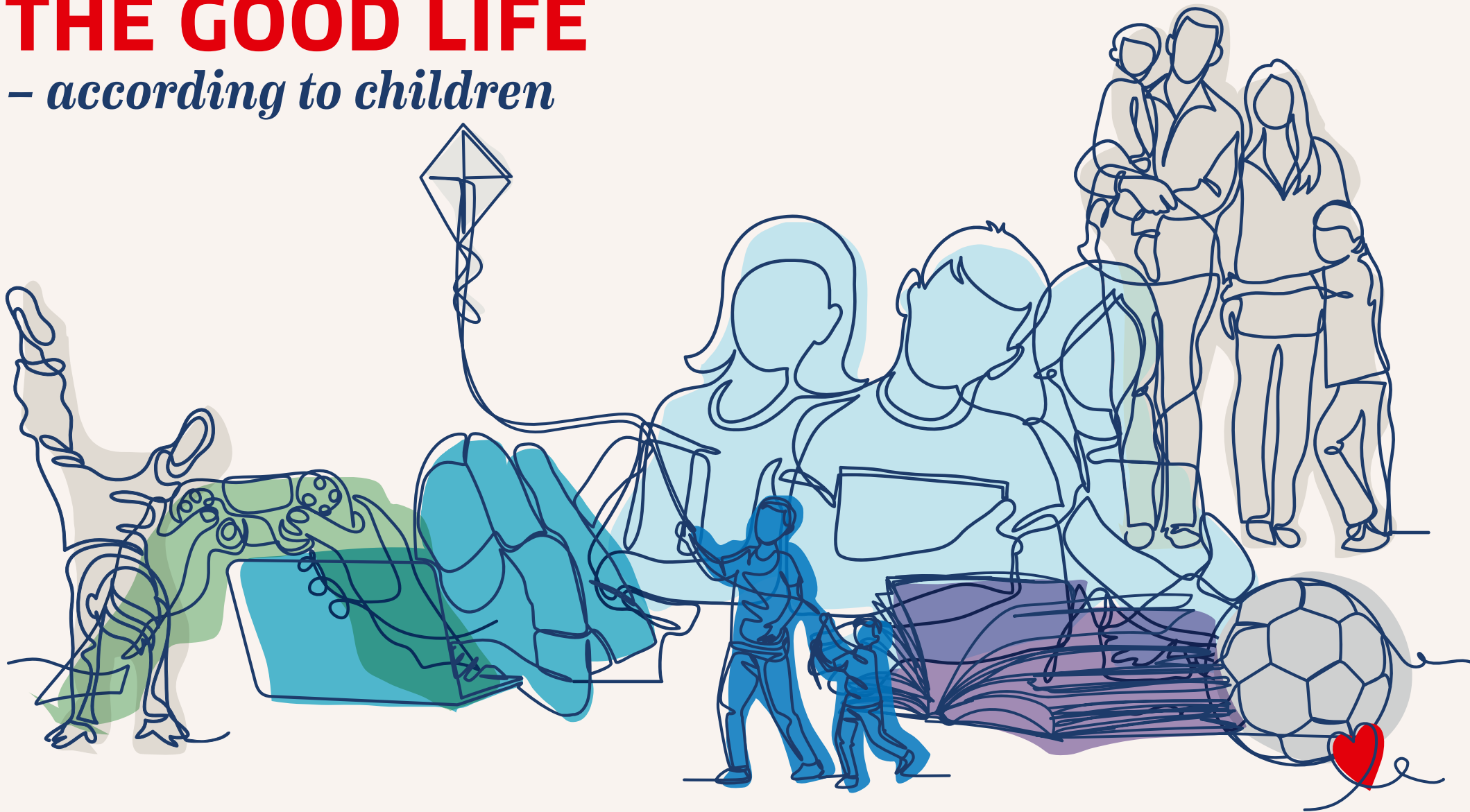


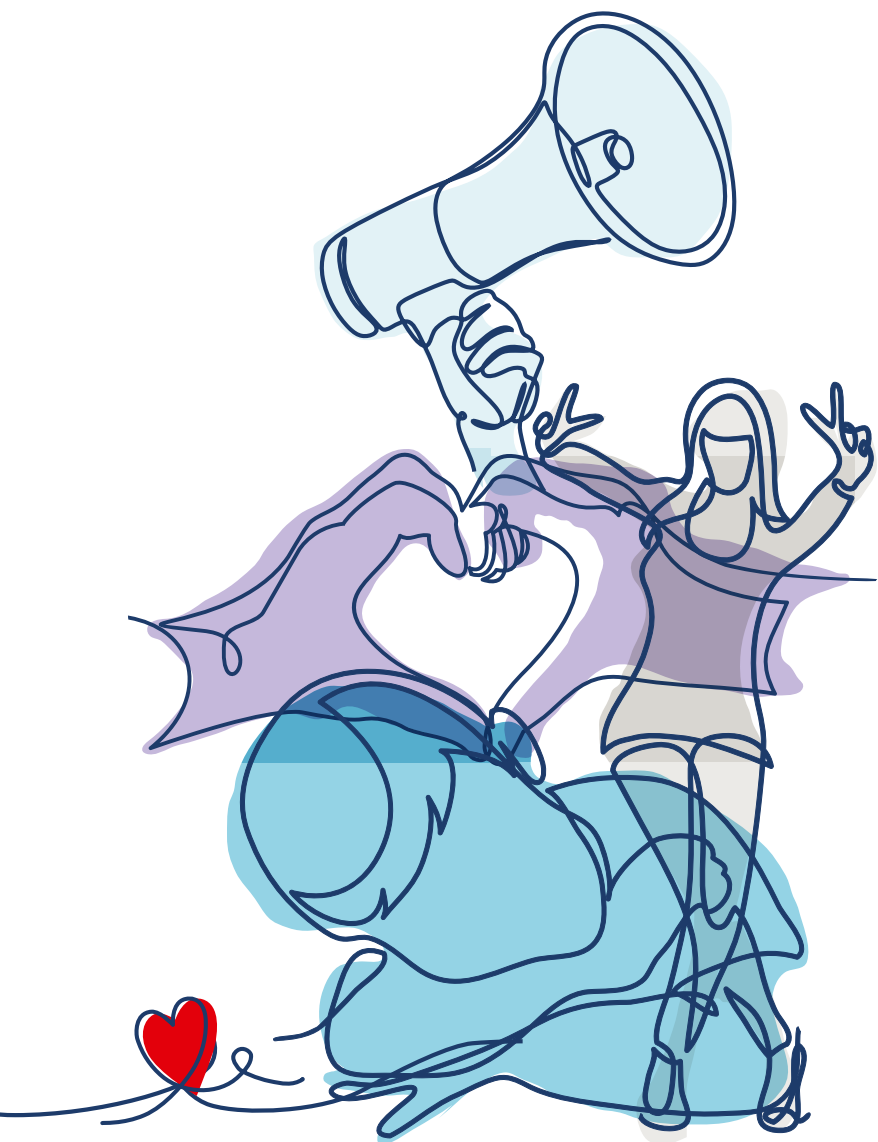
In brief:

THE GOOD LIFE

– according to children



A generation of Danish schoolchildren has spoken – let's hear what they have to say



Children must be heard in the public debate

If we want Denmark to be the best country in the world for children to grow up in, we adults need to listen even more closely to our children. Even though we – compared to other countries – are good at consulting children, there are still far too many discussions and decisions about children's lives being taken by adults. We are simply not doing enough to involve children. And we are thus missing out on crucial insights to ensure that we choose the right solutions. At Tænketanken Mandag Morgen and the LEGO Foundation, we believe there is a need to learn more about what the children themselves regard as being a good life.

This is why we commissioned the report *The Good Life – according to children*, which is the most comprehensive survey of children's attitudes and values across all school-age children. The survey provides a unique and broad insight into Danish children's experiences of and attitudes to what constitutes a good life for children across the various arenas in their lives: in the family, at school and after school – and both online and offline. In this abridged edition, we have reduced the survey to the 15 most important insights. We hope you enjoy reading this report.

A survey based on children's own input

The survey provides a unique and broad insight into children's perceptions of what constitutes a good life for children, and is based on extensive quantitative and qualitative data material. It has been a clear priority to use several methodological approaches to capture children's lives and represent children's voices in as nuanced and effective a way as possible.

We have taken into account the children's different backgrounds for participating in the survey by, among other things, adapting questions, the choice of words, the length of the questions and their complexity to the children's ages. For the youngest children, the questionnaire was read out automatically, and the response options were illustrated with pictograms.

We have included children of all ages in grades 0-10 in the survey, collected 1,702 questionnaire responses, conducted 28 interviews and received responses from 22 children participating in a mobile ethnographic study.

CONTENTS

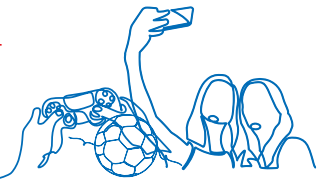
THE GOOD FAMILY LIFE

04



THE GOOD AFTER-SCHOOL LIFE

08



THE GOOD SCHOOL LIFE

13



THE ROLE OF PLAY

18

HOW CHILDREN VIEW THE FUTURE

22



WHAT WE HAVE DONE

27



*- and then parents should
ALWAYS listen to their
children. No matter how stupid
it is. There can be a lot behind
the things that children and
young people say, if they would
just listen.*

- CLARA, 14

WHAT I REALLY LIKE
ABOUT MY FAMILY IS THAT
WE ALWAYS HAVE FUN
TOGETHER, AND THAT
WE'RE ALWAYS THERE FOR
EACH OTHER.

- CECILIE, 13

*A good family is
when you can talk
about anything and
everything.*

- ANNE, 12



THE GOOD FAMILY LIFE

Loving parents set the framework for a good life for their children, and most Danish children thrive at home



A loving and secure family is key to children having a good life as children. Much of what grown-ups often take for granted is what the children in the survey stress as being the most important elements for a good family life. The children say that **it is their parents who are most important for creating the right framework for a good life** – including the children in grades 7-10.

Fortunately, most children in Denmark get on very well with their family (84%). And the survey shows that **children with a high level of family well-being are generally happier with their lives overall.**

According to the children, the good family life rests on love and feeling secure. **The most important thing is simple: that you have a family that loves you.** In the children's own words, it is important that parents are "always there for you", and that they "will do anything to make sure you are well". The children in grades 0-3 also say that it's important that your parents comfort you if you have hurt yourself, or that they help you, for example, if you're bored.

I really like having a loving family that is always there for us if we're feeling upset or angry. And that they will always help. And that they're not the sort of parents that say 'you can only have oats for breakfast, and spinach for supper'. Which is nice, because there are other families who don't have any time for their children at all.

- FIE, 11

My Mum and Dad are good at saying good morning and making me feel welcome. And they're good at comforting me if I've hurt myself.

- MADS, 8

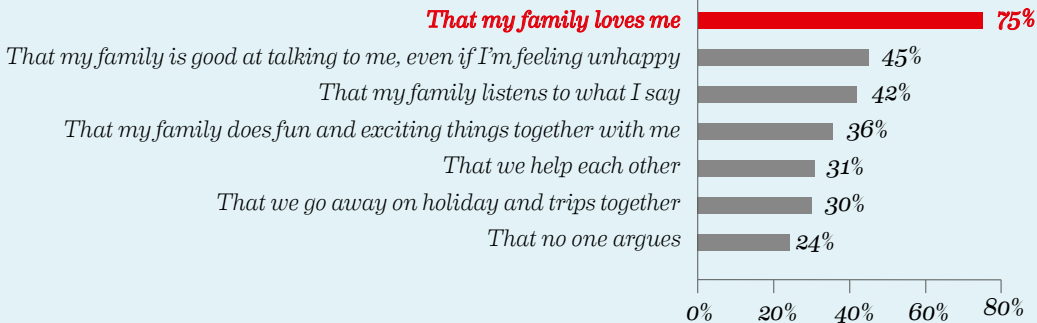
84%

of children getting on very well with their family.



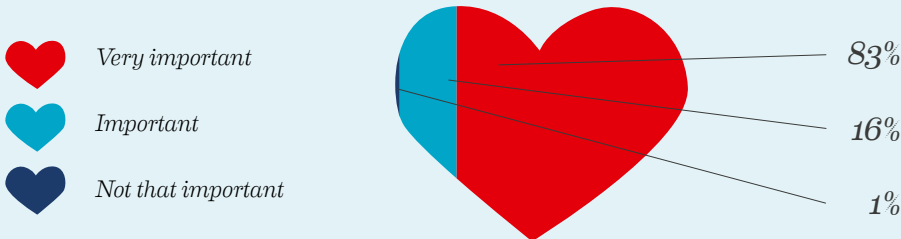
What is particularly important in terms of getting on well with your family at home?

"Tick max. three." Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



How important are your parents for your well-being?

Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



INSIGHT 2

Presence, interest and quality time boost family well-being and the family values change as the children get older



Children get on better with their family the more time they spend engaging with their parents. As far as the children are concerned, it's not that important what you do when you're spending time with your family. What matters is that you're together.

When parents take an interest in their children's lives, it is clearly reflected in the children's level of well-being. Several children say that it is nice when their parents ask how they are, or when they accompany them to their hobbies and after-school activities. Several also say that it's nice when their parents try to familiarise themselves with their children's interests and universes, for example gaming.

The survey also shows that as the children grow older, it becomes less important for them to do fun and exciting things with their family. How the family interacts changes, and the children focus more on spending time with their friends. On the other hand, it becomes more important for the older children that there is good communication in the family. **It becomes more important that the parents listen and understand them.** When communication falters in the family, some of the older children in the survey say that it feels as though they have outgrown their parents. Some also mention that it can be difficult to talk to their parents because they acquire their own opinions and attitudes. On top of which, several teenagers say that their parents are not always good enough at admitting when they're wrong.

Younger children want to do fun things with their family, while older children want to be listened to

40%

of children in grades 4-6 believe that it is particularly important to do fun and exciting things with their family. Among the children in grades 7-10, the figure is 32%.



47%

of children in grades 7-10 believe that it is particularly important that their family listens to what they have to say. Among the children in grades 4-6, the figure is 36%.

Higher life satisfaction among children with parents who take an interest in their lives

Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.

90%

of children who find that their parents take an interest in their lives have high or medium life satisfaction.

64%

of children who find that their parents take an interest in their lives have high or medium life satisfaction.

I really like it when we're all together. It doesn't matter that much what we do. For example, going out for supper, playing a game, having a meal on the patio, or just sitting around talking about what we've been doing."

- VIOLA, 11

As parents, it's important to understand one's children when enquiring about what they get up to in their daily lives. It's also a way of getting closer to your children and finding out what they are up to so that you have something to talk about. Parents need to take an interest in what their children do.

- NIKOLAJ, 15



INSIGHT 3

A fun family life contributes to a happy child life – but Mum and Dad don't join in the play equally often



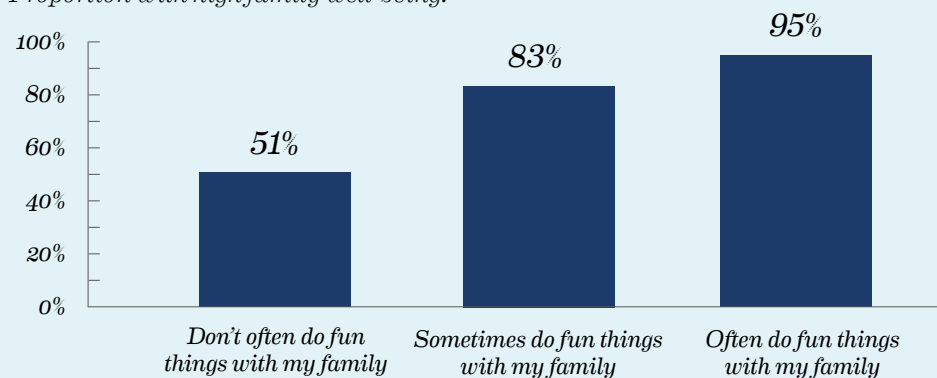
Many children like to play and muck around with their family. One in three children in the survey (29%) say they often do fun things with their family. And when the parents are asked how often they spend time playing with their children, one in five (19%) say that they play with their children every day.

The survey shows that children **who have fun with their families are also happier in a number of other areas.** For example, they experience higher family well-being and higher overall life satisfaction. Children who often do fun things with their family also feel less lonely and are more optimistic when thinking about the future.

If the parents are asked how often they play with their children, **there is a clear distinction between mothers and fathers.** Two out of three fathers (67%) play with their child daily or several times a week, while for mothers it is just over half (55%).

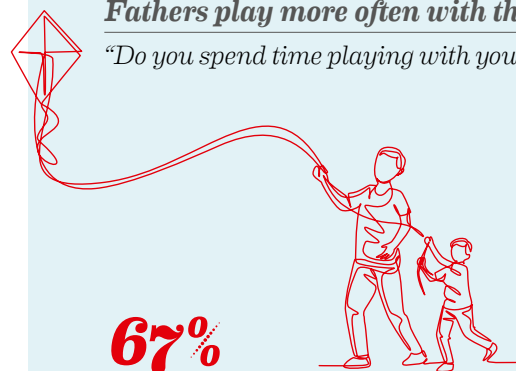
Getting on well and having a good time with your family go hand in hand

Proportion with high family well-being.



Fathers play more often with their children

"Do you spend time playing with your child?"

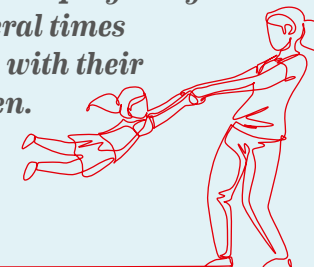


67%

of fathers play daily or several times a week with their children.

55%

of mothers play daily or several times a week with their children.



Play can bring you a little closer together, as during the week you don't tend to see as much of each other because of school and work. At weekends we spend more time together.

- SARA, 14

Grown-ups can sometimes be childish too. Mostly our father. It's almost as if he's one of us sometimes. But it's great fun.

- LEA, 15



It's fun going to rugby because you're part of a team. Everyone talks nicely to each other, and you're asked to join in if there's a group throwing the ball to one another. That's what I like most about rugby. And then, of course, it's a great sport.

- JESPER, 10

SOMETIMES WE DRESS UP, AND PUT ON LOTS OF MAKE-UP. AND SOMETIMES WE PLAY COMPUTER GAMES. AND SOMETIMES WE ACTUALLY PRACTISE BALLET. AND SOMETIMES WE PLAY. AND SOMETIMES WE DRAW.

- ALMA, 9

I do gymnastics on Mondays and Thursdays, and teach a group of young children on Tuesdays. At one point I started feeling slightly stressed, because I was finding that I was often being asked to join my friends, and I couldn't make it.

- IDA, 14



THE GOOD AFTER-SCHOOL LIFE

INSIGHT 1

Good friends are crucial for a good after-school life

because they make you laugh a lot and create a sense of intimacy

Friends are the main common denominator when children talk about what they like doing best in their spare time. Computer games and various sports are highlighted as the most popular activities – partly because they take place with friends. Socialising with friends also permeates the children's responses to what is the best thing about going to organised after-school activities, and what is the best thing about digital technologies.

According to the children, one of the most important things for a happy life is having fun with your friends and having friends you can trust. Several children say that it is **good to have friends, because they play a different role for you compared to your family and other adults**. For children in grades 7-10 in particular, friends are valuable because they can understand your problems, and because you can confide in them when you don't want to involve your family.



95%

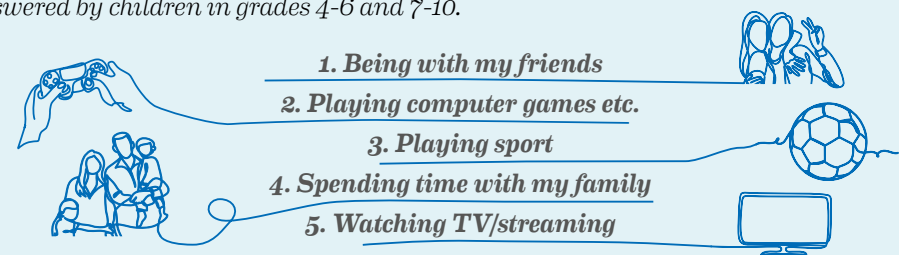
of the children in grades 0-3 think that having friends you can play with is "important" or "most important".

95%

of the children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 say that their friends are "important" or "very important" for them to feel happy.

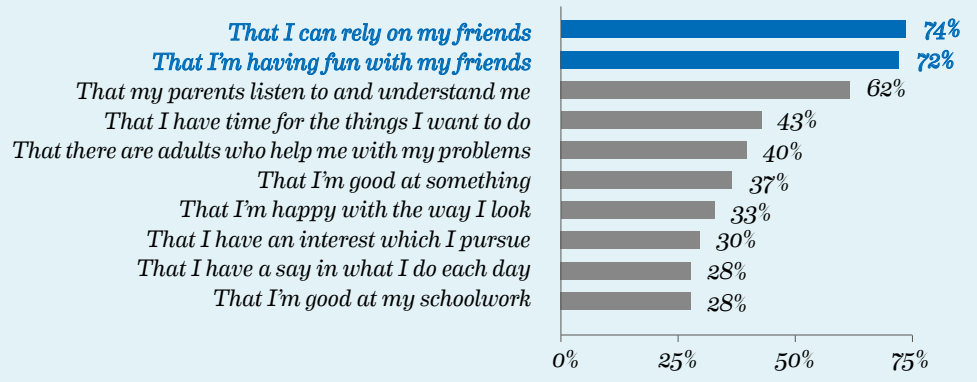
Top 5 leisure activities

"What do you like doing best in your spare time." (open response option). Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



Fun and trusting friends are important for children

"How important are the things on the list for you to feel that life is good?" Proportion answering "Very important". Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



I don't think there's anything about me which my best friend doesn't know. She probably knows more than my own mother 😊.

- RIKKE, 14

You are closer to your friends, and you can talk to them about things which are close to your heart. The deepest secrets.

- NIKOLAJ, 15

We just have fun. Sometimes I laugh so much that I almost wet myself because my friend Marko is so funny. He's completely crazy.

- NIKOLINE, 8

Mobile phones and computers are time-wasters but are also social glue in children's relationships

Today, digital technologies and social media are a staple ingredient of children's spare time. But they do more than entertain. The **digital devices are social glue in children's leisure lives**. The surveys shows, for example, that it is being able to be in contact with friends that is the big attraction of the digital universe.

The social aspect becomes apparent when the children explain why they like spending time on their mobile or playing on their computer. Usually the slightly younger children say, for example, how much they enjoy being able to talk using Discord when playing computer games, while other children – usually the slightly older ones – emphasise being able to **stay in touch and follow what everyone is doing by chatting or exchanging videos**.

However, the children are also aware of and can sense the disadvantages of digital technologies – especially the girls in grades 7-10. More girls than boys think that one disadvantage of having a mobile or a computer is that you have to be online all the time. There are also more girls than boys who quickly feel excluded, who worry about being bullied and who find it hard to live up to the expectations on social media.

The best thing is that you can chat with your friends and stay in contact with them outside school. And get an idea of what other people get up to outside school.

- RIKKE, 14

It's fun being able to play computer games with many of my friends, and when we're all in the same room, we can talk together. That's what I like about Minecraft and Roblox.

- FREDERIK, 10

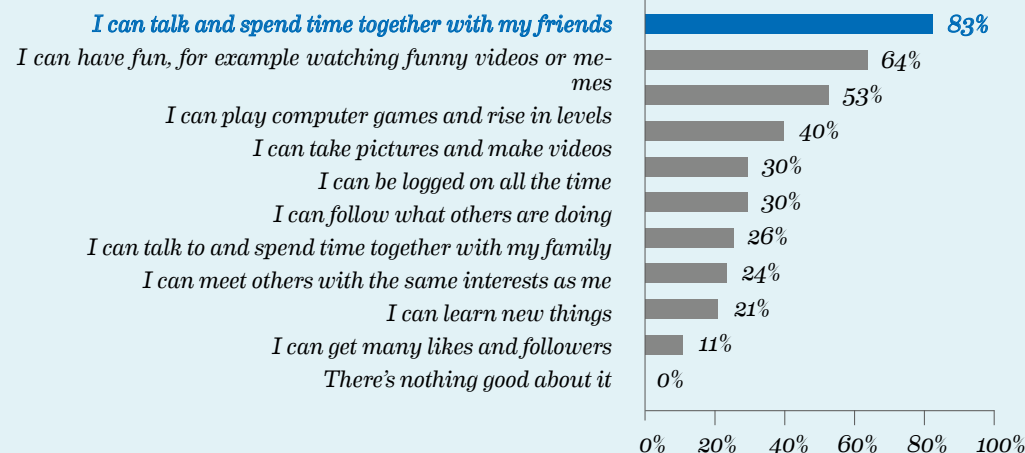


47%

of children in grades 4-6 and grades 7-10 think that playing computer games is one of the best ways of spending their spare time.

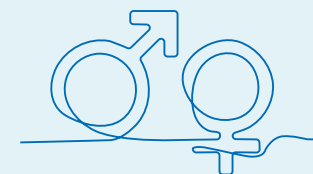
Digital technologies are social glue in leisure life

"What's the best thing about having a mobile, computer etc.? Tick max. three."
Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



34%

of the girls in grades 7-10 think that the worst thing about digital media is that you have to be logged on all the time. Among the boys in grades 7-10, the figure is 22%.



Organised after-school activities create positive communities but the associations are losing the older children



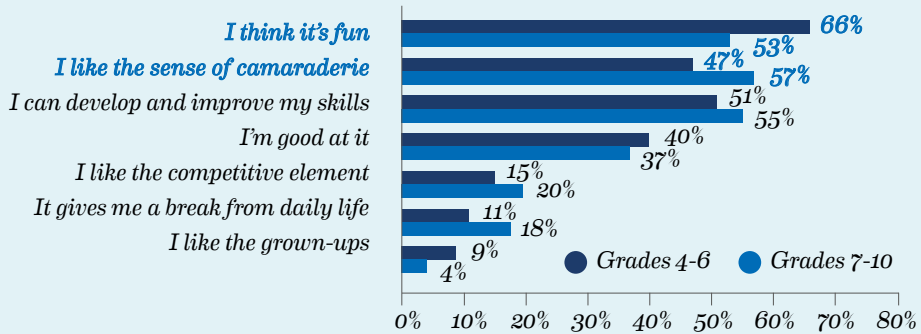
The majority of children in Denmark attend after-school activities (73%), but **the main reason is spending time together with their friends**. Several children say that they regard leisure activities as an opportunity to do the things they want to do. Leisure activities provide joyful shared experiences and pave the way for new friendships. Many children also respond that leisure activities provide an opportunity to become good at something and develop new skills. Some – especially the oldest children – also see leisure activities as a much-needed opportunity for time on their own. In the survey, 18% of children in grades 7-10 say that the best thing about going to something is that it provides a break in their daily lives. Among the girls in grades 9 and 10, it is a significant figure – 30%.

The proportion of children taking part in organised after-school activities falls from almost eight out of 10 in grades 0-3 to approx. six out of 10 in grades 7-10. Many of the children in grades 7-10 who have stopped say that it is because there is too much focus on competition rather than having a fun and enjoyable time together.

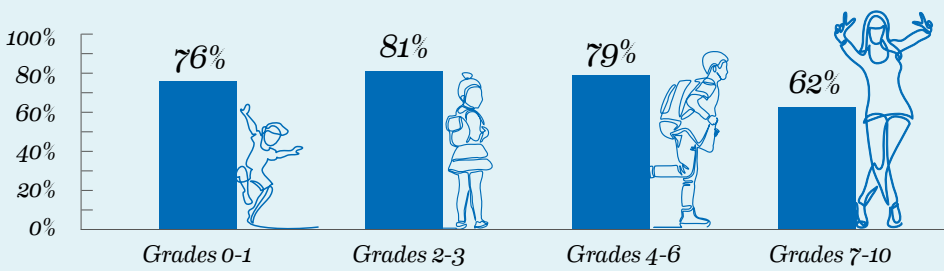
There can be many reasons why children don't participate in organised after-school activities. When children become older, many of them actively opt out and engage in leisure activities outside any organised framework. However, **there are also structural reasons that are unrelated to children's specific choices** – among other things what the children's parents can afford. The survey shows that the more a child's parents earn, the greater the likelihood that the child attends an after-school activity.

Leisure activities must be fun and forge bonds

“What do you think is best thing about your after-school activity? Tick max. three.”



“I go to an after-school activity”



Unequal access to after-school group activities

64%
of children from households with incomes of DKK 300,000 or less a year go to an after-school activity.

81%
of children from households with incomes of DKK 800,000 or more a year go to an after-school activity.

I stopped swimming because I really didn't like the coach as he pushed us too hard. It's more fun in small groups; there's more play. It's not fun with all the competition.

- LEA, 15

If you're feeling a bit tired of school or if you have lots of homework, then it's nice to go to gymnastics, spend time with friends and take a break. It's nice to get out and push your thoughts to one side for a while.

- HELENE, 14

How much time I spend on my mobile

Examples of children's screen time



A good teacher is someone who helps you, whose lessons are fun and interesting, and if anyone gets angry, the teacher helps them to become friends again.

- EBBE, 11

THE BREAKS CAN BE QUITE FUN. YOU CAN GO OUT AND PLAY, AND THAT'S GREAT. SOME OF MY FRIENDS ARE ALSO PRETTY GOOD AT MAKING UP NEW GAMES.

- DANIEL, 7

If I'm told to prepare a presentation about the economic cycle, then I'll learn more if I have to find the information myself. If I have to present it and show it to others, it requires that I understand it. It also requires that you are very involved in the subject for group work. More brains work better than one.

- NIKOLAJ, 15



THE GOOD SCHOOL LIFE

The good school is first and foremost a good social community – unfortunately school well-being declines in the older classes



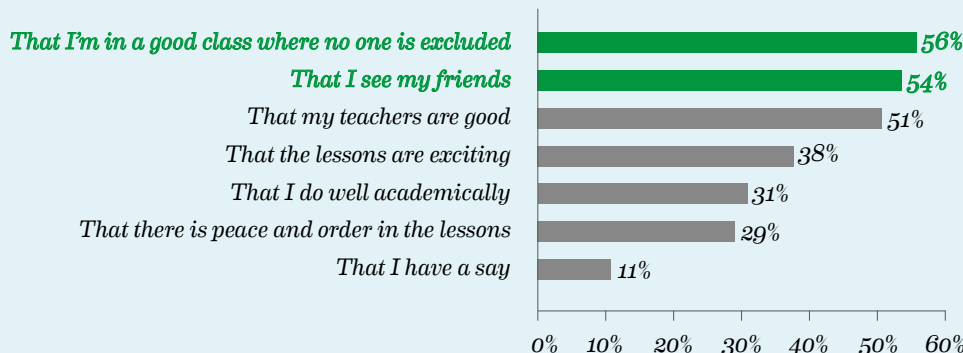
Friends are not just an important part of children's after-school lives. The results of the survey also clearly show that friends and **the school community play an important role in school life – for both the youngest and the oldest children.** For almost half the children in grades 0-3, the best thing about school is being together with their classmates. Having good teachers or that school is exciting are not quite as important. The children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 also mention their friends and the feeling of camaraderie at school as being decisive for their well-being. When asked "What is most important for your well-being at school?", most answer "that I'm in a good class where no one is excluded", while almost as many say "that I see my friends".

Several children also point out that one of the **things that makes everyone feel happy and brings everyone together is when the school day is different from normal.** Replacing the usual classroom lessons with excursions, outdoor classes or lessons involving movement invariably helps to ensure a good school day.

School well-being varies significantly according to the age of the children. Among children in grades 0-1, almost two out of three (64%) are very happy going to school. **After that, children's well-being at school decreases with age.** In grades 2-3, almost half (47%) the children have a high level of well-being at school, while in grades 4-6 the figure is 44% and in grades 7-10 the figure is 38%.

Classmates make school a great place to be

"What is most important for your well-being at school? Tick max. three."
Answered by children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



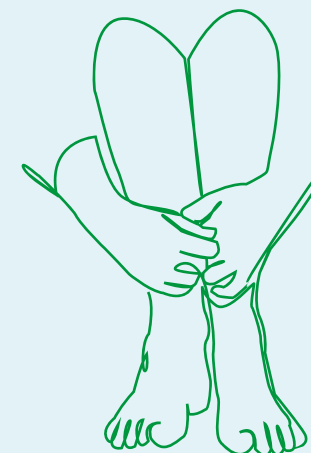
The best thing is probably that so many classes get on really well. It's like one big community, without everyone being in the same class, and there are several ways of meeting new friends.

- CECILIE, 13

School is much harder than you think. It's not as fun as it was when you were younger. It was really hard when we started being given marks in grade 8. Having your work assessed and being given a number. It wasn't because what I did was bad, but because you realised that you had to improve in certain subjects. It's stressful.

- RIKKE, 14

18%
of children in grades 7-10 do not enjoy school. This is 11% more than among children in grades 0-1.



Boys and girls have different school values


but agree that class camaraderie is most important



The survey shows marked differences in how boys and girls experience school. **Girls are generally happier going to school than boys.** Overall, for all age groups, 11% more girls than boys have a high level of school well-being.

Even though boys and girls largely **agree that friends, class camaraderie and good teachers are the most important things for their well-being at school**, they weight several school values differently. More girls than boys point to the school community and friends as being the most important. And in grades 7-10, the survey shows that it is more important for the girls that they do well (41% compared to 34% of the boys). Several of the girls in grades 7-10 say that they feel under pressure to perform well in terms of their homework and presentations, and increasingly so when they start being given marks for their work.

More boys than girls, on the other hand, believe that it is important to have a say at school. On top of which, it's crucial for the boys that they find the lessons stimulating. Among boys in grades 4-6, 42% respond that one of the most important things for their school well-being is that the classes are exciting, while for the girls the figure is 30%. Many boys say that they soon start to feel bored in lessons, especially when they have to sit still for too long or repeat the same exercises.

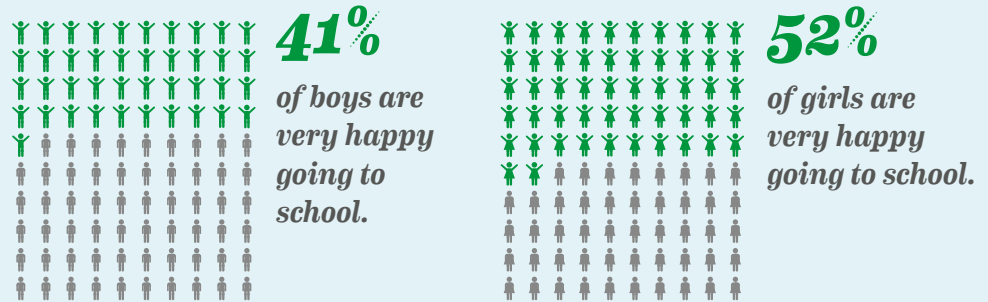


It's pretty boring going to school. I think we have to learn boring stuff. You keep being taught the same thing. It's boring when you have to sit completely still and listen to what the teacher is saying. And I don't think the teacher really knows how to tell us what we're supposed to do. Sometimes I almost fall asleep in class.

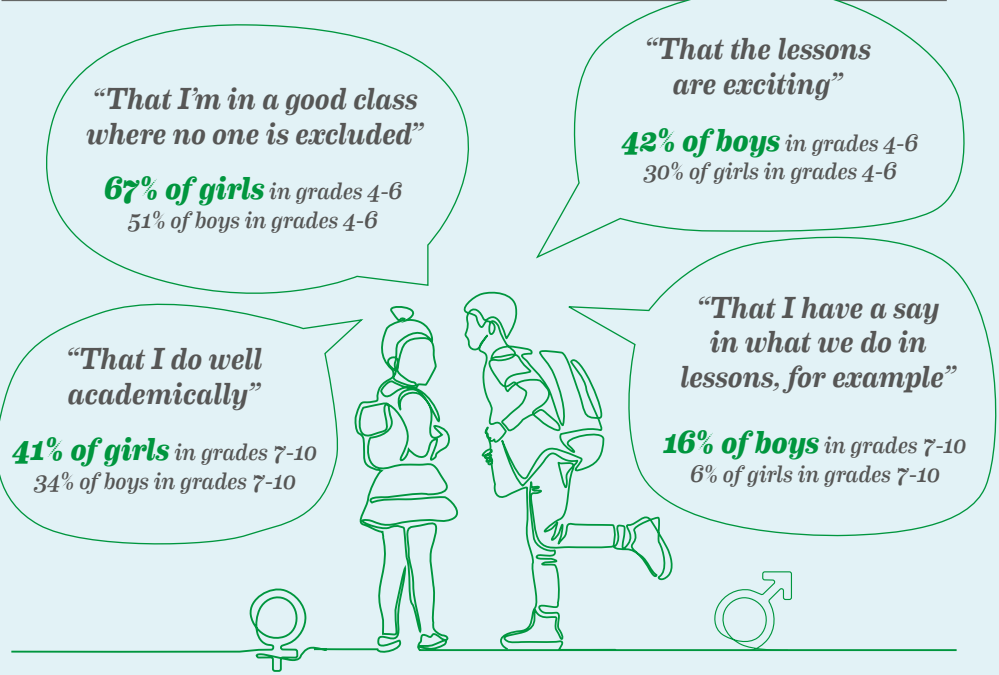
- SIMON, 7

Physics and chemistry are probably the most exciting. You actually get to do something instead of just staying seated. You conduct experiments, such as getting a bulb to light up using a potato. It's certainly more fun than Danish and listening to a teacher talking for 1½ hours about a single topic.

- NIKLAS, 14



What is most important for your well-being at school?



Children want experimental teaching

but in grades 7-10 there is more focus on “useful teaching”



Children thrive best in school when the lessons are motivating and exciting. However, what makes teaching exciting differs depending on which children you ask. Among children in grades 4-6, most of them say that **the teaching is exciting when it's experimental** or when it is suitably difficult. Many children also like it when the teaching is different, when they are able to take hands-on approach, or when they are learning in a way which is fun yet which ensures a better grasp of the subject.

The children in grades 7-10 also like experimental teaching, but most of them find it exciting when the content is “something which is useful”. Several of the **oldest pupils say they “drift off” if it's not clear what the purpose of the teaching is or its learning objective**. If, on the other hand, it is clear why they are learning something, and if they can relate it to daily life, then they feel more motivated.

I don't know when I'll ever use cosines and sines and stuff like that. It's a little lost on me. In social studies, we're studying economics – what expenses you have when you leave home etc. That's much more relevant.

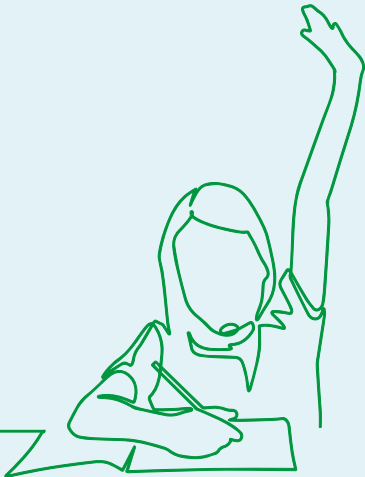
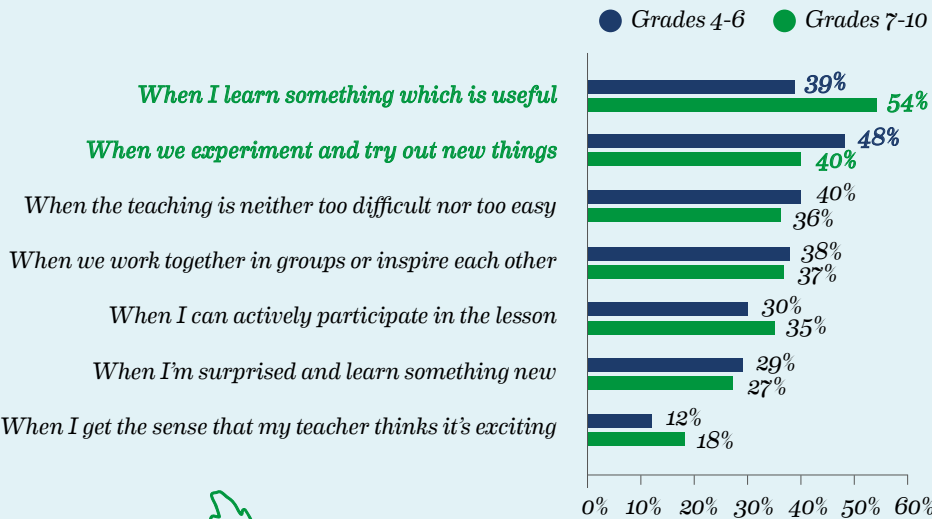
– IDA, 14

Last Friday we had a social studies subject which the whole class thought was really exciting. Especially as we didn't just sit and write notes, but everyone was able to speak and contribute their views.

– CECILIE, 13

The importance of useful teaching increases with age

“What makes the teaching exciting? Tick max. three.”



38%

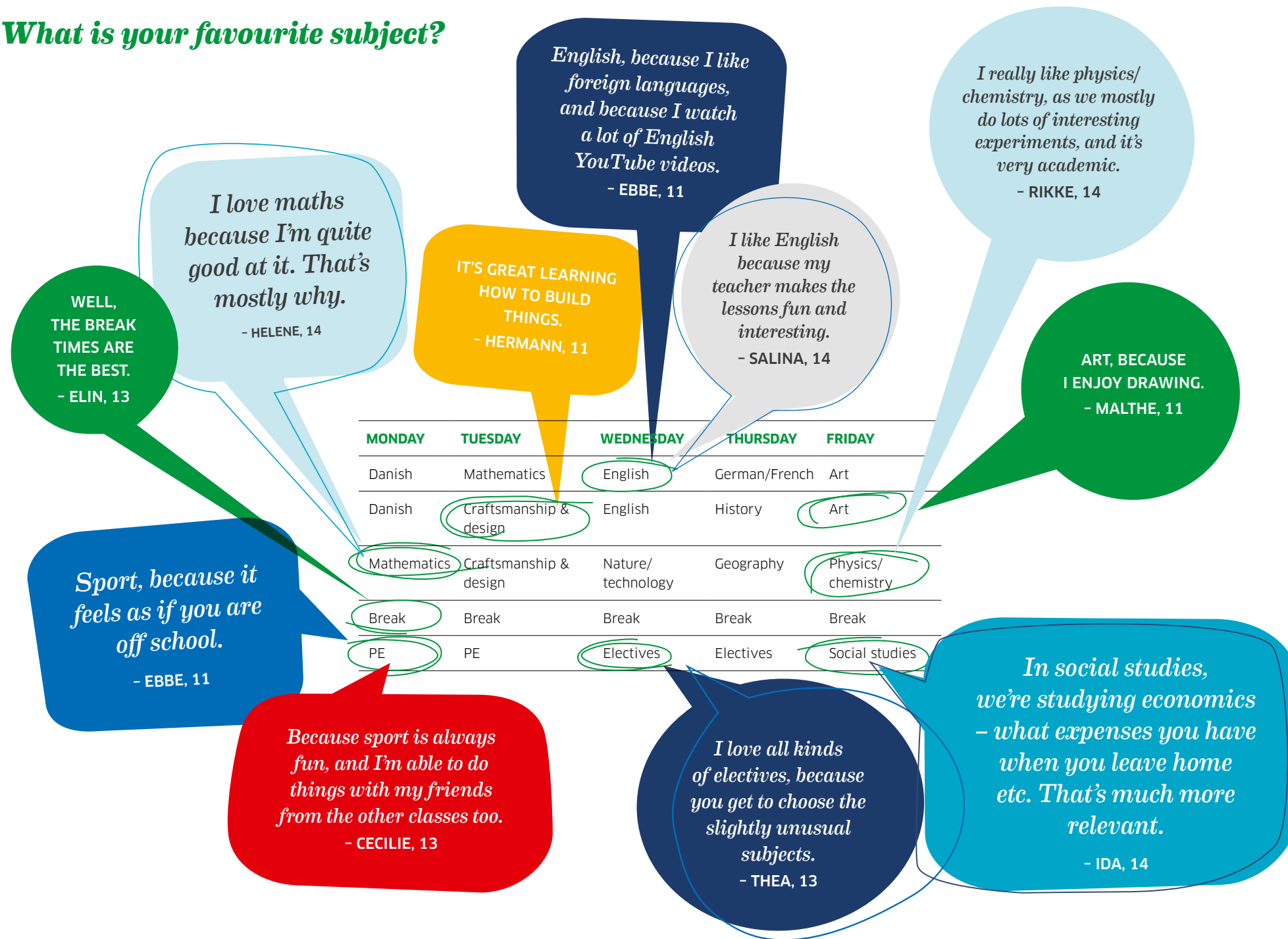
of the children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 say that one of the most important things for their well-being at school is that the lessons are exciting.

30%

of the children would like more of a say at school.



What is your favourite subject?



*When playing,
you're just lost
in your own
play universe.*

- SALINA, 14

*I think that as you get
older, there's the idea that
you grow up, put childish
things behind you and stop
using your imagination,
even though I don't really
see anything wrong with it.*

- JULIE, 13

**SOMETIMES YOU MISS
IT A LITTLE. I MEAN FANTASY
PLAY, AND NOT THINKING
ABOUT ALL SORTS OF OTHER
THINGS. YES, EVERY
SO OFTEN I MISS IT.**

- CECILIE, 13

*When two of you play,
it's usually much more fun
because you're not playing
alone. Like when you play
mummies and daddies with
two others or more.*

- FLORA, 6

THE ROLE OF PLAY IN CHILDREN'S LIVES

INSIGHT 1

Play is most important for most and the youngest children

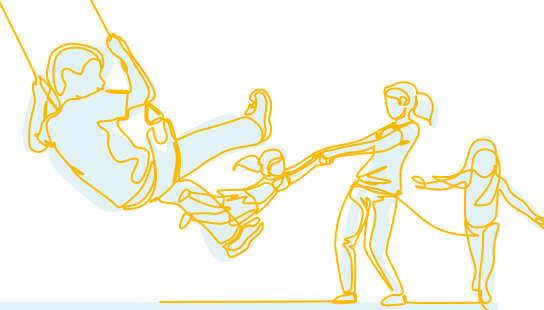
and play and well-being go hand in hand

Play is an important part of children's lives if you ask the children. 72% and 59% of children in grades 0-1 and grades 2-3, respectively, say that **it is very important for them to play**. Very few (4%) children in grades 0-3 state that play is not really that important for them. Among children in grades 4-6, two out of three (67%) say it is "quite" or "very important" for them to play. And in grades 7-10, the majority (51%) reply that they still play to some extent. However, the proportion who reply that it is "quite" or "very important" to play has fallen to 27%.

That play is of great value in children's lives is underlined, among other things, by the fact that **children who often play also have higher levels of well-being**. Among the children in grades 4-6 who often play, 42% have a high life satisfaction, while the figure is only 24% among those who seldom play.

Playing is great fun, and you have to make the most of your childhood. You also have to play to stay fit and healthy and to have a nice time. I think it's really important to play.

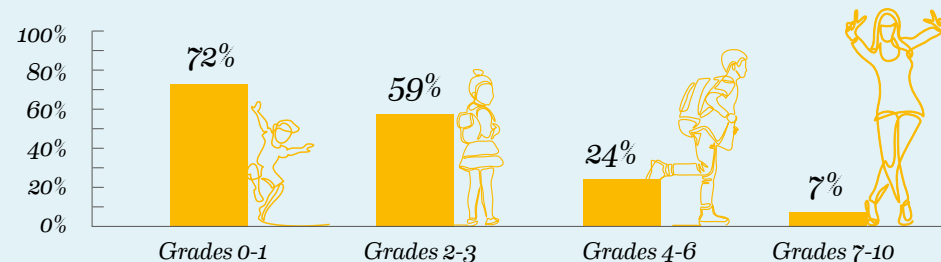
- HEDY, 10



63%

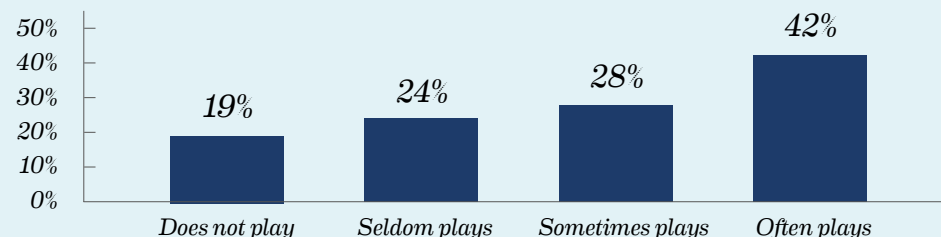
of school-age children believe that it is quite or very important to play.

"It is very important for me to play"



Play and well-being go hand in hand

Proportion with high life satisfaction.



INSIGHT 2

The good thing about play is the laughter and having fun and that it develops children's social skills

Play is very popular with most children, and there are various reasons for this. But above all, play is **important because it's fun**. Play also has other qualities, but the fact that it is fun, and that you laugh with friends is clearly the recurring aspect when children talk about the positives of play.

Children in grades 0-3 and 4-6 also emphasise the fact that **play stimulates their imagination and creativity**. In grades 0-3, almost as many children say that the best thing about play is coming up with new things and playing together as those who say it is laughing together. In grades 4-6, close to half (46%) of the children say that the best thing about play is that they can make up their own rules and play together. Many children talk about play as a completely special universe which they can step into, where they can give their imagination free rein, and where all their worries melt away. In a way, play lives its own life, where you can lose all sense of time and place.

Play also trains the children's social skills, and teaches them to take care of each other. Several children say, for example, that it is important that everyone has someone to play with. And even though it can sometimes be demanding, the children who are outside the group are invited to play.

Play can bring you a little closer together.

- SALINA, 14

When you play, you're more together with your friends. You also get to know your friends better. And you talk together more compared to when you're looking at your phone.

- JESPER, 10

It was all such fun. You switched off mentally and focused on enjoying yourself. It was different.

- NIKOLAJ, 15,
(about when he used to play)



Top 3 best things about playing

The children in grades 0-3 had different response options to the children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.

GRADES 0-3

1. We laugh together



2. We're good at making up new things or playing together



3. We rarely disagree



GRADES 4-6

1. I have fun and laugh



2. We can make up our own rules or play together



3. We try out new things together



GRADES 7-10

1. I have fun and laugh



2. We have shared experiences with our friends that will remain with us afterwards



3. We can make up our own rules or play together



INSIGHT 3

Many children stop playing when they grow older and being together with friends changes

The survey shows that the **proportion of children who play declines steadily with age** – and by grades 7-10, many children have stopped playing altogether. Among the children replying that they no longer play, most state that they stopped when they were about 12 years old. The survey shows that girls in particular stop playing when they hit their teens.

Several of the children who have stopped playing find it **difficult to explain why they no longer play**. They explain that they have grown out of it, and that it is something that you naturally stop doing once you reach a certain age. Most children who have stopped playing remember play as something positive. They say that play was something that was worry-free, where you did not dwell on the seriousness of life – and that they sometimes miss it.

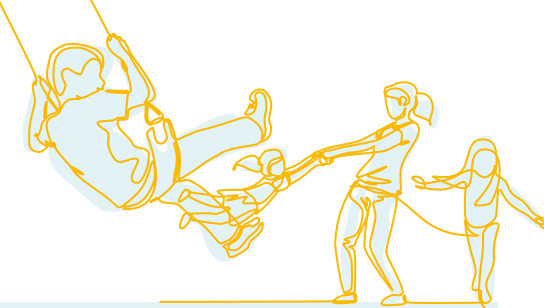
The children who have stopped playing say that the best thing about it was having fun and laughing together. They also say that **having fun is still the best thing about being together with their friends**. However, there are some other things that have changed when they “hang out” with their friends now compared to when they played with them. Using your imagination and coming up with new games and rules no longer plays the same role when the children are together with their friends. On the other hand, being together is more about, for example, sharing experiences or playing computer games together.

Society today has certain standards whereby at some point you have to put play on the shelf and behave like an adult. [...] It's like a phase that's out of my life now.

– JULIE, 13

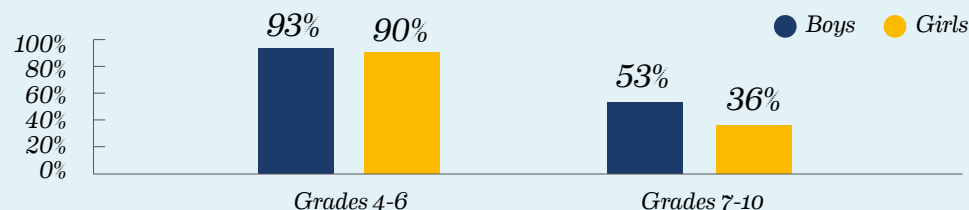
We call it 'hanging out'. For example, we don't write whether we want to play; that was the kind of thing your parents did for you. We just text whether we want to be together. Even though we might sometimes play when we're together.

– IDA, 14



Girls stop playing earlier

Proportion that plays often, sometimes or rarely.



The most important thing is still to have fun with friends

According to children who have stopped playing.

The good thing about playing with my friends back then was
“That we had fun and laughed together”

74%

The good things about being together with my friends is
“That we have fun and laugh together”

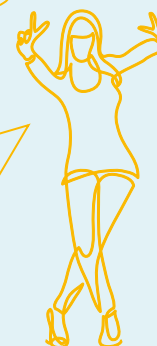
85%

The good thing about playing with my friends back then was
“That we made up our own rules and games together”

61%

The good things about being together with my friends is
“That we have shared experiences with our friends that will remain with us afterwards”

52%



*I'm looking forward to
seeing what's going to
happen, and where
I end up in life.*

- CLARA, 11

*I'm worried about
whether I'm good
enough at school,
and whether I'm
stressed.*

- BENJAMIN, 12

**I'M LOOKING
FORWARD TO
BECOMING AN
ASTROPHYSICIST.**

- KARLA, 11

*If I was prime
minister, I would listen
to the children – the
grown-ups are no good
at it at all.*

- SIMONE, 13



HOW CHILDREN VIEW THE FUTURE

Most children are positive about the future and look forward to getting an education and a dream job

The children's positive expectations for the future are nuanced and diverse, but there are **two main themes that stand out: education and work**. When children are asked what they are looking forward to in future, almost one in five say that they are looking forward to getting a job. Some say that they are looking forward to "getting a job and earning money", but several also mention specific dream jobs, such as becoming a vet, an eSports gamer, an astrologer or a professional footballer. 15% of the children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 say that they are looking forward to getting an education. Several children talk about specific programmes they are looking forward to in the shorter term. They are looking forward, for example, to starting residential school (*efterskole*), grade 10 or further education.

Although work and education dominate children's positive expectations for the future, the answers also vary considerably. Some children (11%) look forward to having a family and children, for example, while others are looking forward to the end of the coronavirus pandemic (10%). **Many children are looking forward to greater autonomy in their own lives**: 10% say they are looking forward to being able to decide more about their own lives, while 9% are looking forward to leaving home and getting their own place.

The survey also shows that the **positive future expectations vary quite a lot across the different age groups**. For example, 15% of children in grades 4-6 say that they are looking forward to the end of the pandemic compared to 6% of children in grades 7-10. The children in grades 7-10 on the other hand focus more on the next steps for them educationally. Here, one in four (25%) say that they are looking forward to getting an education, while this applies to just 4% of children in grades 4-6.

I'm looking forward to being able to decide for myself, and my parents not brushing my teeth. That I can move out, and decide for myself what I want to eat.

- LAURA, 10

I'm looking forward to testing my limits, taking a dream education, and being able to do whatever I want. Aiming for something achievable which makes me happy.

- WILLIAM, 15








57%

of children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 are optimistic about the future.

Top 5 of what children look forward to in future

Categories based on open responses from children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.

1. Getting a job 
2. Getting an education 
3. Having a family and children 
4. Seeing what happens 
5. The coronavirus pandemic ending 



Pressure of expectations is the children's main concern and these worries mostly affect the girls in grades 7-10

As with positive future expectations, children also have many different concerns about the future. Some of their worries relate to the surrounding community, while others relate to themselves. And here, in particular, one theme dominates: **the fear of not being able to live up to everything that is expected of them.** As many as 31% of the responses relate to children being anxious about not being able to realise expectations.

There are several dimensions to the concerns about being unable to live up to the expectations. Some children talk about expectations at a general level, and say, for example, that "so much is expected of us" or that "my plan is falling to pieces, and I'm not good enough". Others mention more specific expectations, such as being expected to get a good job or do well at school. **However, most worries about expectations stem from getting the desired education or training.** Several of the children reflect on exams and marks, and the consequences they face if they do not do "well enough". Several describe a fear of "failure", and of making the "wrong choices", which may prevent them from continuing their studies and at the end of the day from getting a good job.

Sometimes I worry. I worry because if I fail and don't get into the right school, then I'm not really sure what I'll do.

- THEA, 13

I'm worried that my family will catch corona, and that my father's health deteriorates even more.

- SIGNE, 9

Many children my age are good at denigrating each other, and you end up having no self-confidence, and I'm afraid it will stay with me in future."

- AYA, 14

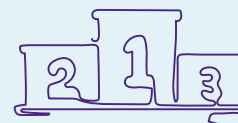


25%

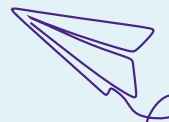
of children in grades 4-6 and 7-10 feel worried when they think about the future.

Top 5 of what children worry about

Categories based on open responses from children in grades 4-6 and 7-10.



1. Living up to expectations



2. Global concerns



3. Uncertainty about education and career

4. Death, illness and accidents



5. Other



If it was up to the children, schools should be improved and school days especially would be shorter



What would children's lives be like if they were given the job of running the country as prime minister? Many of the answers relate to the children's main activity on a daily basis: school. Half of the children (52%) say that they would improve schools in some way if they were prime minister. One in three (31%) children make general suggestions for how schools could be improved. The suggestions range from "more and better teachers" to "smaller class sizes" and "different teaching" - **for example more movement in classes, less screen time and more creative teaching**. Some even believe the school system itself needs changing.

The 2013 school reform gave Danish schoolchildren a longer school day, but not all children think it was a good idea. Almost one in four (22%) say that **they would make the school day shorter** if they were prime minister. One in 10 also say they would award fewer marks, require fewer tests and give less homework as well.

However, it is not just life at school which the children believe needs improving. **A large group of children mention broader social initiatives that would support all children in Denmark**. For example, 10% would provide help for the children who need it, while 13% would ensure that there was a level playing field for all children in Denmark. Moreover, one in 10 children say they would make a point of listening more closely to the children if they occupied the prime minister's chair.

I would tell them that they're fine as they are, and that Snapchat filters don't make them any better.

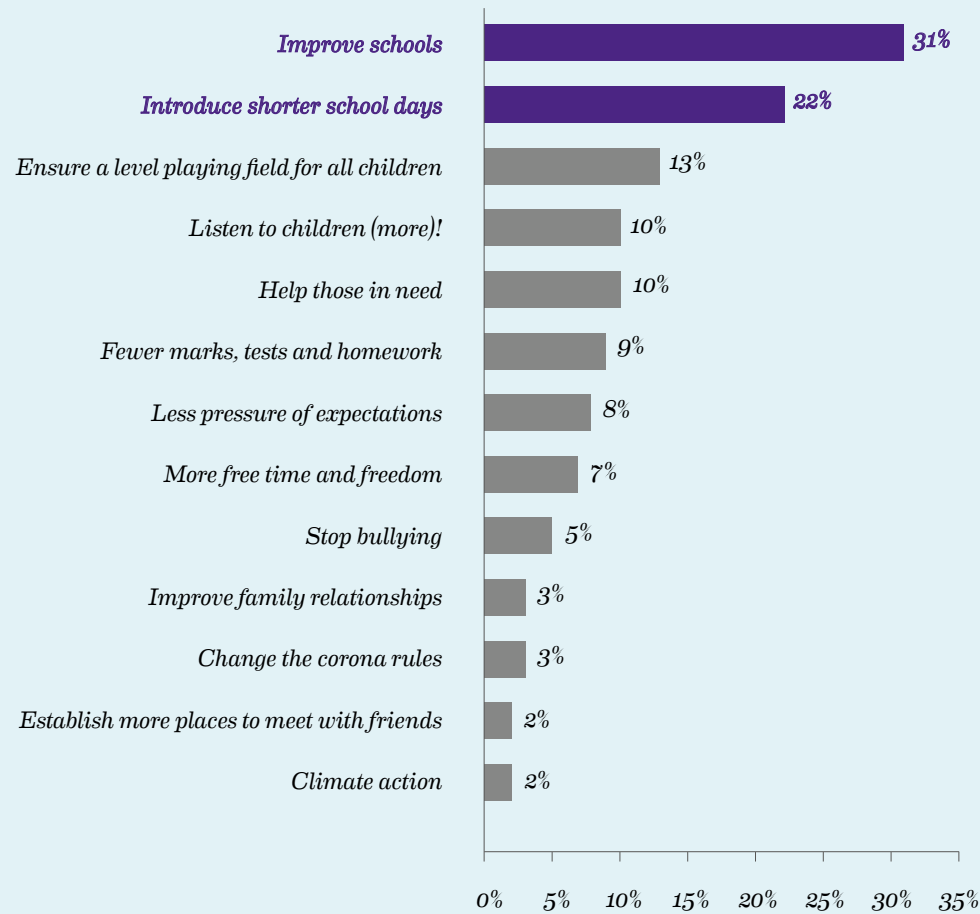
- ELLIE, 13

I would change the school system. It's by no means all children who can learn equally well in the current rigid system. You're not allowed to throw yourself into what interests you, which can diminish the desire to learn.

- LIVA, 15

"If I was prime minister, I would ..."

Categories based on open responses from children in grades 7-10.



If I was prime minister, I would ...

*Make school
more fun and a
better place to be.*

- BIRK, 13

Make the school day shorter, much shorter. The aim of the school system is for children to earn money and get an education - not their well-being. It's important that children are well, and that they don't worry, otherwise they'll enjoy school less. Prolonging the time they spend at school doesn't help - it just makes it worse. Children also need more freedom, because they're not kids forever - one day it'll be over, and then they have to work.

- RASMUS, 14

*Cut the number of tests
and marks because it's
really stressful.*

- YOUSSEF, 15

*Listen to children - the
grown-ups are no good
at it at all. I wouldn't just
tell them that I was their
prime minister, but
I would actually be so.*

- SIMONE, 13

*Make sure that
everyone is
friendly with
one another.*

- CARL, 15

*Make sure everyone
lives in a climate-
friendly way,
so that we children
and young people
have a future.*

- AMINA, 16

**FOCUS MORE ON
WELL-BEING THAN
PERFORMANCE.**

- OLIVER, 14

**HELP TO ENSURE
THAT EVERYONE
HAS PLENTY OF
SELF-RESPECT.**

- CAROLINE, 13



What we have done

This abridged publication summarises the findings of the report *The Good Life – according to children* in 15 insights from the five themes: family, leisure, school, play and the future.

The report paints a picture of what children regard as being a good life, and is the first of its kind to have asked children across all school grades, from grades 0 to 10. The reported figures in the publication reflect the entire target group of children from grades 0-10, unless otherwise stated.

To obtain a broad and in-depth picture, we have collected extensive quantitative and qualitative data material. The data collection was carried out in collaboration with Epinion, and collected in three phases.

1 QUALITATIVE PRELIMINARY STUDY

PURPOSE:

Initial understanding of the children's thoughts and language

DATA:

6 interviews
Systematic literature study

PHASE 1: Preliminary study

The first phase consisted of a systematic literature study on relevant child research about well-being and play (read [here](#)) as well as six qualitative interviews with different-aged schoolchildren. Here, relevant themes were identified, and an initial understanding formed of children's thoughts and language. The interviews were conducted in September/October 2020.

2 QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

PURPOSE:

Broad and representative picture

DATA:

1,702 respondents

PHASE 2: Questionnaire survey

The preliminary study served as the basis for the second phase of the project, which consisted of a nationwide questionnaire survey with a representative sample of 1,702 child respondents in school grades 0-10. The questionnaires were designed with an eye for the children's different assumptions for participating. Account was taken of the children's ages, in that the electronic questionnaire was adapted in terms of the choice of words, length and complexity. For the youngest children, the questionnaire was read out automatically, and the response options were illustrated with pictograms. The questionnaire replies were obtained between 18 December 2020 and 22 January 2021.

3 IN-DEPTH QUALITATIVE STUDY

PURPOSE:

To qualify and clarify

DATA:

22 interviews
22 participants in mobile ethnography

PHASE 3: Qualitative follow-up

In the third phase of the survey, 22 qualitative children's interviews and a mobile ethnographic study with 22 participating children were conducted, which contributed in-depth perspectives, insights and narratives. The follow-up interviews were held between 17 May and 10 June 2021, and the mobile ethnographic study ran from 17 May to 6 June 2021.

Impact of coronavirus pandemic

The data for the survey was collected at a time when society was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. However, the purpose of the survey was not to describe changes in children's lives during the pandemic. Rather, the publication has set out to clarify children's general understanding of what a good child life is. Even though life for children in 2020/2021 has been characterised by restrictions, being sent home and home schooling, the disturbances to everyday life have also been an opportunity for reflection – for adults and children alike. In this way, the coronavirus period has created a momentum for self-reflection, where it has been even more possible to address how children characterise a good child life.



Click [here](#) to read the full report.