

Measuring National Well-being - Children's well-being, 2013

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Abstract

The article 'Measuring National Well-being - Children's Well-being, 2012' (ONSa) reported children's views on some aspects of their lives. This was based on data from the 2009–10 Understanding Society, the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). This summary further explores children's reports of their well-being based on the 2010–11 study.

Introduction

During the national debate 'What matters to you' (ONSb), children were asked what was important to their overall well-being. They reported that their family, friends, school and appearance were very important.

To quote a respondent to the national debate on measuring well-being;

'My children matter to me. Most of all, their well-being and future prospects are the single most important thing in my life. If they are happy and well cared for, I am happy'.

Throughout this analysis 'relatively happy' refers to all those who were completely, mostly or somewhat happy.

Key points

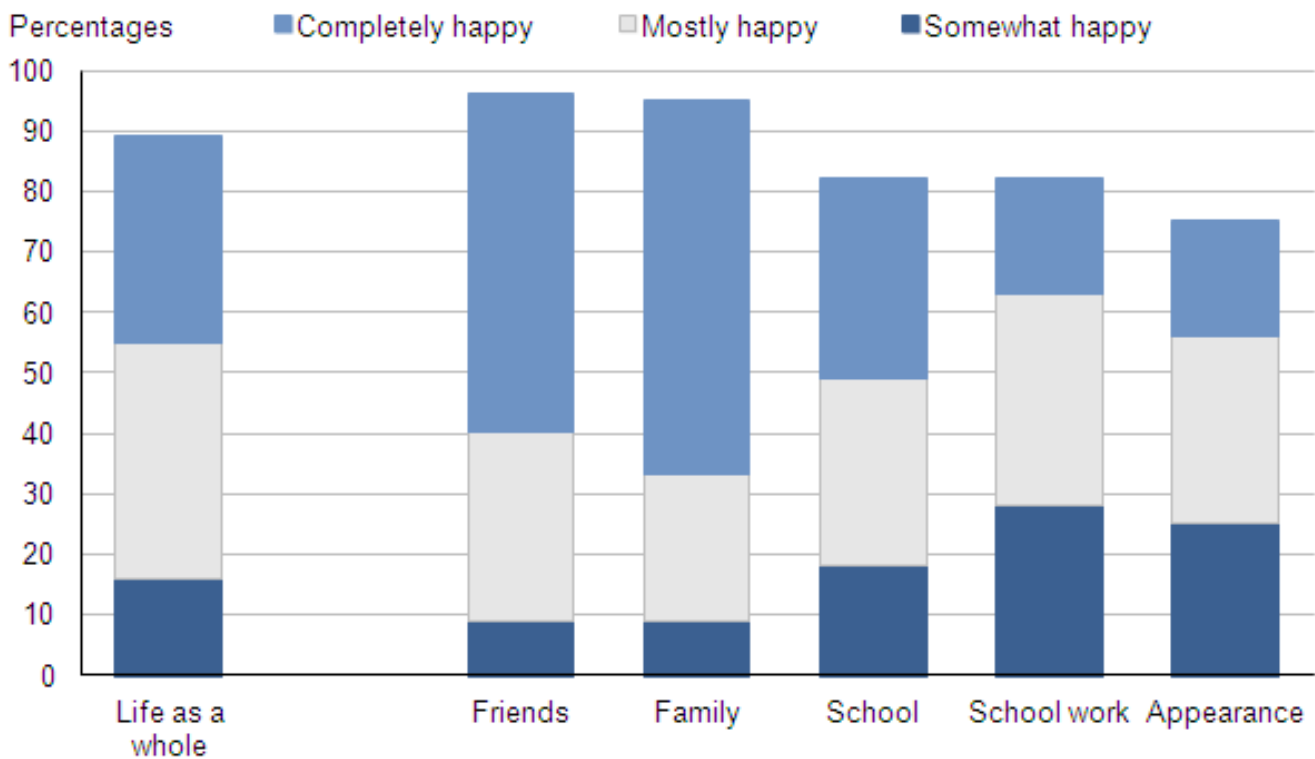
- In 2010–11, 89 per cent of children said that they were relatively happy with their lives overall and 4 per cent reported being relatively unhappy.
- A much higher percentage reported being completely happy with their friends and family than with their school, their school work or, particularly, their appearance.
- Boys were more likely than girls to report being happy with their life overall, their friends and their appearance, while girls were more likely than boys to report being happy with their school work.
- Children's responses to all the UKHLS 2010–11 questions about their feelings to aspects about their lives were very similar to those in 2009–10.

Children's levels of happiness

In 2010–11 children aged 10 to 15 who took part in the UKHLS were most positive about their friends (96 per cent relatively happy) and family (95 per cent relatively happy) and least positive about their appearance (75 per cent relatively happy). Just over a third of children were completely happy with their lives overall (34 per cent). However, well over half of respondents were completely happy with their friends (56 per cent) and family (62 per cent). By contrast, less than one in five respondents were completely happy with their school work or appearance (both 19 per cent) (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Reported level of children's happiness with life overall and aspects of their lives, (1), 2010–11

United Kingdom



Source: Youth Module of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, 2010-11

Notes:

1. Children aged 10 to 15 were asked 'How do you feel about your life as a whole, friends, family, school, school work, appearance?' Responses were on a seven point scale from 'completely happy' to 'not at all happy'

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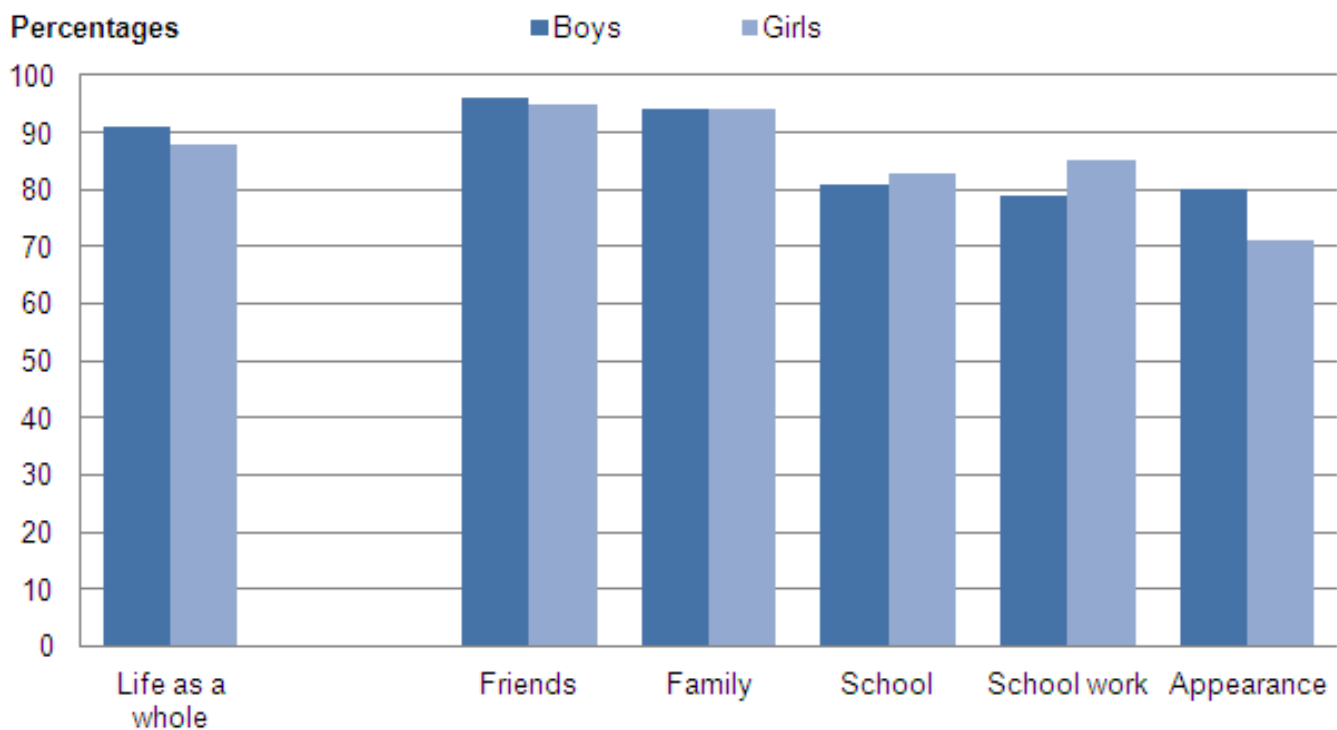
(28.5 Kb)

Differences by sex

Overall, a higher percentage of girls than boys said they were relatively happy with their school work while a higher percentage of boys than girls reported being relatively happy with life as a whole and their appearance (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Percentage of children who were relatively happy with life overall and aspects of their lives by sex, (1), 2010–11

United Kingdom



Source: Youth Module of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, 2010-11

Notes:

1. Children aged 10 to 15 were asked 'How do you feel about your life as a whole, friends, family, school. school work, appearance?' Responses were on a seven point scale from 'completely happy' to 'not at all happy'

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Children's well-being and the Good Childhood Index

The overall findings are similar to those of research in England by the Children's Society. This found a significant association between a child's self reported well-being and the 10 aspects of children's lives included in the Good Childhood Index (The Good Childhood Report, 2012). Other key findings in this report include:

- Choice and family have the biggest impact on children's happiness.
- The quality of children's relationships with their families is far more important than the structure of the family that they live in.
- Children in families who have experienced a reduction in income are more likely to have low well-being.
- Children who do not have clothes to 'fit in' with their peers are more than three times as likely to be unhappy with their appearance.

Further information

Some other aspects of children's well-being were discussed in the article 'Measuring National Well-being - Children's Well-being, 2012' [Measuring National Well-being - Measuring children's Well-being](#)

The paper 'Review of available sources and measures for children and young people's well-being' (January 2013) gives information about data which already exists and discusses some of the limitations of these data. Find this on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.

The Good Childhood Report, 2012 (Children's Society) <http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/research/well-being/good-childhood-report-2012>

About the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme

NWB logo 2



This article is published as part of the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme.

The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation - how the UK as a whole is doing.

Measuring National Well-being is about looking at 'GDP and beyond'. It includes headline indicators in areas such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education, environmental conditions and measures of 'subjective well-being' (individuals' assessment of their own well-being).

Find out more on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.

Background notes

1. UK Longitudinal Study

The Youth Module of the UK Longitudinal Study is a self-completed questionnaire answered by those aged 11 to 15. The questions used in this analysis are:

‘How do you feel about your...

life as a whole

schoolwork

appearance

family

friends

school?’

Responses were on a 7-point scale ‘completely happy, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 not at all happy’. In this analysis, responses completely happy, 2 (mostly happy) and 3 (somewhat happy) are described as relatively happy, a response of 4 is considered neutral and 5 (somewhat unhappy), 6 (mostly unhappy) and not at all happy are considered as relatively unhappy.

Source: University of Essex. Institute for Social and Economic Research and National Centre for Social Research, Understanding Society: Wave 1-2, 2009-2011 [computer file]. 4th Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], December 2012. SN: 6614, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-4>.

The Good Childhood Index

The Good Childhood Index is published by the Children’ Society. It is produced using surveys in England

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/research/well-being/background-programme/good-childhood-index>

The main measure of overall subjective well-being included in the index consists of five statements to which children are asked to respond on a five-point scale from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’:

- My life is going well

- My life is just right
- I wish I had a different kind of life
- I have a good life
- I have what I want in life

This measure is derived from a longer seven-item measure originally developed by Huebner (1994) in the United States. Children's responses to each question are coded on a scale from zero ('strongly disagree') to four ('strongly agree'), with the score for the middle statement being reversed. Then these scores are added together to create an overall scale from 0 to 20.

2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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This document is also available on our website at www.ons.gov.uk.

References

1. ONSa Joloza, T (2012): Measuring National Well-being – Children's Well-being, 2012, ONS. Accessed at [Measuring National Well-being - Measuring children's Well-being](#)
2. ONSb "Measuring what Matters: National Statistician's Reflections on the National Debate on Measuring National Well-being" - published 25 July 2011. Find this on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.
3. University of Essex. Institute for Social and Economic Research and National Centre for Social Research, Understanding Society: Wave 1-2, 2009-2011 [computer file]. 4th Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], December 2012. SN: 6614, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6614-4>.