

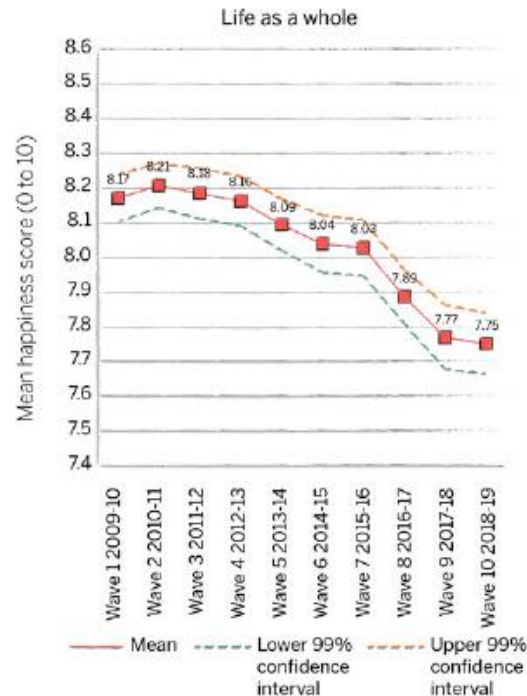
The Good Childhood Report 2021



The key findings

Trends in children's well-being 2018-19 (from Understanding Society)

Figure 1: Trends in children's (age 10 to 15) happiness with life as a whole, UK, 2009-10 to 2018-19



Comparisons between 2009-10 and 2018-19 show:



Happiness with life as a whole, friends, appearance and school significantly lower than in 2009-10.

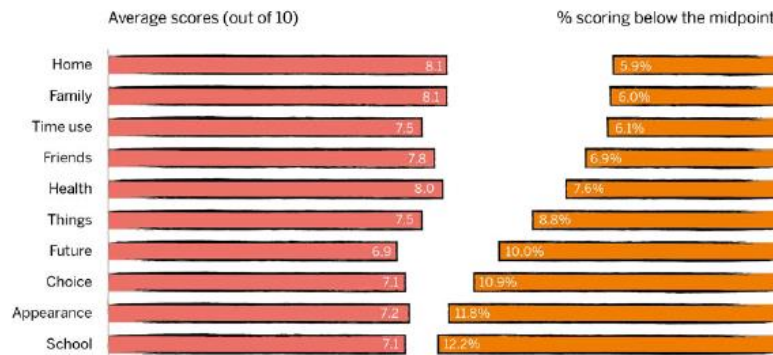


No significant change in happiness with family or schoolwork compared with 2009-10.

- **Appearance:** Boys significantly happier than girls across survey years (although boys mean score has reduced).
- **Schoolwork:** Girls significantly happier than boys across most waves.

Children's well-being in 2021 (from TCS household survey)

Figure 3: Mean scores (out of 10) and proportion of children (aged 10 to 17) scoring below the midpoint on Good Childhood Index



Source: The Children's Society's Household Survey, Wave 20, April-June 2021, 10 to 17 year olds, United Kingdom. Weighted data. Excludes missing responses (including 'prefer not to say').

In The Children Society's annual household survey 2021, GCI scores more consistent with previous years (than in 2020):

- 12% of children scored below midpoint on multi-item measure of overall life satisfaction.
- Children on average most happy with their home, their family and their health.
- More score below the midpoint (suggesting they are unhappy) for school than any other aspect of life.

Comparing outcomes at age 17 for children with differing levels of subjective well-being in earlier adolescence

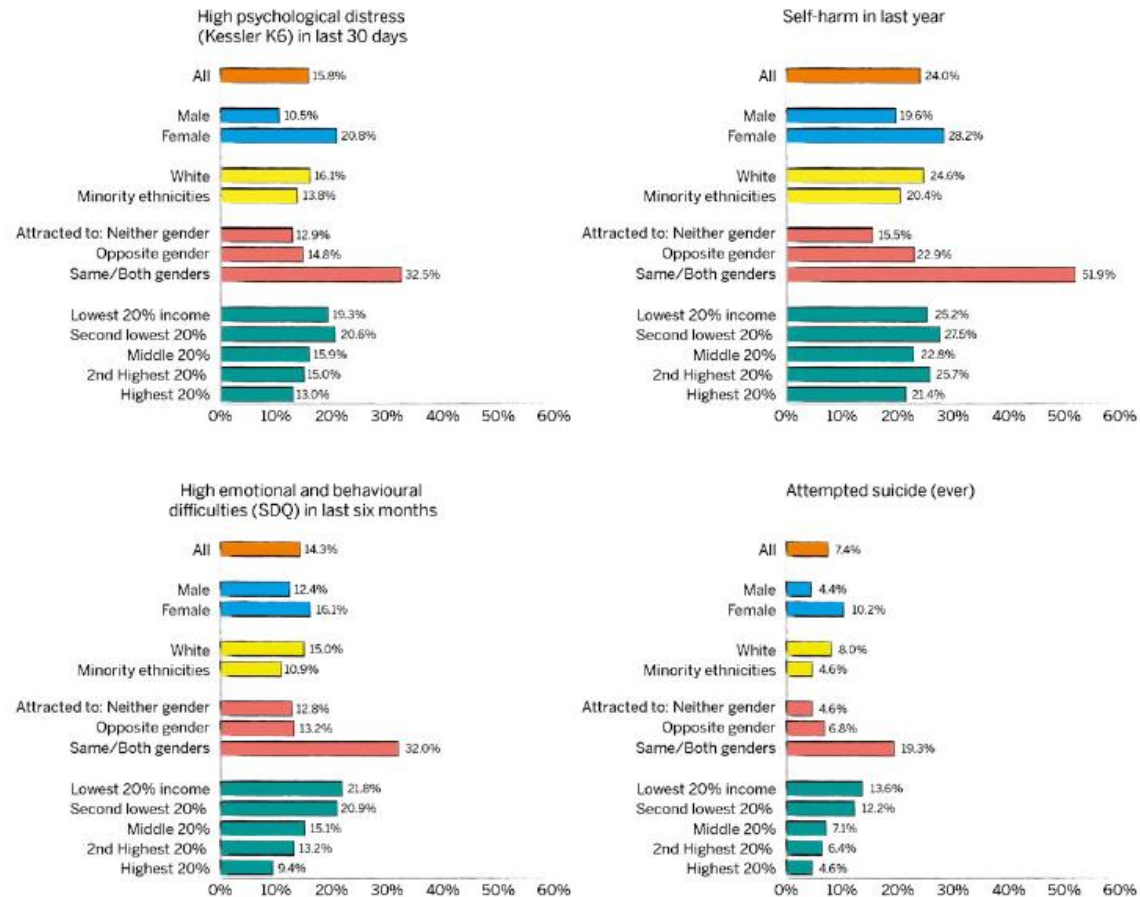
Why important?

- Allows us to look at well-being and outcomes for same children
- Opportunity to look at children at transitional age

Measures from the Millennium Cohort Study: longitudinal study of young people born in the UK in 2000-02

- *Life Satisfaction*: On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means completely happy and 7 means not at all happy, how do you feel about your life as a whole?
- *Psychological distress*: six questions (Kessler K6) answered by young people, which measure non-specific psychological distress in the last 30 days.
- *Emotional and behavioural difficulties*: 25 questions, comprising the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which ask about the last six months.
- *Self-harm*: a set of questions asking whether the young person had hurt themselves on purpose in the past year, which was aggregated into one yes/no measure for analysis.
- *Attempted suicide*: a question asking whether the young person had ever hurt themselves on purpose in an attempt to end their life.

Variations in symptoms of mental ill-health at age 17, by children's characteristics at age 14



Proportion of young people with poor outcomes at age 17, according to life satisfaction at age 11 and 14

Table 1: Proportion of young people with poor outcomes at age 17 compared to their life satisfaction score at age 11 and 14 (controlling for other characteristics)

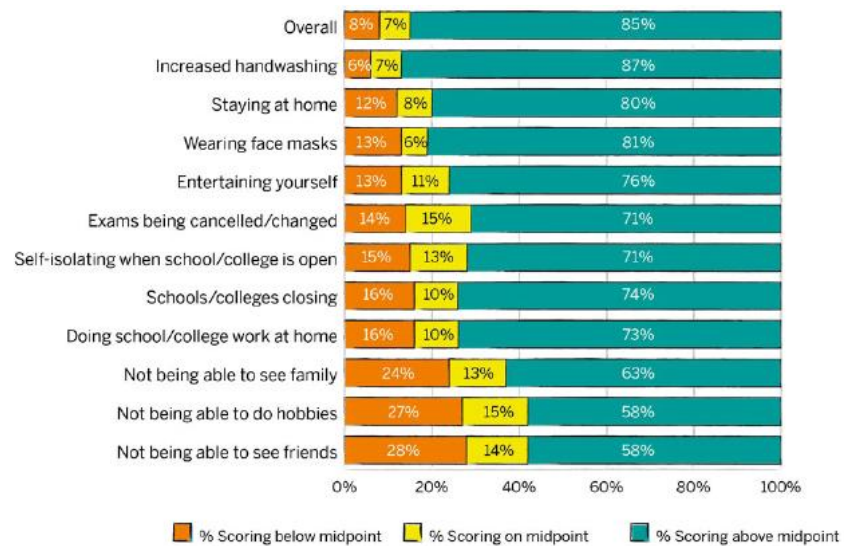
Life satisfaction at 11 and 14	Kessler	SDQ	Self-harm	Attempted Suicide
Low both	50%	47%	62%	26%
Low 11	16%	18%	23%	9%
Low 14	41%	35%	45%	21%
No low	15%	13%	24%	6%
High both	6%	7%	11%	2%
Total	16%	14%	24%	7%

Children's experiences of Covid-19: One year on

- How are children (and their parents) faring one year on from *Life on Hold?*
- How do children feel about the future?

Children's reflections: How well coped with pandemic

Figure 6: Extent to which children (aged 10 to 17) think they have coped with Coronavirus changes



Source: The Children's Society's Household Survey, Wave 20, April-June 2021, 10 to 17 year olds, United Kingdom. Weighted data. Excludes missing responses (including 'prefer not to say').

Conclusions and Impact

- Clear priorities for improvement: friends, appearance and school.
- Fortunately, most children/parents seem to have coped to some extent with the pandemic. A small proportion in both groups have been identified who have not coped well and might benefit from support.
- Children with low life satisfaction scores at age 14 are more likely to report poor mental health outcomes at age 17.
- There is potential value in regularly monitoring children's well-being in early adolescence to identify those who may need extra support. This could have long-term benefits.
- In spite of the challenges of the last 18 months, seven in ten children are optimistic about the future. There is still room for improvement and policymakers and practitioners must take seriously children's concerns – about themselves and wider society.

Policy recommendations

- We have to do more to turn these trends around – we need an ambitious and bold plan to level-up for children. This should include:
 - Clear leadership, a strategy and national monitoring of children's well-being to hold decision makers to account on progress

- We think the plan should have three key pillars:
 1. Intervening early to stop abuse and neglect
 2. Tackling child poverty
 3. Responding to children's emotional health concerns through open access, community services

Thank you!

Summary Good Childhood Report
Receive Campaign Emails
Become a Campaign Champion

Shari Lewison-Frisch
Diocesan Ambassador for Worcester
M: 07377 401141
E: shari.lewison-frisch@childrenssociety-volunteer.org.uk