



The Good Childhood Report 2023

Youth summary

**The
Children's
Society**

What is wellbeing?

The Children's Society has been doing research on young people's wellbeing for around 18 years, and has surveyed almost 46,000 young people about how they feel about their lives.

It's only by hearing from young people that we can actually know what's going on in their lives and work out how best to support them.

Wellbeing means different things to different people. It can include happiness, relaxation, health, having enough money, doing well at school, getting on well with friends and family, or getting a good job.





Information sources

In this summary report, we share information from three key sources.

1. The Children's Society's household survey

Every year we ask around 2,000 10- to 17-year-olds about their wellbeing. These questions are answered by the young people in a survey that they complete at home.

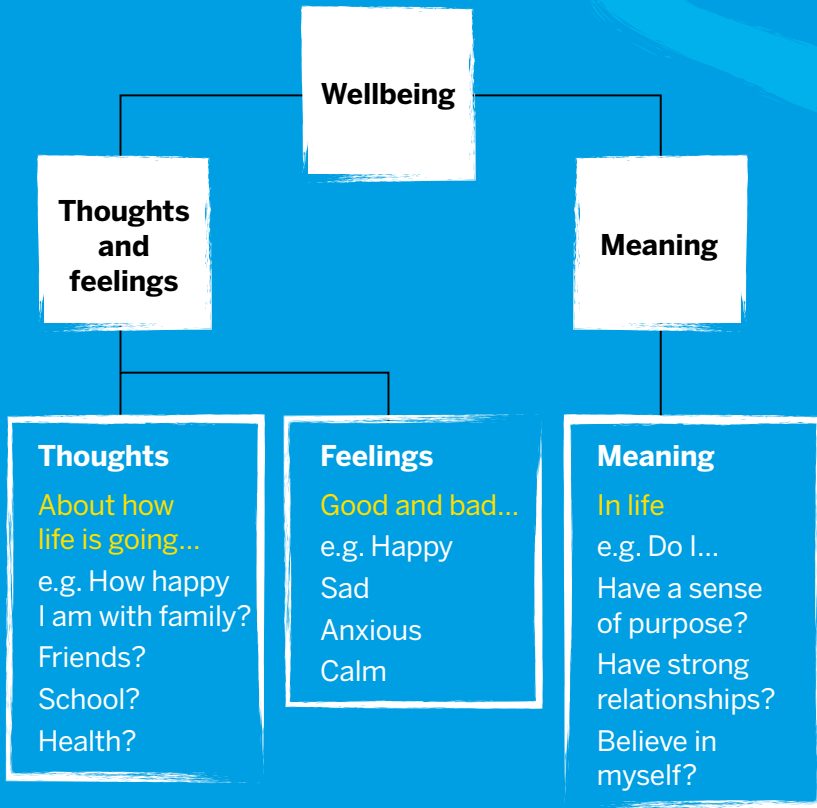
2. Understanding Society

We report on data from this large survey, which asks children aged 10 to 15 about six areas of wellbeing. This survey goes to the same families every year, so their answers can be tracked over time. This year, we look at the data from 2020-21.

3. Good Childhood consultations

In summer 2023, we visited schools and the Young Carers Festival to ask young people what they think needs to change to improve young people's wellbeing in this country.

What is wellbeing made up of?

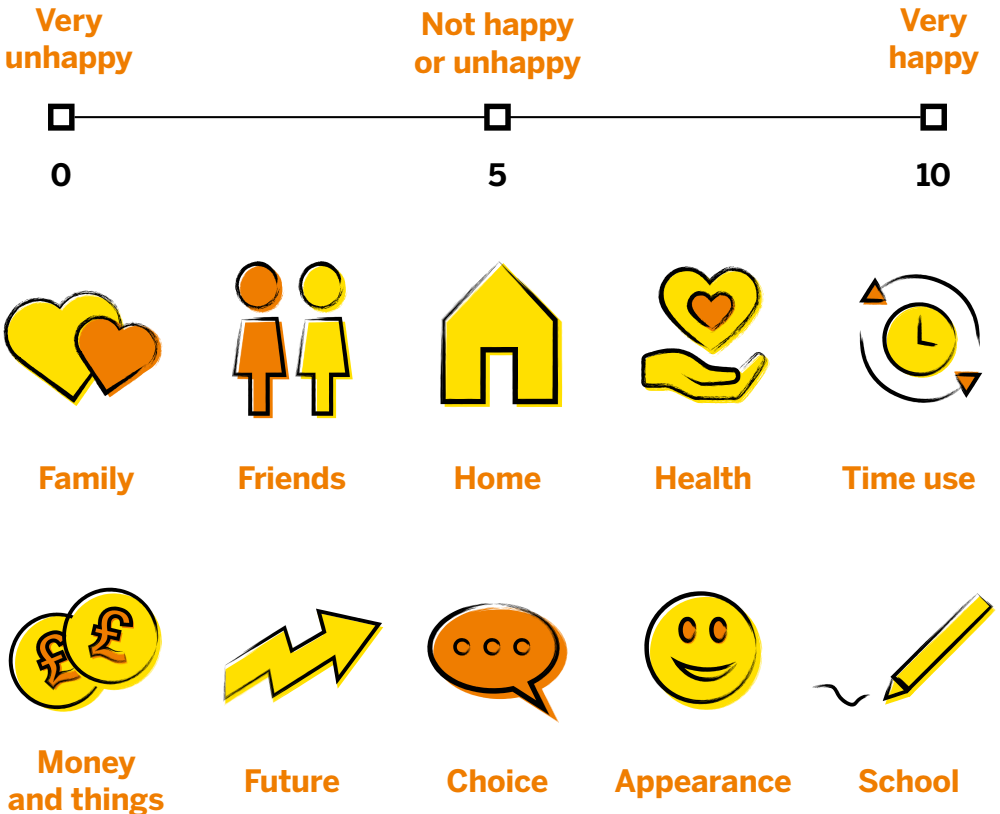


Each year, we ask young people themselves about many different aspects of their wellbeing.

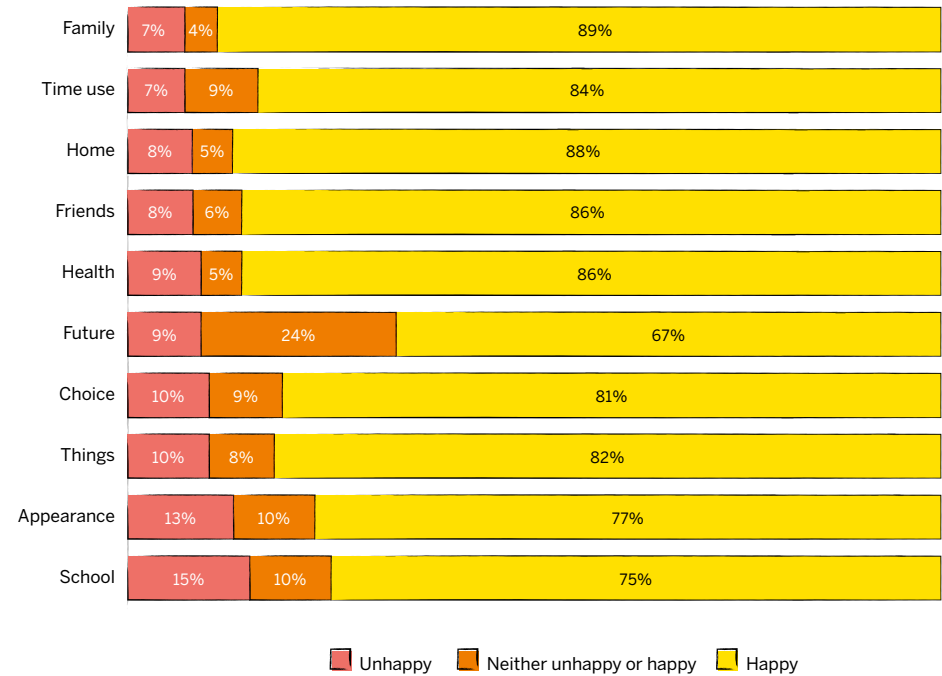
This includes their emotions (for example, how happy or sad they are), how they feel about different areas of their lives (including their life overall and 10 different aspects of life that other young people have told us are important), and whether or not they feel they have a purpose.

Here is what young people told us!

We ask young people to score how happy they are with these 10 different aspects of their life using the scale below.



Graph 1: Young people’s happiness with the 10 aspects of life. *



This year, more young people completing our survey (aged 10 to 17 in the UK) were happy with their family, home, friends, and health than with the other aspects of life they were asked about.

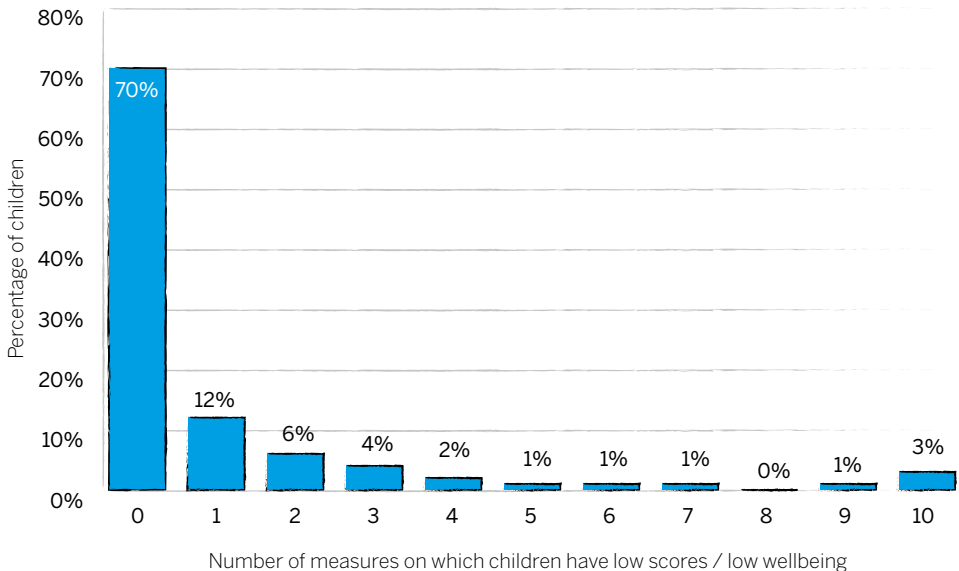
More young people were unhappy with their school and their appearance. It’s important to know which groups of young people are unhappy with their lives and why, as it helps us to think about the ways we might best support them.

*Over 2,000 young people (10- to 17-years-old) in the UK were asked these questions between May and June 2023.

Young people with low wellbeing

In this year's report, we were interested in understanding more about young people who said that they were unhappy with different parts of their lives in our 2023 survey. We wanted to know if the same young people were unhappy with more than one aspect of life.

Graph 2. Proportion of young people (aged 10 to 17) unhappy with multiple aspects of life.



As shown in Graph 2, most young people were not unhappy with any of the aspects of life they were asked about.

However, almost 1 in 5 (19%) young people were unhappy with 2 or more aspects of life, with almost 1 in 10 (9%) unhappy with 4 or more areas.

Trends in wellbeing

Alongside asking how young people feel about different areas of their life today (based on our own survey in 2023), we report on changes over time for the following six aspects of life among young people aged 10 to 15 in the UK.

Happiness with...	Most recent scores compared to 2009	
Life as a whole		Decreased
Family		Same
Friends		Decreased
Appearance		Decreased
School		Decreased
Schoolwork		Decreased

These results come from a big survey (called Understanding Society), which follows the same families year on year. The changes shown compare young people's answers to the most recent survey (2020-21) with those from the first survey (2009-10).

Thinking about the future

Asking young people how they feel about the future helps us understand what is important to them.

This year, we asked young people what they thought was important for their own future from the list below, and how much they were worried about these areas.



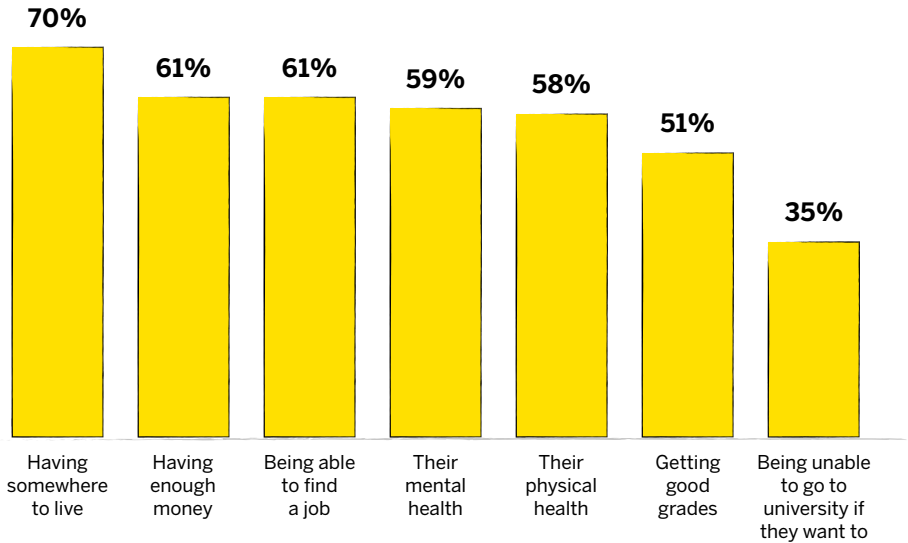
We also asked how young people felt about the following issues in society:

- the environment
- levels of unemployment
- the amount of crime
- online safety
- homelessness
- inequality
- new illnesses/pandemics (not Covid-19)
- refugee and migrant crisis (people being forced to leave their homes and go to other countries due to war and other reasons.)
- rising prices.

What young people think is important

We asked young people to think about their own future and rate how important (from very important to not at all important) seven things were to them.

Graph 3. Thinking about the future, what do young people think is very important?



Over two thirds of the young people we surveyed in 2023 thought that having somewhere to live was very important, while just over a third thought going to university (if they wanted to) was very important.

We also wanted to know what young people were worried about in relation to their own future.

Young people were most worried about ...



having enough money



being able to find a job



getting good grades

Issues in society

In our survey, we also asked young people about nine issues in wider society.

Graph 4. What young people (aged 10 to 17) were very or quite worried about in wider society.



The issues that more young people were worried about in 2023 were **rising prices, the environment, and crime.**

How positive do young people feel about their own future, the future of the country, and the future of the world?



74%

of young people
said that they felt very or quite positive about their own future.



36%

of young people
said that they felt very or quite positive about the future of the world



38%

of young people
said that they felt very or quite positive about the future of the country.

We also asked young people taking part in our 2023 survey in year 7 and above whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements.

% agreed I feel safe when ...



... using my phone, tablet, laptop, or other devices.



... I am at school/college.



... on my way to and from school/college.



... I am out with my friends.



... I am out in my local area during the day.



... I am outside of my local area.



... I am out in my local area at night.

Most young people agreed that they felt safe in most of these situations.

However, less than half agreed that they felt safe when out in their local area at night.



A photograph of two young women. In the foreground, a young woman with teal-colored hair is looking upwards and to the right with a gentle smile. In the background, another young woman with long brown hair is leaning forward, smiling warmly at the first woman. The lighting is soft and warm, creating a positive and supportive atmosphere.

"Help
young people
flourish."

If I were Prime Minister ...

We asked young people who took part in our consultations in summer 2023 what they feel needs to change to improve the wellbeing of young people in this country.

We asked them what they would do if made Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Here is what some young people said they would do ...

"Make primary and secondary school meals free so that parents have more room for their children's happiness, to pay for more fun activities and meals at home."

"Make sure all young people have equal opportunities in life."

"Make more safe spaces for young people."

"Lower the prices of stuff so parents can afford it and get necessities for children."

"Open up more parks and open up more fun stuff for children of all ages."

"Make healthcare free for the entire UK so children can stay healthy throughout their lives, living in a better place in the UK."

"Properly fund mental health and other child services."

"Help children to feel happier about how they look and how they feel."







"Give people in need more money to improve the wellbeing of young people."

"Have a day where schools focus on wellbeing. Where you play games and have fun."

What are we at The Children's Society asking the government to do!

This year we listened to what young people thought those in power should do to improve the wellbeing of young people in this country.

Here is what we are asking those in power to do.

-  **Protect children from the rising cost of living.**
-  **Stand up for children to build hope and security for their futures.**
-  **Create a system that starts with prevention.**
-  **Take responsibility for girls' unhappiness.**
-  **Enable schools to support pupils' wellbeing.**
-  **Respond to the needs of parents, carers, and families.**

Young people's perfect world

Finally, we asked young people taking part in consultations for this report in 2023 to describe their perfect world. Here is what some of them had to say.

"To make sure all children are heard."

"Better energy all around the world – accessible good energy everywhere."

"What makes a perfect world is being kind to one another and respecting each other."

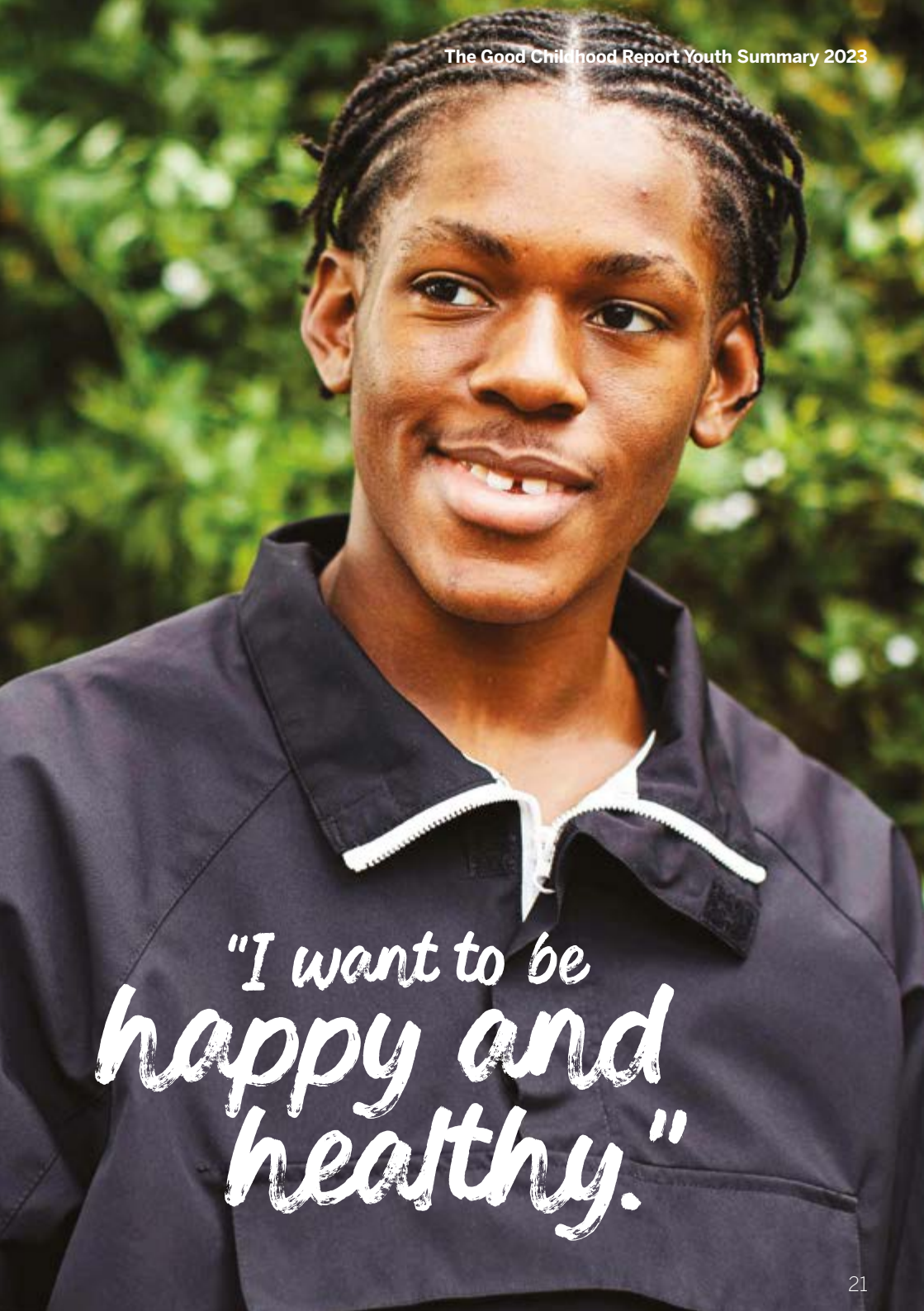
"No discrimination."

"Safer world, peace, no more bullying, no wars, no pollution."

Reflection activity

After reading the findings, you might like to fill this space with your own thoughts, ideas or drawings about the topics covered.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for a reflection activity. It occupies the majority of the page below the introductory text.



*"I want to be
happy and
healthy."*

Test your knowledge



1. Are more young people happy with their families, home, friends, and health?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. Has young people's happiness with their schoolwork increased since 2009?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Was having enough money in the future the most important thing for young people?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Were most young people positive about their own future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Was crime the issue young people were most worried about?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Where you can go to find more information or support about wellbeing

Improving wellbeing

There are five key things we can all do to improve our wellbeing. These are known as the Five Ways to Wellbeing:

1. Be active.
2. Keep on learning.
3. Connect and talk with friends and family.
4. Be creative and play.
5. Take notice of what is going on around us.

Advice and support for children and young people

If there's a mental or emotional issue you're worried about, you can find information and advice

for yourself or someone you know here: **childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Young-People-Guide-to-Stressful-Situations.pdf**.

You can also contact Childline for free by calling **0800 1111** or by visiting their website **childline.org.uk**.

Advice and support for parents

If you are a parent or carer looking for advice and support with your child's mental and emotional health, you can contact the YoungMinds parent helpline: **youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-helpline**.

You can call the helpline for free on **0808 802 5544**.

Every young person should have the right to a safe, happy childhood.

But right now, young people are facing huge risks. They urgently need our help. That's why our services exist to offer them vital support when they need it most. And we campaign alongside young people to bring about a society where all children can look forward to the future with hope.

Together, we can protect every childhood.

Email: **researchteam@childrenssociety.org.uk**

Twitter: **@ChildSocPol**

Tel: **0300 303 7000**



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