

Children's World

THE SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING OF MALTESE CHILDREN

*Carmel Cefai
Natalie Galea*

THIRD MONOGRAPH IN
RESILIENCE AND HEALTH
CENTRE FOR RESILIENCE AND
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
2016



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Third Monograph in Resilience and Health by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, University of Malta

Published by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, University of Malta, Malta.

First published in 2016

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ISBN: 978-99957-890-0-8

Resilience and Health Monograph Series

Series Editors: Carmel Cefai & Paul Cooper

We are pleased to publish the third monograph in the *Resilience and Health* series by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta. The series aims to provide an open access platform for the dissemination of knowledge and research in educational resilience and social and emotional health. We have one e-publication per year in such areas as social and emotional development, health, resilience and wellbeing in children and young people, social and emotional learning, mental health in schools and professionals' health and wellbeing.

The publication of the Resilience and Health Monograph Series is based on the philosophy of the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, which is develop and promote the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional health and resilience in children and young people.

We welcome contributions from colleagues who would like to share their work with others in the field.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to express their gratitude to all the children who participated in the study, to their parents for giving their consent, as well as their teachers and Heads of Schools who provided administrative support in data collection; to Dr Gwyther Rees who provided the international comparative graphs used in the report and other statistical assistance; to Prof Asher Ben-Arieh, Dr. Gwyther Rees and Ms Tamara Dinisman from the International Survey of Children’s Well-Being project team, for their support during the project planning, data collection and data analysis; and to Dr Valeria Cavioni (University of Pavia) for the design of the monograph’s cover and layout.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Article 12 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that ‘parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’. This rights-based approach to children’s voice underlined the need and value of gaining entry into the conceptual world of children in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives (Bodgan & Biklen, 2011). It is validated and supported by practice-based issues underlining the need to give children a ‘warranting voice’ (Gergen, 2001). Children are a source of knowledge and expertise, having unique and inside knowledge of what it is like to be a child at home, a student at school, a member of a peer group or a child with a group of friends. They are able to provide an accurate account of their own thoughts and feelings as well as suggestions on how relationships may be strengthened, how learning processes could be enhanced, how the home, school, peer group and community may be improved (Fielding and Bragg, 2003; Robinson and Taylor, 2007).

What children have to say about their experiences at home, at school, in the community, their use of time, their satisfaction with life and overall wellbeing is not only valid and meaningful, but also helps to provide a more adequate and useful construction of the situation, contributing to a better understanding of the issues (Fielding and Bragg, 2003). The need to tap the child’s own account of his or her experiences in seeking to understand the processes underlying wellbeing is the overarching principle of *Children’s Worlds*, the International Study of Children’s Subjective Wellbeing. *Children’s Worlds* is a research survey on children’s subjective wellbeing involving more than 20 countries across the world. Its objective is to collect representative data on children’s lives and daily activities, their time use and their perceptions of their wellbeing, in as many countries as possible, with the aim of raising awareness on, and improving, children’s wellbeing and their life situations (Ben Arieh, 2015). The first wave of the study was published in 2012 in 14 countries, while the second wave followed in 2013-2016 with 16 countries participating, including Malta. This report presents the findings from Malta in the second wave of the study.

Methodology

Sampling strategy and outcomes

The sample was designed to achieve a nationally representative sample of school children around the ages of 8, 10 and 12. It was designed on children in primary school in Year 3 (8 years old) and Year 5 (10 years old) and in Form 1 in middle school (12 years old). A representative sample of 1000 students from each of the three age groups was selected for the study. The primary sampling unit was the three mainstream school sectors in Malta (i.e. State schools, Church schools and Independent schools). Separate samples were drawn for Years 3 and 5 (primary school education) and Form 1 (secondary school education) respectively. Both samples followed the same methodology. First percentages of students attending the different types of school sectors were obtained to calculate the number of students required for the corresponding sample from each sector. This ensured that the sample reflects the proportion of children in each school sector. The sampling frame was further stratified by various variables, namely geographic region, gender and school size.

State schools were selected by stratified sampling. One school was randomly selected from each of the ten colleges. The fact that state schools are region bound ensured that all districts were represented. Selection of the other remaining state schools was based on probabilities proportional to their size (i.e. schools were selected from colleges/regions characterized by large student populations). Church and Independent schools were selected on the basis of size/student populations and gender. It was ensured, however, that schools were selected from around Malta and Gozo.

On a general note, two representative classes were randomly selected by the Head of School for each age group, following the criteria provided by the research team. Since students aged 8 and 10 years attend primary school, the same schools were selected for data collection for the two age groups. In the case of middle schools, large schools comprised an average of six classes for 12 year olds. In such schools, four classes were selected for 12 year olds.

Table 1 summarises the resulting sample. After data cleaning, the survey data set contained questionnaires from a sample of 2777 children. In the achieved sample, there were more children in the 12 year old age group than in the 8 and 10 year old age groups respectively. Weights have been applied to the sample used so that the proportion of children in the data set in each stratum is equivalent to the proportion of children in that stratum in the population. The resulting numbers are shown in Table 2. Table 3 shows the participants by age and gender.

Table 1: Achieved sample (Numbers)

	Stratum			
	All	1 – State	2 - Church	3 - Independent
8 year old	865	428	369	68
10 year old	868	423	361	84
12 year old	1044	522	378	144
	2777	1373	1108	296

Table 2: Weighted sample (Numbers)

	Stratum			
	All	1 – State	2 - Church	3 - Independent
8 year old	796	442	266	88
10 year old	839	474	269	96
12 year old	942	502	339	101
	2577	1418	874	285

Table 3: Age by gender (Numbers)

	8 year old	10 year old	12 year old	Total
Boy	442	444	434	1320
Girl	347	395	507	1249
Total	789	839	941	2569

Questionnaires

Three versions of the questionnaire were developed, one for each age group, exploring the same issues, but with some variations, particularly between the questionnaires for the 8 and 10 year olds and that for 12 year olds which included more items. The questionnaires explored such topics as home and people children live with, money and possessions, friends and other people, the area where they live, school and bullying, use of time, and views about themselves, their life and their future¹ The questionnaires comprised questions about frequency of activities, satisfaction scales of life in general and specific domains or factors, agreement scales with status and events, and socio-demographic characteristics. Three types of scales were used to measure each aspect of children's lives, namely, agreement (five point unipolar agreement scale), satisfaction (11 point scale), and frequency (of activities in last week, month, year). In the 8-years-olds version, a scale of 5 emoticons was used for the satisfaction items. The questionnaires were translated in Maltese making use of a backward and forward procedure, piloted with a focus group with each age group, and amended accordingly. Data collection started in late 2014 and was completed by February 2015.

Statistical analysis

The presentation of the findings covers weighted descriptive analysis of all age groups followed by means for gender and age to explore the variations based on these variables. All differences referred to in the report have been subject to statistical testing. The Chi-Square test and the One-way ANOVA test were used to make inferences through tests of hypothesis; where differences are noted as significant, they relate to a p-value below 0.05.

¹ Almost 91,000 kids ages 8, 10 & 12 from 23 countries, various religions, cultures and languages were comfortable with 95% of the questions asked (Ben Arieh, 2015).

FINDINGS

1. Home and Family

The vast majority of participants (10/12 year olds) lived with mother and mother in a first home only, but 15% lived with only one of the biological parents (Table 4).

Table 4: Family type in first and second home (10/12 year-olds) (%)

First home %		Another home %	
Mother and father	84.64	First home only	90.6
Mother and partner	5.33	Mother and father	6.0
Father and partner	1.49	Mother and partner	1.5
Lone mother	4.96	Father and partner	12.1
Lone father	0.10	Mother	-
Other	3.48	Father	-
Total	100.0	Total	100.0

The great majority of participants have a stable and happy life, feel safe and happy at home, having close relationships with their parents, talking, learning and having fun together most days of the week (Tables 5, 7, 9, 10). Girls appear to have a better family life than boys, having more quiet place to study, parents listening more, and spending more good time together, while the older children appear to be more satisfied with their families than younger ones, including feeling safer, having more quiet spaces to study, having parents listening more, being treated better by parents, and being satisfied with home and the people they live with (Tables 6, 8; Figures 1-2). On the other hand, the 8 year olds spend more time having fun and learning with parents than the older children. A minority of children, however, would like a better life at home, with 20% wanting more space to study at home, 10% more attention from parents, and 5% not feeling safe at home. 12% of eight year olds are not satisfied with their home and the people they live with, while another 10% only partially agree. In face when compared to the other countries, Maltese children rank quite low on how safe they feel at home (Figures 3-4) and almost at the bottom out of 16 countries on the item having a quiet place to study (Figures 5-6). Maltese 8 year olds also rank quite low on being treated fairly by parents (Figure 11). On the other hand, Malta moves up to the upper half of the ranking when it

comes to children feeling they have a good time together as a family and that their parents listen and take account of what they say (Figures 7-10).

Table 5: Home and family (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe at home	1.4	3.5	4.7	20.4	70.0
I have a quiet place to study at home	9.3	11.0	13.9	26.3	39.5
My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account	4.9	5.8	9.7	20.9	58.7
My parents/carers treat me fairly	4.4	3.8	5.8	20.7	65.2
We have a good time together in my family	1.4	2.6	5.6	18.5	72.0

Table 6: Means variation in questions about home and the people you live with (All age groups)

	Feel safe	Place to study	Parents listen	Parents fair	Good time together
Gender					
Boy	3.54	2.69	3.17	3.54	3.38
Girl	3.54	2.83*	3.30*	3.61	3.40*
Age group					
8 year-olds	3.44	2.62	3.06	3.53	3.16
10 year-olds	3.51	2.58	3.20	3.56	3.43
12 year-olds	3.65**	3.03**	3.39**	3.61**	3.53
Total	3.54	2.76	3.23	3.57	3.39

* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.0005 (age)

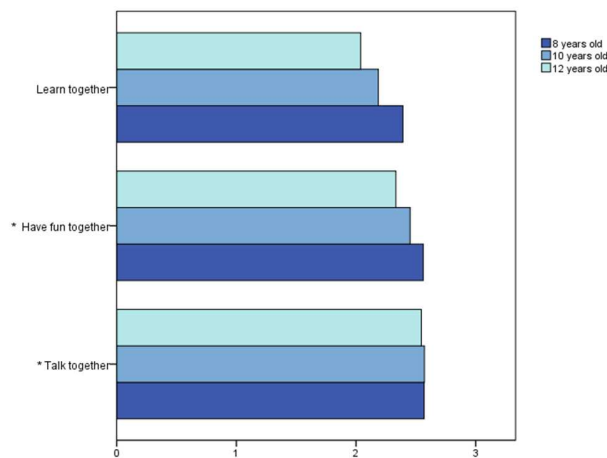
Table 7: Time spent with family (All age groups) (%)

	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
How often do family: Talk together	1.8	7.5	24.4	66.3
How often do family: Have fun together	2.5	9.8	30.9	56.8
How often do family: Learn together	6.5	14.9	32.2	46.4

Table 8: Means variation in time spent with family (All age groups)

	Talk together	Have fun together	Learn together
<i>Gender</i>			
Boy	2.53	2.39	2.18
Girl	2.57	2.45	2.19
<i>Age group</i>			
8 year-olds	2.57	2.43*	2.38*
10 year-olds	2.55	2.43	2.18
12 year-olds	2.54	2.31	2.03
Total	2.55	2.42	2.19

* p < 0.0005 (age)



* p < 0.0005 (age)

Figure 1: Gender differences in time spent with family (All age groups)

Table 9: Satisfaction with home and the people you live with (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
The house or flat where you live	2.7	1.3	6.0	15.5	74.5
The people you live with	1.9	1.4	4.3	12.9	79.5
All the other people in your family	3.7	1.3	7.3	15.0	72.7
Your family life	6.7	5.2	10.4	13.3	64.3

Table 10: Satisfaction with home and the people you live with (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The house or flat where you live	.9	.6	.5	.4	1.2	4.1	2.1	5.3	8.7	14.2	62.0
The people you live with	1.0	.4	.3	.5	1.3	1.9	1.0	2.0	5.1	11.6	74.9
All the other people in your family	1.3	.6	.3	.5	1.1	2.2	1.9	4.0	7.5	15.6	65.0
Your family life	.9	1.0	.4	.6	.9	2.4	1.9	3.5	5.9	14.5	68.1

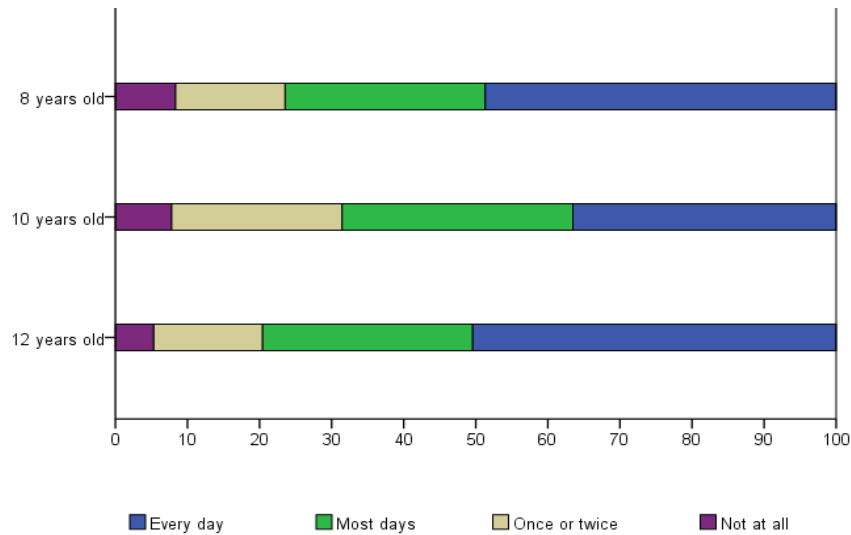


Figure 2: Satisfaction with aspects of family and home by age (Means).

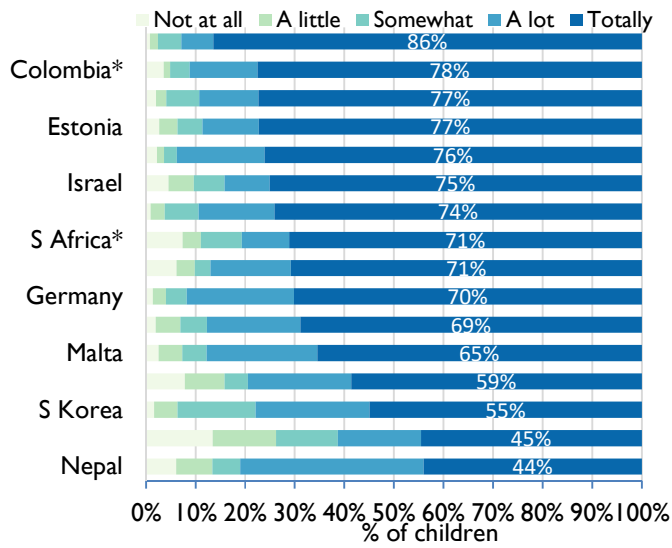


Figure 3: 'I feel safe at home' (8year olds)
(Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

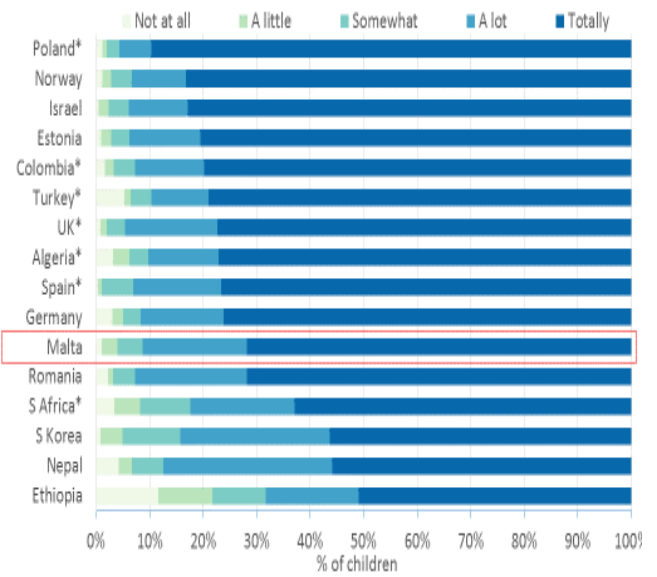


Figure 4: 'I feel safe at home' (10/12 year olds)
(Rees & Main 2015)

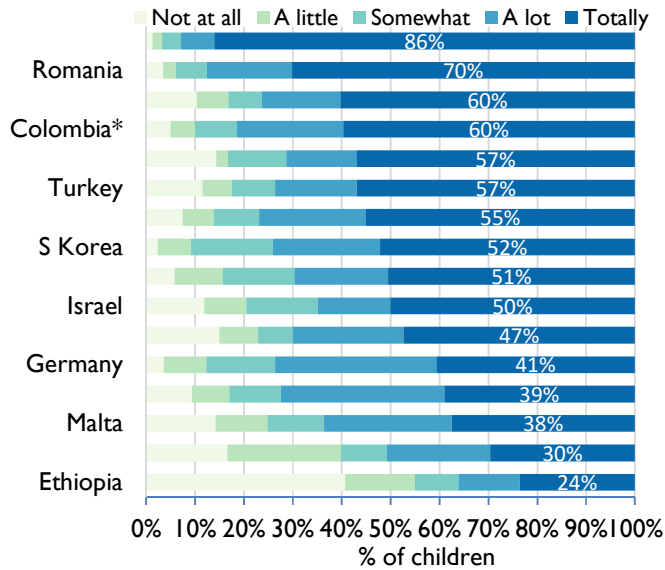


Figure 5: 'I have a quiet place to study at home' (8 year olds)
(Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

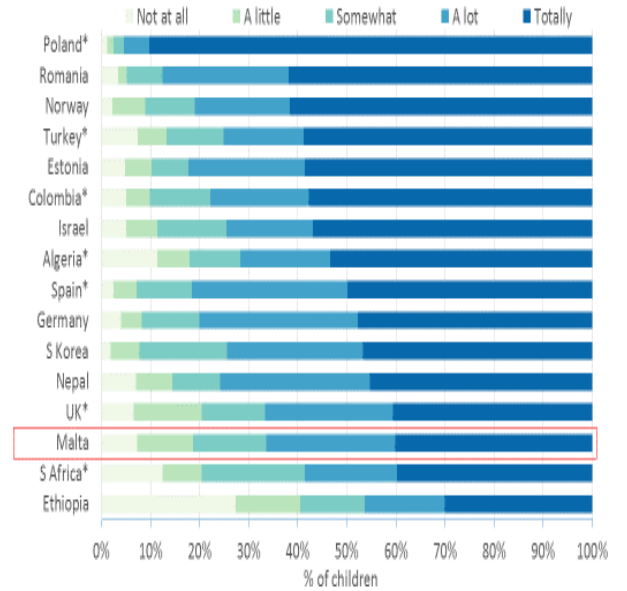


Figure 6: 'I have a quiet place to study at home' (10/12 year olds)
(Rees & Main, 2015)

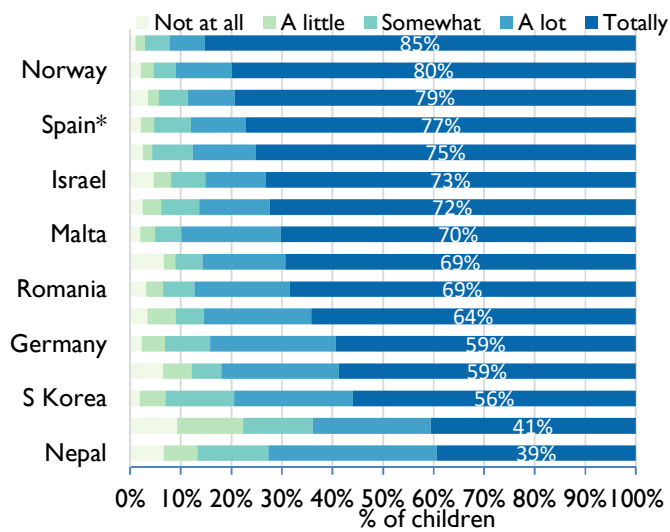


Figure 7: ‘We have a good time together in my family’ (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

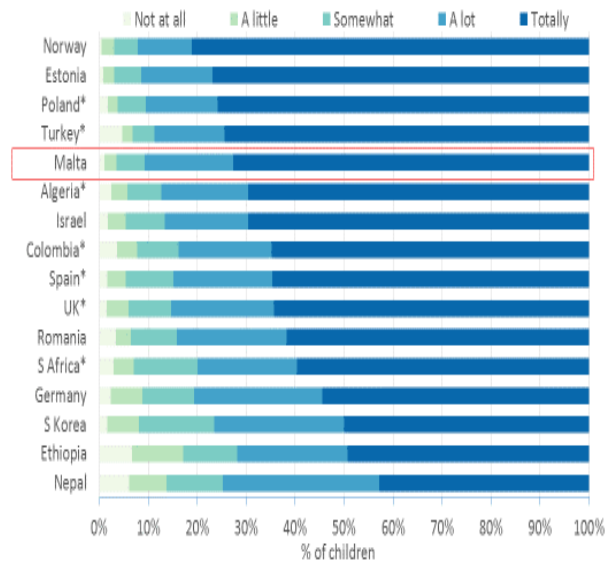


Figure 8: ‘We have a good time together in my family’ (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

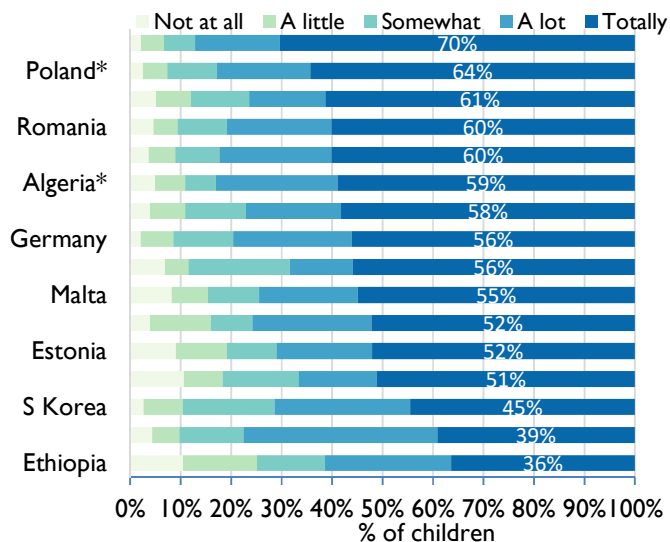


Figure 9: My parents listen to me and take me seriously (8year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

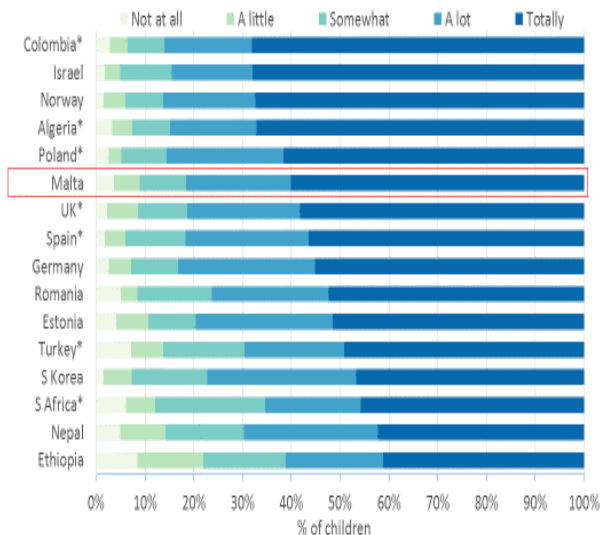


Figure 10: My parents listen to me and take me seriously (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

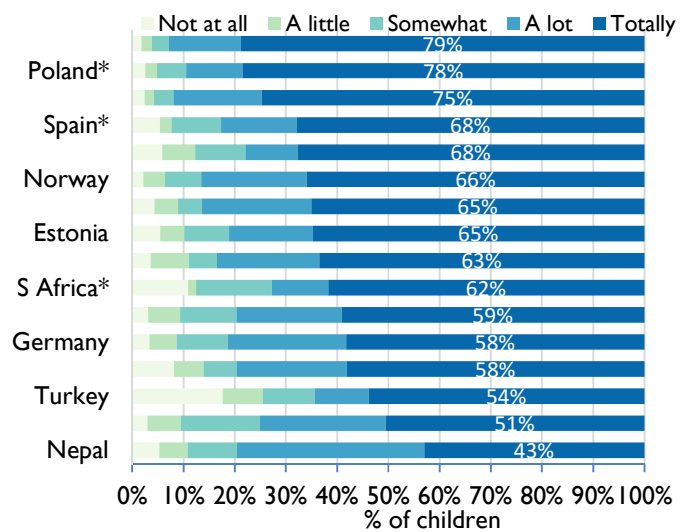


Figure 11: ‘My parents/carers treat me fairly’ (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

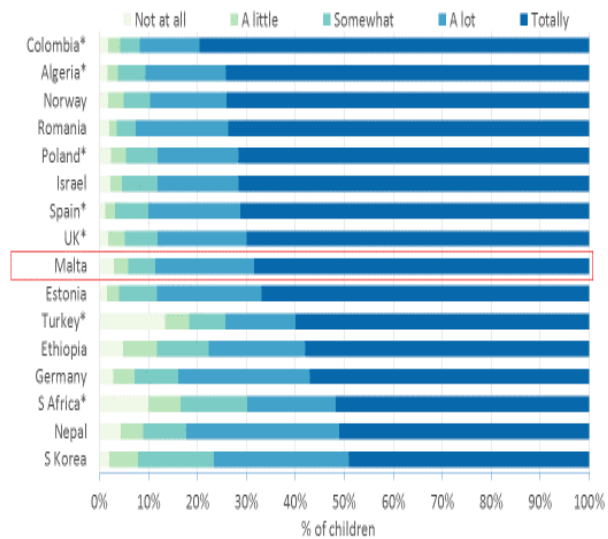


Figure 12: ‘My parents/carers treat me fairly’ (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

2. Economic Wellbeing

On the whole Maltese children feel well cared for economically and happy with the things they have, with the great majority possessing such items as books, music player, clothes, access to home computer and internet, television and family car (Table 11). More than half of 12 year old children get regular pocket money every week or every month, while another 30% get it on an irregular basis (Figure 11). Eighty percent of 8 year olds and 50% of 10/12 year olds do not lack any item, while 14% and 30% of 8 and 10/12 year old lack one item respectively (Table 12). Eight year old girls lack more items than boys, while the opposite is true of 10/12 year olds; 10 year olds lack more items than 12 year olds (Table 13). Twenty percent of 10/12 year olds do not have own room, while 30% do not use mobile; 14% of 12 year old do not get any pocket money; another 30% get it only irregularly. When compared to other countries, Maltese children appear to be well off, with an overall lack of items of 0.25 and 0.8 items (less than one item) for 8 and 10/12 year old respectively, and ranked with the group of countries least lacking in items (Figures 13-14). An item per item analysis shows that Maltese children compare favourably on possession of items, with the exception of having own room (Table 15). About 95% of all children are satisfied or very satisfied with the things they have, with little variation in gender or age (Tables 16-17).

Almost all participants (98%) said that at least one adult in the family has a paid job, with over 70% saying that there is more than one adult with a paid job in the family. About half of the 12 year old participants said their family have the same money as a year ago, while 38 % said they have more; 13% said they have less (Table 18). Most parents are spending the same as or more on their children when compared to a year ago (Table 19).

Table 11: Things you have (All age groups) (Means)

	8 year-olds	10/12 year-olds
Mobile phone *	-	84.1
Own room *	-	82.7
Books to read for fun *	-	90.3
Own stuff to listen to music *	-	94.9
Clothes in good condition to go to school in	98.3	99.6
Access to a computer at home	88.9	94.4
Access to the Internet	88.2	96.5
Family car for transportation	84.2	88.8
Television that can use	98	98.9

*questions were not asked of 8 year olds

Table 12: Pocket money (10/12 year-olds) (%)

	%
I don't get pocket money	14.4
I get pocket money, but not regularly	30.8
I get pocket money every week	44.2
I get pocket money every month	10.6
Total	100.0

Table 13: Number of items lacked by children (All age groups) (%)

	8 year olds % lacking out of 4 items	10/ 12 year olds % lacking out of 9 items
None	80.4	49.4
One	14.3	29.5
Two	4.3	14.1
Three	0.5	4.7
Four	-	1.3
Five or more	0.7	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 14: Mean variation in number of items lacking (All age groups)

	8 year-olds	10/ 12 year-olds
Gender		
Boy	.25	.97**
Girl	.30*	.70
Age group		
10 year-olds	-	1.10**
12 year-olds	-	0.61

* p < 0.0005 (gender), ** p < 0.0005 (age)

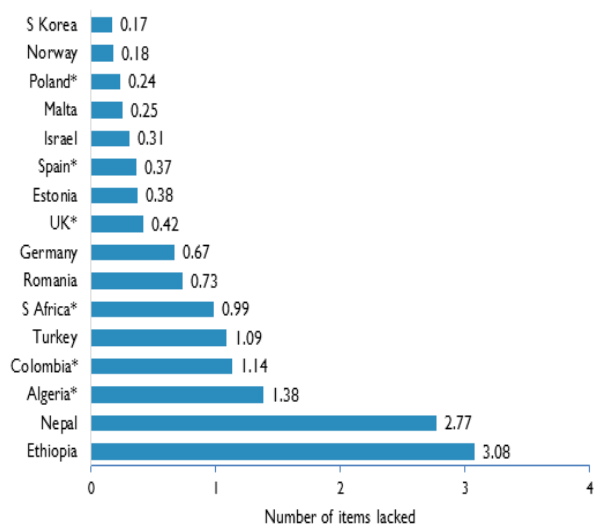


Figure 13: Number of items lacked (out of 5) (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)



Figure 14: Number of items lacked (out of 8) (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

Table 15: % of children lacking access to material items (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

	Good clothes	Computer	Internet	Mobile phone	Own room	Books	Family car	Music player	TV
Algeria*	3%	47%	56%	61%	62%	28%	42%	55%	24%
Colombia*	1%	22%	25%	23%	39%	29%	64%	42%	4%
UK*	<0.5%	6%	3%	16%	17%	10%	11%	5%	1%
Estonia	1%	3%	2%	4%	28%	4%	14%	12%	n/a
Ethiopia	18%	97%	98%	86%	86%	64%	98%	83%	73%
Germany	2%	16%	9%	8%	11%	21%	7%	5%	n/a
Israel	1%	6%	6%	20%	30%	7%	8%	19%	3%
Malta	1%	4%	3%	30%	20%	6%	6%	15%	3%
Nepal	3%	87%	93%	24%	41%	30%	93%	46%	31%
Norway	<0.5%	2%	1%	3%	7%	3%	3%	1%	<0.5%
Poland*	1%	2%	4%	5%	8%	14%	11%	10%	n/a
Romania	1%	14%	20%	18%	36%	12%	41%	13%	3%
S Africa*	3%	38%	40%	27%	42%	18%	28%	29%	4%
S Korea	1%	4%	3%	10%	11%	4%	7%	10%	4%
Spain*	2%	6%	7%	45%	19%	10%	13%	14%	2%
Turkey*	5%	18%	23%	60%	33%	10%	43%	43%	3%

Table 16: How happy do you feel with the things you have (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
8 year-olds	1.2	.5	2.5	8.5	87.3

Table 17: How happy do you feel with the things you have (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10/12 year-olds	.1	.4	.2	.4	.6	2.4	1.1	4.3	8.2	14.2	68.1

Table 18: Compared to a year ago, how much money does your family have now? (12 year olds)

	%
We have more money than a year ago	38.0
We have about the same as a year ago	48.7
We have less money than a year ago	13.4
Total	100.00

Table 19: How much money do your parents spend on things for you (12 year olds)?

	%
They spend more than they did a year ago	32.9
They spend about the same as they did a year ago	54.7
They spend less than they did a year ago	12.3
Total	100.0

3. Friends

The great majority of the children are happy and satisfied with their friends, with more than 80% having enough friends and feeling that their friends are nice to them (Table 20). On the whole, 12 year olds have more enough friends and think that friends are nice to them than the younger children. More than 90% of all participants appear to be satisfied with their friends (see Tables 21-22), putting Malta with the top four countries in this area (Figures 15-16). When asked about relationships with people in general, the great majority expressed satisfaction with their relationships ranging from around 75% of 8 year olds going up to almost 90% of 10/12 year olds; girls appear more satisfied with these relationships than boys. For the great majority of children in the study, time with friends is for talking and playing but not for studying. The majority talk and have fun with friends quite frequently (every day to most days), but only 20% meet frequently to study together (Table 23).

Table 20: Friends (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My friends are usually nice to me	2.5	6.7	11.1	25.8	53.9
I have enough friends	6.3	4.6	5.9	18.3	64.9

Table 21: Satisfied with friendships and other relationships (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
Satisfaction with: Your friends	1.9	0.5	4.9	14.7	78.1
Satisfaction with: The people in your area	7.1	5.0	16.3	23.6	48.0
Satisfaction with: Your relationships with people in general	4.7	4.7	16.0	20.5	54.0

Table 22: Satisfied with friendships and other relationships (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your friends	.5	.2	.1	.6	1.4	2.9	2.0	6.3	10.1	19.6	56.4
The people in your area	4.3	.9	1.2	2.0	2.6	6.6	4.9	8.1	13.5	17.6	38.2
Your relationships with people in general	1.1	.8	.6	.6	1.0	3.3	3.8	6.1	11.0	22.0	49.7

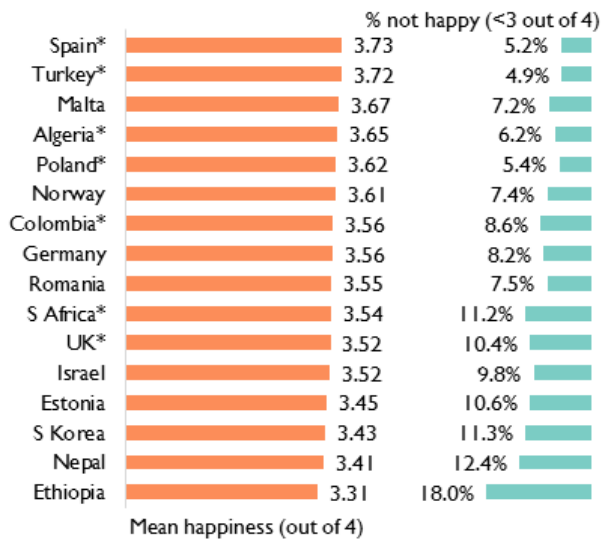


Figure 15: Satisfaction with friends (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

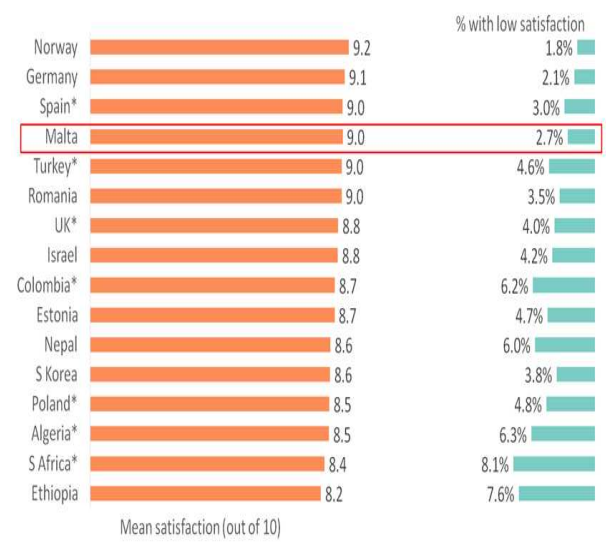


Figure 16: Satisfaction with friends (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

Table 23: How often do you spend time with friends (All age groups) (%)

	Not at all	Once or twice	Most days	Every day
How often do friends: Talk together	7.0	17.9	29.7	45.3
How often do friends: Have fun together	7.5	14.8	26.1	51.6
How often do friends: Meet to study together	60.6	19.3	10.0	10.1

4. Local Area

About 60% of children in the study feel safe in their area and believe that there are sufficient places to play or have a good time. Sixteen percent however, do not think there is enough space for play and leisure time while another 12% appear doubtful. Eleven percent do not feel safe when they walk in the area they live in, while another 11% also express some concern (Table 24). Girls appear to feel less safe than boys, while 12 year olds have more positive views about safety and space in their area than 8 year olds (Table 25). Three fourths of all children are satisfied with the outdoor areas children can use in their area (Tables 26-27); girls are more satisfied than boys with the area they live in; while 12 year olds are more satisfied with the outdoor areas for children than 10 year olds (Table 28). Children who lacked more basic items expressed less satisfaction with the area they live and the outdoor areas for children.

It is interesting to note that while 10/12 year olds are satisfied with the way they are dealt with at the doctors, 8 year olds have more reservations, with only 65% being satisfied; 10 year olds are also less satisfied than 12 year olds (Table 28). In fact when compared to international peers, Maltese 8 year olds are the least satisfied with the doctors from all the other countries (Figure 23). When asked how satisfied they are with people in their area, 72% of 8 year olds appear to be satisfied compared to about 80% of 10/12 year olds (Tables 29-30).

Compared to other countries, Maltese children are some of the least satisfied and happy children with their area. Malta is at the very bottom (16th place) of the list of countries for 8 year olds who are satisfied with the people who live in their area, 14th place in there being enough places to play or have a good time in, and 12th place in feeling safe in their area (Figures 17, 19, 21, 25). Ten and twelve year olds are somewhat more satisfied with their local area, being ranked higher than eight year olds when compared to the other countries, though in some areas such as how satisfied they are with people in their area, they rank relatively low (Figures 18, 20, 22, 26).

Table 24: Views about local area (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time	15.9	11.5	12.6	18.8	41.2
I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in	11.1	11.0	15.0	20.9	42.0

Table 25: Means variation in views about area (All age groups)

	Enough places to play or to have a good time	I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in
Gender		
Boy	2.59	2.84*
Girl	2.56	2.58
Age group		
8 year-olds	2.55	2.63
10 year-olds	2.52	2.74
12 year-olds	2.64	2.76

* p < 0.0005 (gender)

Table 26: Satisfaction with local area (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
How you are dealt with at the doctors	11.0	9.2	15.0	22.6	42.2
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	7.4	6.0	12.1	18.6	55.9
The area you live in general	3.8	4.1	10.7	14.9	66.6

Table 27: Satisfaction with local area (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How you are dealt with at the doctors	1.9	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.0	4.0	2.8	3.7	10.7	14.4	59.6
The outdoor areas children can use in your area	7.5	1.5	2.1	2.4	3.1	7.7	5.5	7.3	10.3	15.2	37.4
The area you live in general	1.5	0.5	0.9	0.9	1.6	4.8	3.9	6.6	11.6	15.4	52.3

Table 28: Mean variation in satisfaction with local area

	How you are dealt with at the doctors	The outdoor areas children can use in your area	The area you live in general
<i>Gender</i>			
Boy	8.77	7.45	8.71
Girl	8.88	7.38	8.47*
<i>Age group</i>			
10 year-olds	8.71	7.23	8.58
12 year-olds	8.93**	7.57**	8.60
<i>Material deprivation (Items lacked)</i>			
None***	9.12	7.77	8.90
One	8.71	7.34	8.59
Two or more	7.70	7.17	8.22
Total	8.68	7.41	.858

* p < 0.005 (gender), ** p < 0.005 (age), *** p < 0.005 (material deprivation/items lacked)

Table 29: Satisfied with friendships and other relationships (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
Satisfaction with: Your friends	1.9	0.5	4.9	14.7	78.1
Satisfaction with: The people in your area	7.1	5.0	16.3	23.6	48.0
Satisfaction with: Your relationships with people in general	4.7	4.7	16.0	20.5	54.0

Table 30: Satisfied with friendships and other relationships (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your friends	.5	.2	.1	.6	1.4	2.9	2.0	6.3	10.1	19.6	56.4
The people in your area	4.3	.9	1.2	2.0	2.6	6.6	4.9	8.1	13.5	17.6	38.2
Your relationships with people in general	1.1	.8	.6	.6	1.0	3.3	3.8	6.1	11.0	22.0	49.7

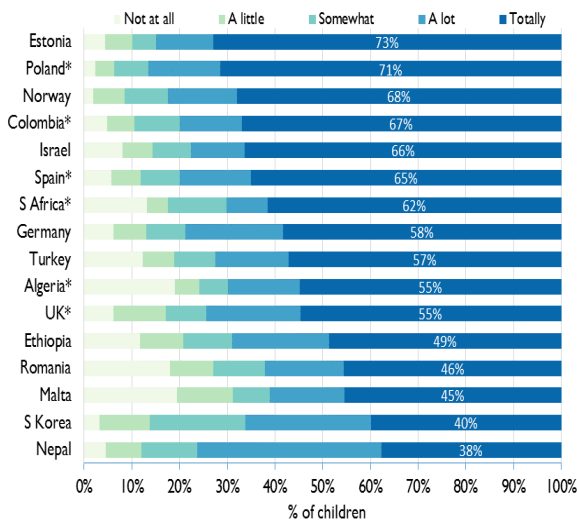


Figure 17: In my area there are enough places to play and have a good time (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

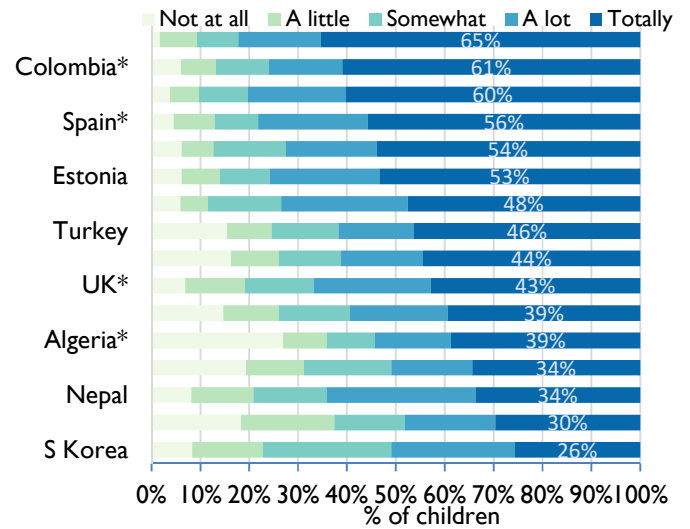


Figure 18: In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time (101/2 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

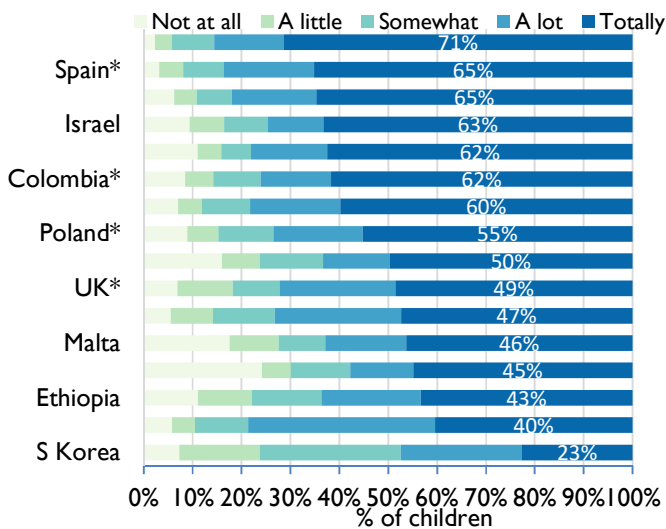


Figure 19: I feel safe when I walk around the area I live in (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

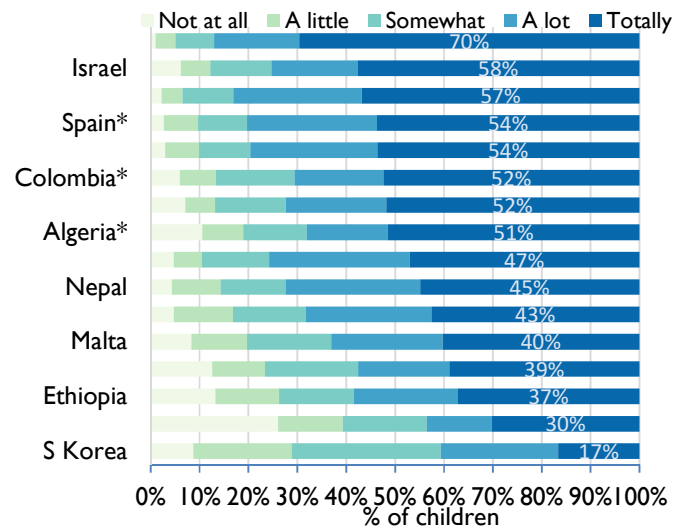


Figure 20: I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

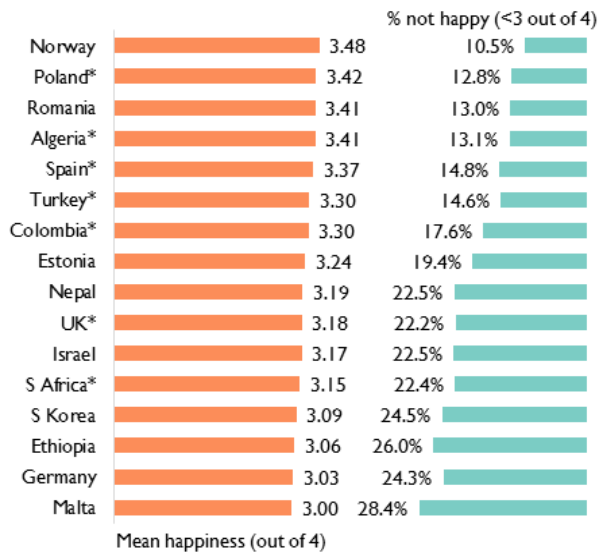


Figure 21: Satisfaction with 'the people who live in your area' (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

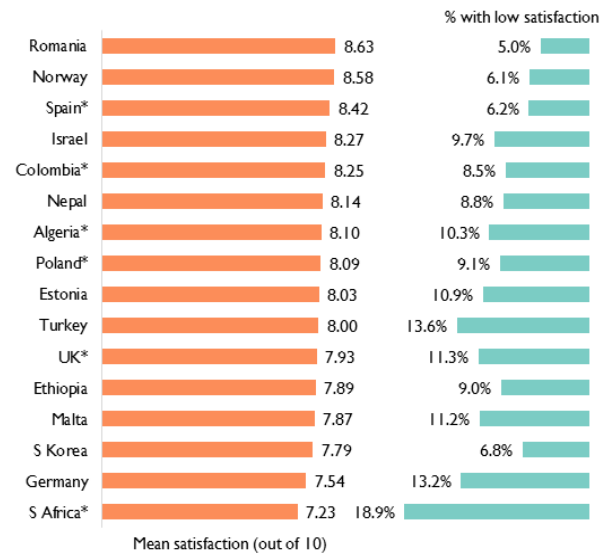


Figure 22 : Satisfaction with 'the people who live in your area' (10/12 year old) (Rees & Main, 2015)

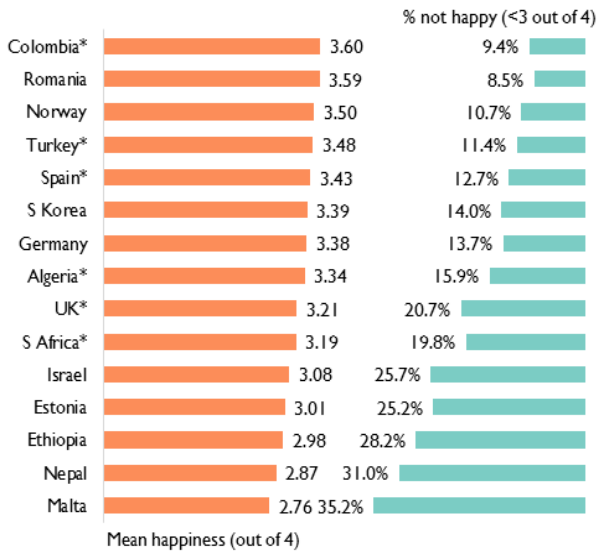


Figure 23: Satisfaction with the way dealt with by the doctor (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

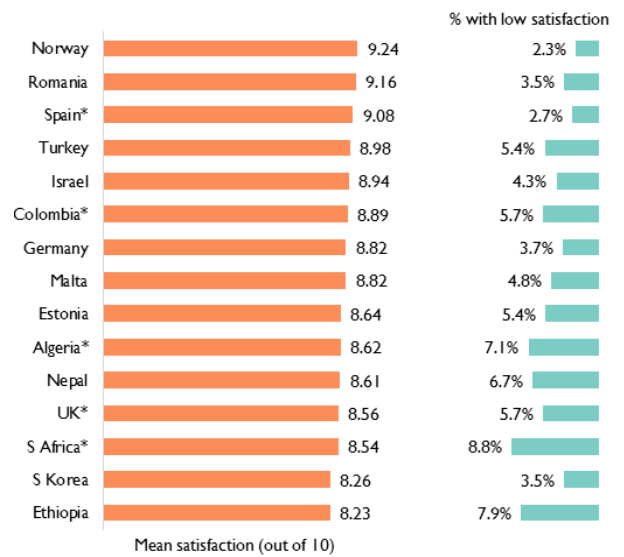


Figure 24: Satisfaction with the way dealt with by the doctor (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

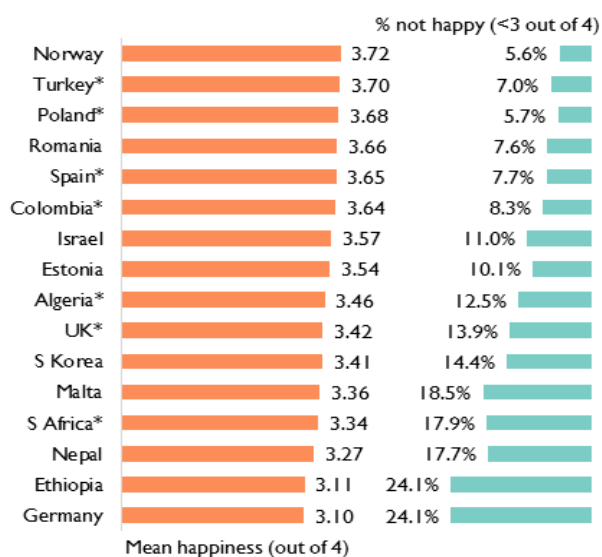


Figure 25: Satisfaction with the area you live in general (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

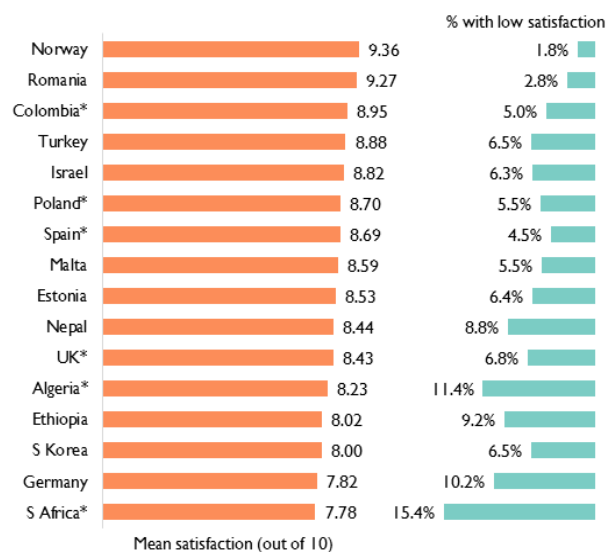


Figure 26: Satisfaction with the area you live in general (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

5. School

The great majority of children in the study like going to school (74%), feel safe at school (84%) and believe that teachers treat them fairly (85%) and listen to them (84%) (Table 31) . Girls feel safer and like more going to school than boys, eight year olds like more going to school than older peers, while primary school students, especially 10 year olds, have better views of their teachers than the middle school children (Table 32). The vast majority (about 85%) of 8 year olds are satisfied with school, including other children in their class (88%), school grades (83%), relationship with teachers (89%) and school experience (77%); girls are more satisfied than boys with their school experience and relationship with the teachers (Tables 33-34). Even higher figures are found amongst the older students (10-12 year olds), with over 90% being satisfied with the other children in their class, their school grades, their school experience, the things they have learnt and the relationships with the teachers (Table 35). There is relatively less satisfaction with school grades and other children in class when compared to the other aspects of school life. On the whole girls appear to be more satisfied, particularly with their school experience and relationship with teachers than boys, but boys are more satisfied with other children in their class. Twelve year olds are less satisfied than 10 year olds with other children in their class, the things they have learnt and relationship with teachers (Figure 36).

When compared with the other countries, Maltese 8 year olds are more or less in the middle of the list of countries, but with low ranking on marks (10th) and safety (12th place) (Table 37). On the other hand, 10/12 year olds rank very high in their relationships with teachers and peers and feeling safe at school, are somewhere in the middle with regards to grades, school experience and life as a student, but are ranked in 9th place in liking school (Table 38).

Despite the overall positive picture of school experience, more than one fourth of students reported frequent physical or relational bullying (more than once in a month) (Table 39). Boys appear to experience higher levels of physical victimisation than girls, while girls reported higher levels of relational bullying. Primary school children experience more victimisation, both physical and relational, than middle school students (12 year olds), with 8 year olds reporting more physical bullying and 10 year olds relational (Table 40). When compared to the other countries in the study, Malta ranks third place in physical bullying amongst 8 year olds and fourth place in relational bullying amongst 10/12 year old (Figures 27-30).

Table 31: Views about school (All age groups) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	2.6	4.3	9.4	24.3	59.4
I like going to school	8.2	7.1	11.1	24.4	49.1
My teachers treat me fairly	4.0	3.9	7.5	21.2	63.4
I feel safe at school	4.3	4.7	7.2	20.9	62.9

Table 32: Means variation in views about school (All age groups)

	My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	I like going to school	My teachers treat me fairly	I feel safe at school
<i>Gender</i>				
Boy	3.33	*2.83	3.35	*3.29
Girl	3.34	*3.15	3.37	*3.38
<i>Age group</i>				
8 year-olds	**3.34	**3.12	**3.32	3.36
10 year-olds	**3.46	**2.94	**3.50	3.29
12 year-olds	**3.22	**2.92	**3.27	3.35
Total	3.34	2.99	3.36	3.33

* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.005 (age)

Table 33: Satisfaction with school (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
Other children in your class	2.2	2.2	7.8	21.4	66.4
Your school marks	2.7	2.2	12.5	18.7	63.9
Your school experience	2.8	2.4	7.9	19.0	67.9
Your relationship with teachers	2.6	2.2	5.9	12.4	77.0

Table 34: Gender differences in satisfaction with school (8 year olds)

	Other children in your class	Your school marks	Your school experience	Your relationship with teachers
Boy	3.48	3.36	*3.35	*3.52
Girl	3.46	3.41	*3.62	*3.67
Total	3.47	3.38	3.47	3.59

* p < 0.05 (gender)

Table 35: Satisfaction with school (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Other children in your class	.4	.5	.5	1.3	2.1	4.9	4.2	9.4	15.5	20.0	41.3
Your school marks	1.1	.3	.5	1.3	1.2	5.0	3.5	6.8	14.5	23.0	42.7
Your school experience	1.1	.4	.5	.7	1.7	3.5	3.1	6.3	9.2	19.3	54.4
Things you have learned	.2	.4	.3	.9	.5	1.6	2.1	3.7	7.2	20.1	63.1
Your life as a student	1.0	.7	.6	.7	1.2	2.3	3.2	6.2	9.7	19.6	54.6
Your relationship with teachers	.8	.8	.4	1.1	1.0	3.3	2.9	4.7	9.3	19.7	56.0

Table 36: Means variation in satisfaction with school (10/12 year olds)

	Other children in your class	Your school marks	Your school experience	Your life as a student	Things you have learned	Your relationship with teachers
<i>Gender</i>						
Boy	*8.62	8.50	8.78	*8.67	9.15	*8.69
Girl	*8.30	8.58	8.84	*8.99	9.26	*9.04
<i>Age group</i>						
10 year-olds	**8.57	8.50	8.79	8.85	**9.29	**9.10
12 year-olds	**8.36	8.58	8.82	8.82	**9.13	**8.66
Total	6.92	6.97	7.16	8.84	9.21	7.25

* p < 0.0005 (gender), ** p < 0.05 (age)

Table 37: Views about school: rankings (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2015)

	Agreement questions				Satisfaction questions			
	Teachers		Safe	Like	Class		Marks	School exp.
	listen	fair			mates	Teachers		
Algeria*	1	4	2	1	3	3	6	4
Colombia*	4	1	1	3	8	6	8	1
Estonia	15	9	11	11	16	11	11	11
Ethiopia	12	12	15	2	13	15	14	16
Germany	13	15	14	16	15	10	15	15
Israel	8	8	10	12	14	12	5	14
Malta	5	6	12	7	6	5	10	7
Nepal	16	16	16	13	10	13	12	12
Norway	2	5	5	8	1	1	4	6
Poland*	9	3	4	10	5	7	2	8
Romania	10	2	6	5	7	4	1	3
S Africa*	7	11	7	6	11	9	9	10
S Korea	14	14	13	15	12	16	16	13
Spain*	6	7	8	9	2	8	7	5
Turkey*	3	13	3	4	4	2	3	2
UK*	11	10	9	14	9	14	13	9

Table 38: Views about school: rankings (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

	Agreement questions				Satisfaction questions					
	Teachers listen	Teachers fair	Safe	Like	Peers	Teachers	Learned	Marks	School exp.	Life as student
Algeria*	1	1	1	2	9	1	2	5	2	1
Colombia*	14	5	4	5	8	8	3	8	4	3
Estonia	15	13	13	16	15	13	13	14	14	13
Ethiopia	4	6	14	1	6	7	10	6	11	5
Germany	16	16	16	15	14	14	14	15	16	16
Israel	13	11	12	12	10	12	8	4	9	10
Malta	3	2	5	9	3	6	5	7	7	7
Nepal	7	3	11	3	5	4	6	1	6	6
Norway	6	9	2	10	1	5	9	3	5	9
Poland*	11	10	10	13	11	16	15	12	12	14
Romania	10	4	6	6	2	2	1	2	1	2
S Africa*	8	14	9	7	16	10	7	9	8	8
S Korea	9	12	15	8	12	11	16	16	15	15
Spain*	5	7	7	11	4	9	11	13	10	12
Turkey*	2	8	3	4	7	3	4	10	3	4
UK*	12	15	8	14	13	15	12	11	13	11

Table 39: Bullying (All age groups) (%)

	Never	Once	Two or 3 times	More than 3 times
Hit by other children in your school	56.5	17.5	12.8	13.2
Left out by other children in your class	52.0	20.6	13.5	13.9

Table 40: Means variation in bullying (All age groups)

	Hit by other children in your school	Left out by other children in your class
<i>Gender</i>		
Boy	1.00*	.80
Girl	.65	.98*
<i>Age group</i>		
8 year-olds	1.13**	.90
10 year-olds	.96	1.04**
12 year-olds	.46	.75
Total	0.84	0.89

* p < 0.0005 (gender), ** p < 0.0005 (age)

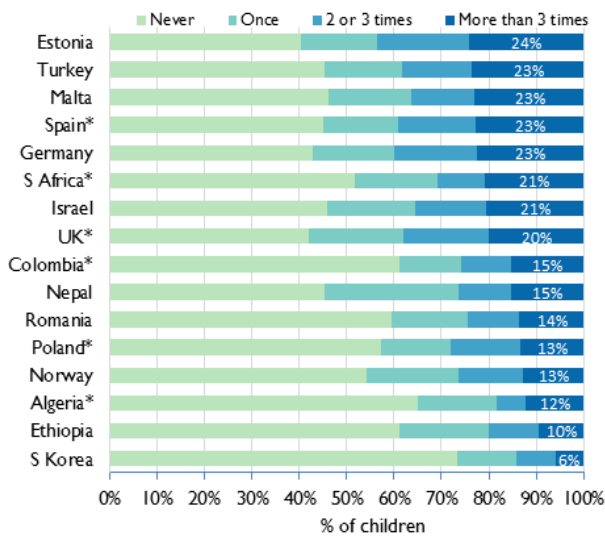


Figure 27: Hit by other children in school (past 2 weeks) (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

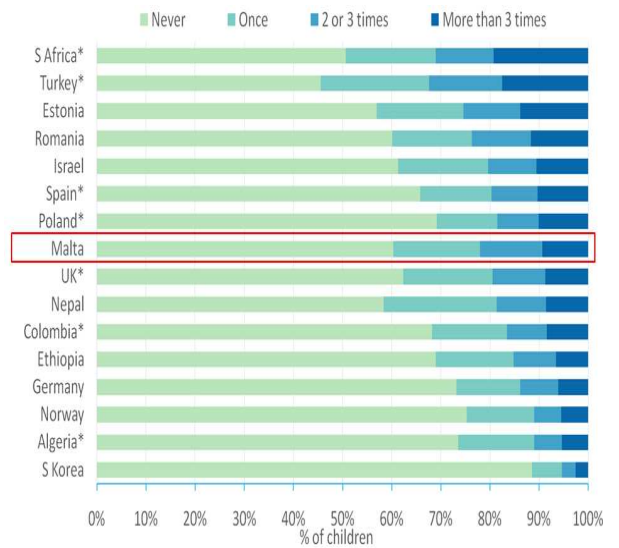


Figure 28: Hit by other children in school (past 2 weeks) (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

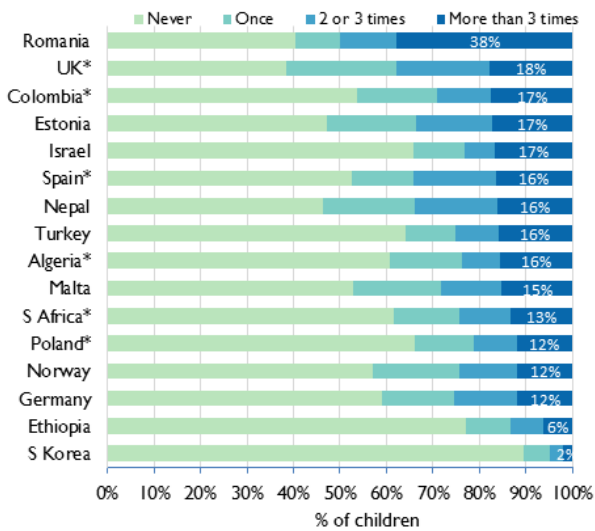


Figure 29: Left out by other children in class (past 2 weeks) (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

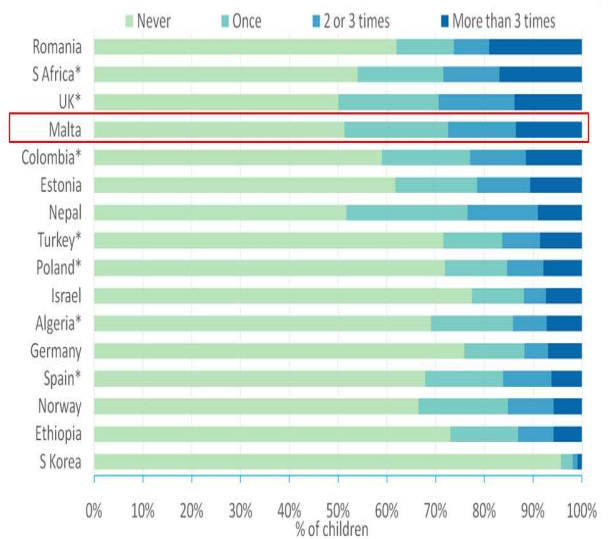


Figure 30: Left out by other children in class (past 2 weeks) (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

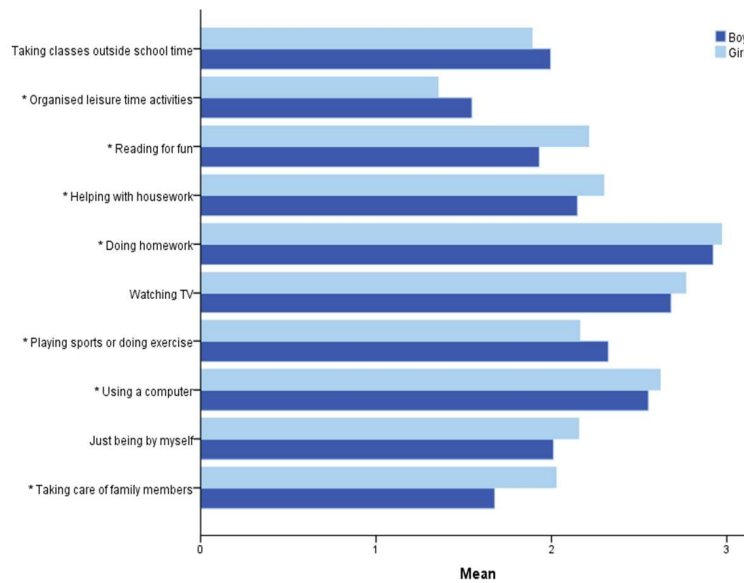
6. Use of time

Maltese children spend most of their time doing homework, watching TV, and using computers. Helping with housework, reading for fun and sports and exercise are also quite popular, but taking part in organised leisure time activities is not so common (Table 41). Gender differences reflect stereotypical gender roles, with boys spending more time on organised activities, sports and computers, and girls on reading, helping with housework, doing homework and taking care of others (Figure 31). Younger children spend more time reading for fun than older ones, while older children spend more time doing homework, watching TV and on computers than young ones (Table 42). The great majority (80% and over) are satisfied with their use of time (Tables 43-44); but girls are less satisfied than boys. Twelve year olds are less happy than 10 year olds, maybe reflecting the pressure of homework at this transitional age (Table 45). Maltese 8 year olds spend most time on the computer out of the sixteen countries, while being placed second in reading for fun and third in doing homework. On the other hand, they are almost at the bottom of the list of countries in sports and exercise (Table 46). There is a similar pattern for 10/12 year olds, being ranked first of all countries in reading for fun and homework and second in computer, but 12th place in sports and exercise (Tables 47).

Table 41: Time use (All age groups, except items marked with *) (%)

	Rarely or never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Every day or almost
Taking classes outside school time	18.9	6.2	39.6	35.3
Taking part in organized leisure time activities (like clubs and groups)	35.0	7.7	35.8	21.5
Reading for fun	12.2	10.3	24.3	53.1
Helping with housework	8.5	12.1	29.4	50.0
Doing homework	1.4	1.4	4.2	93.0
Watching TV	4.4	4.9	18.0	72.7
Playing sports or doing exercise	11.6	8.7	31.2	48.5
Using a computer	7.1	8.6	20.7	63.6
Just being by myself *	14.0	12.0	26.5	47.5
Taking care of brothers, sisters, other family members or people you live with*	25.4	9.4	20.2	45.0

*indicates questions only asked of 12-year-olds



* $p < 0.005$ (gender)

Figure 31: Gender differences in time use (All age groups)

Table 42: Means variation in time use (All age groups, except items marked with *)

	Classes outside school	Organized leisure activities*	Reading for fun	Helping with housework	Doing homework	Watching TV	Sports or exercise	Using a computer
<i>Age group</i>								
8 year-olds	1.87	-	**2.23	2.23	**2.83	**2.55	2.11	**2.31
10 year-olds	1.93	-	**2.26	2.20	**2.89	**2.51	2.16	**2.33
12 year-olds	1.93	-	**2.07	2.21	**2.94	**2.70	2.22	**2.56
Total	1.90	1.44	2.18	2.21	2.88	2.59	2.16	2.42

*indicates questions only asked of 12 year-olds

** $p < 0.0005$ (age)

Table 43: Satisfaction with time use (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
What you do in your free time	1.9	0.9	4.5	12.3	80.5

Table 44: Satisfaction with time use (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How you use your time	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.4	3.4	3.3	8.5	12.6	20.1	49.3
What you do in your free time	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.7	1.2	4.9	8.5	17.8	62.7

Table 45: Means variation in satisfaction with time use

	How you use your time (10/12 year-olds)	What you do in your free time (10/12 year-olds)	What you do in your free time (8 year-olds)
Gender			
Boy	*8.87	9.16	3.73
Girl	8.69	9.09	3.63
Age group			
10 year-olds	**8.96	9.15	-
12 year-olds	8.62	9.11	-
Total	8.78	9.12	3.26

* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.0005 (age)

Table 46: Rankings of frequencies of each activity (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

	Classes	Reading for fun	Help house	Home work	TV	Sports/ Exercise	Computer
Algeria*	2	6	2	11	10	13	8
Colombia*	6	10	6	10	1	3	3
Estonia	1	15	10	1	8	6	5
Ethiopia	16	16	5	15	16	16	16
Germany	5	11	15	7	12	7	13
Israel	12	12	9	8	5	4	2
Malta	7	2	11	3	6	14	1
Nepal	15	9	4	14	15	15	15
Norway	9	14	13	5	9	9	12
Poland*	10	8	3	2	3	1	7
Romania	11	1	1	4	2	2	4
S Africa*	13	3	8	12	11	11	9
S Korea	3	13	16	13	14	12	14
Spain*	4	7	7	9	4	5	10
Turkey	8	4	12	6	13	8	11
UK*	14	5	14	16	7	10	6

Table 47: Rankings of frequencies for each activity (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

	Classes	Reading for fun	Help house	Home work	TV	Sports/ Exercise	Computer
Algeria*	10	7	5	10	14	15	13
Colombia*	6	13	10	15	8	10	6
Estonia	1	15	11	2	1	5	1
Ethiopia	13	16	2	14	16	16	16
Germany	2	10	14	9	7	6	12
Israel	7	8	9	8	5	3	3
Malta	4	1	13	1	10	12	2
Nepal	11	5	1	11	15	13	15
Norway		12	8	7	2	2	7
Poland*	9	14	3	3	4	1	4
Romania	14	4	4	6	6	8	9
S Africa*	5	3	6	12	11	9	11
S Korea	8	11	15	13	12	14	14
Spain*	3	6	7	4	9	4	8
Turkey	12	2	16	5	13	11	10
UK*	15	9	12	16	3	7	5

7. Life and self satisfaction

The great majority of children are satisfied or very satisfied with the various aspects of their life and their future (Tables 48, 49). Eight year olds appear to be most satisfied with use of time, their life as a whole, their health, their bodies and the way they look, but relatively less satisfied with freedom and being listened to by adults. Similarly 10 and 12 year olds scored high on health, free time and life in general, but gave lower scores on items such as use of time, freedom, opportunities, listened by adults, and doing things away from home. Maltese children may be expressing their desire for more freedom, autonomy and choice in their lives.

Eight year olds boys are more satisfied with their bodies than girls, while girls feel more listened to by adults. Ten and twelve year old boys are more satisfied than girls on use of time, self-confidence, things they want to be good at, and the future. Ten year olds are more satisfied than 12 year olds with use of time, self-confidence and things they want to be good at, maybe indicating issues related to the emerging of adolescence (Table 50, Figure 32). When compared to peers from the other countries, Maltese children are more or less in middle rank with regards to health and appearance (6th/7th place), but 8 year olds move down to 10th place in satisfaction with own body (Tables 56-57).

Twelve year old children are satisfied to very satisfied with various aspects of their lives, such as the way they are, knowing where their life is going, learning different things and feeling positive about the future (Table 51). Boys are more satisfied about their future than girls, particularly in liking the way they are, friendly people and positive views about the future (Figure 33).

When asked to evaluate a number of qualities in themselves, 10/12 year olds underlined such qualities as friendliness, relationships, family, kindness and personality, with less importance given to money, power and image (Table 52). Boys gave more importance to money, power and image than girls, maybe reflecting gender stereotypes (Table 53).

When asked how they felt in the past weeks, 10/12 year old felt very happy and energetic, active and satisfied, the lowest scores being in feeling calm and relaxed (though still high) (Table 54). Boys felt more energetic than girls, while 12 year olds more active than 10 year olds (Table 55).

Table 48: Satisfaction with life and future (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
The freedom you have	5.5	3.2	11.8	18.6	60.8
Your health	2.1	1.1	5.2	14.1	77.5
The way that you look	1.9	1.9	8.1	15.9	72.2
Your own body	2.5	2.5	6.6	16.7	71.7
What you do in your free time	1.9	0.9	4.5	12.3	80.5
How you are listened to by adults in general	4.1	3.8	8.8	21.6	61.7
How safe you feel	2.2	2.2	6.6	12.4	76.6
Your life as a whole	2.7	1.2	4.7	12.3	79.1

Table 49: Satisfaction with life and future (10/12 year olds) (%)

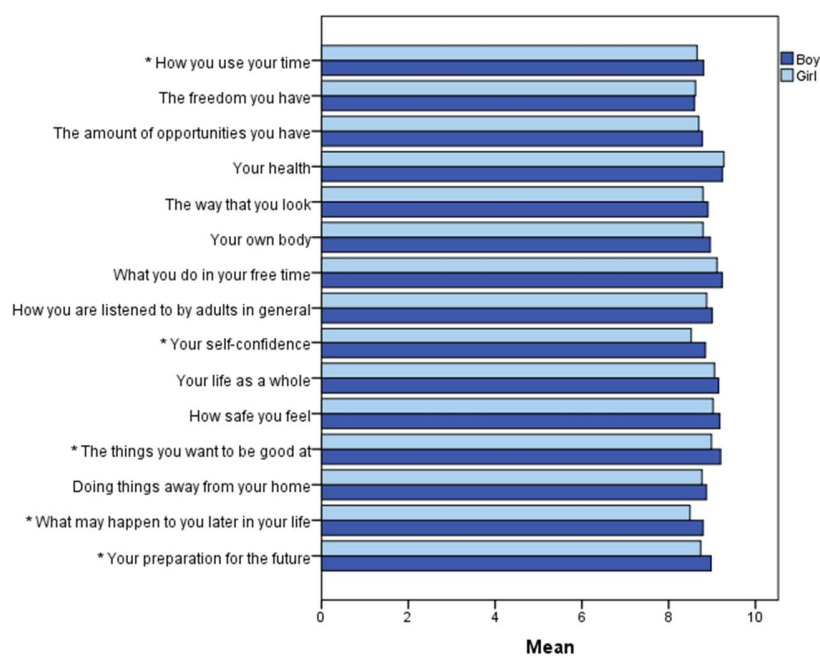
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How you use your time	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.4	3.4	3.3	8.5	12.6	20.1	49.3
The freedom you have	1.4	0.4	0.8	1.0	2.3	4.4	4.0	7.3	12.5	17.5	48.4
The amount of opportunities you have*	1.4	0.2	0.5	1.3	1.7	2.6	4.4	6.1	12.5	18.3	51.0
Your health	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7	2.4	2.4	4.5	7.2	14.3	66.9
The way that you look	1.2	0.6	0.9	0.6	1.5	3.5	2.5	5.8	8.6	17.0	57.9
Your own body	1.6	0.5	0.4	1.2	1.2	3.2	3.3	5.6	9.1	14.6	59.3
What do you do in your free time	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.7	1.2	4.9	8.5	17.8	62.7
How you are listened by adults in general	1.3	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.8	2.9	3.6	4.9	10.0	18.8	54.8
Your self-confidence	1.1	0.3	0.7	1.1	1.6	3.1	2.8	6.1	10.5	19.3	53.4
Your life as a whole	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	3.2	2.1	4.5	7.8	16.3	63.4
The things you want to be good at	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.8	2.6	2.0	4.3	9.5	21.1	58.1
Doing things away from your home	3.1	0.7	0.4	1.3	2.0	5.1	4.0	6.0	12.3	19.4	45.7
What may happen to you later in your life	2.4	1.0	0.6	0.6	1.5	5.4	3.8	7.8	13.0	21.0	43.0
Future	1.2	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	4.6	3.2	5.0	11.4	16.3	56.5
How safe you feel	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.6	2.7	2.4	5.0	8.7	17.4	61.2

*12 year olds only

Table 50: Means variation in satisfaction with life and future (10/12 year olds)

	Use your time	Freedom	Opportunities *	Health	Appearance	Body	Free time	Listened to by adults	Self-confidence	Your life as a whole	The things you want to be good at	Doing things away from your home	Later in your life	Future	Safety
Gender															
Boy	*8.87	8.49	8.73	9.18	8.89	8.90	9.16	8.81	*8.88	9.13	*9.22	8.43	*8.55	*8.95	9.13
Girl	*8.69	8.55	8.65	9.19	8.78	8.74	9.09	8.79	*8.68	9.03	*8.95	8.28	*8.18	*8.73	9.00
Age group															
10 year olds	**8.96	8.48	-	9.19	8.89	8.84	9.15	8.70	**8.95	9.11	**9.17	**7.91	*8.18	8.88	9.11
12 year olds	**8.62	8.55	8.68	9.18	8.79	8.80	9.11	8.88	**8.63	9.06	**9.01	**8.74	*8.53	8.81	9.03
Total	8.78	8.56	6.51	9.18	8.83	8.82	8.99	8.79	8.78	9.08	9.08	8.34	8.36	8.84	9.04

* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.05 (age)

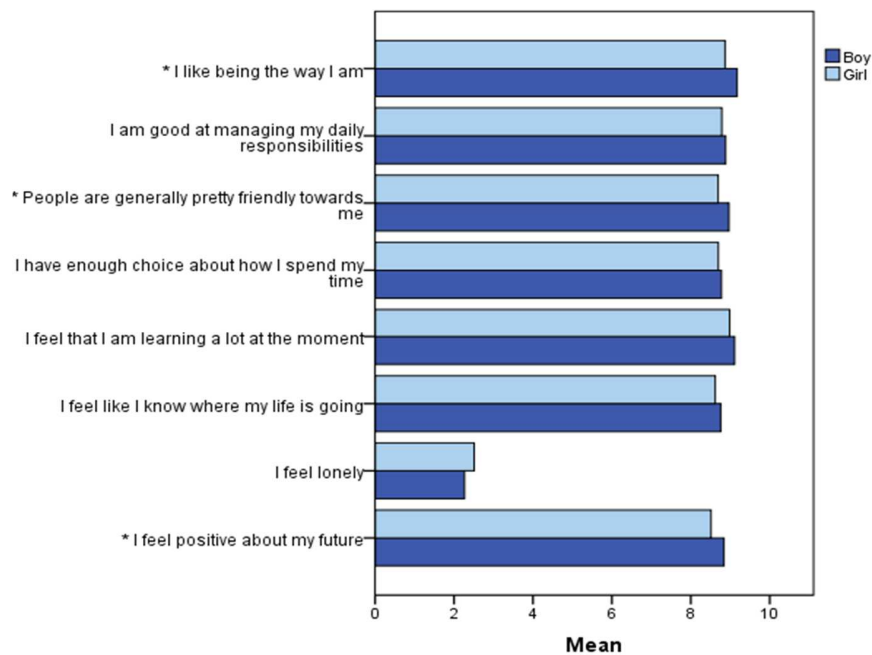


* p < 0.05 (gender)

Figure 32: Gender differences in satisfaction with life and future (10/12 year olds)

Table 51: Satisfaction with life (12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I like being the way I am	.9	.4	.3	.7	1.0	2.9	3.2	5.6	8.5	15.9	60.5
I am good at managing my daily responsibilities	.5	.2	.2	.6	1.7	2.9	3.2	7.3	13.0	22.5	47.9
People are generally pretty friendly towards me	.5	.5	.2	.8	1.7	3.1	4.1	5.4	12.4	23.8	47.6
I have enough choice about how I spend my time	.8	.7	.7	1.4	2.6	2.2	3.0	6.8	11.7	19.4	50.8
I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment	.5	.2	.2	.6	.9	1.3	2.6	6.6	12.6	17.9	56.6
I feel like I know where my life is going	1.4	.5	.4	1.4	1.3	3.9	3.1	6.5	11.7	21.9	47.9
I feel lonely	53.0	8.4	6.0	4.4	3.3	4.8	1.8	3.6	4.7	3.0	7.0
I feel positive about my future	.7	.6	.6	.9	2.0	4.7	4.3	7.2	11.7	14.8	52.5



* p < 0.05 (gender)

Figure 33: Gender differences in satisfaction with life (12 year olds)

Table 52: Views about self (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Friendliness	1.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.6	2.2	1.7	4.4	9.6	18.5	61.0
Relationships with people	1.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.9	2.8	2.0	3.9	9.6	20.5	58.3
Money	6.8	1.1	1.2	1.6	1.5	4.8	4.6	6.7	12.9	15.3	43.5
Power	4.3	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.4	3.9	4.30	7.0	11.2	15.9	49.0
Family	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.6	1.0	1.8	1.7	2.2	5.0	9.0	77.4
Personality	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.6	1.5	1.4	3.1	7.6	17.7	66.0
Kindness	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.4	1.1	1.0	3.3	6.8	15.0	70.9
Image	3.2	0.8	0.5	1.0	0.8	3.1	3.1	5.3	8.3	16.8	57.2

Table 53: Means variation in views about self (10/ 12 year olds)

	Friendliness	Relationships with people	Money	Power	Family	Personality	Kindness	Image
Gender								
Boy	9.06	9.02	*8.33	*8.44	9.38	9.19	9.33	*8.91
Girl	9.14	9.05	*7.57	*8.13	9.35	9.31	9.43	*8.46
Age group								
10 year-olds	9.13	8.96	**7.75	8.34	**9.47	9.28	9.44	8.70
12 year-olds	9.07	9.11	**8.13	8.23	**9.27	9.22	9.33	8.66
Total	9.10	9.04	7.95	8.29	9.37	9.25	9.38	8.68

* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.05 (age)

Table 54: Views about satisfaction (past 2 weeks) (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Satisfied	1.7	0.4	0.2	0.8	1.3	5.4	4.7	6.9	13.1	17.6	47.9
Happy	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.2	2.3	2.7	3.9	8.38	16.1	62.6
Relaxed	2.6	0.8	1.7	2.2	2.9	4.3	5.4	7.2	12.1	15.7	45.0
Active	1.7	0.5	0.6	1.5	1.8	3.1	3.9	5.8	10.8	14.0	56.3
Calm	7.8	1.2	3.3	3.3	2.8	6.3	5.8	8.2	11.3	14.3	35.8
Full of Energy	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	2.7	3.5	5.2	7.4	11.5	65.7

Table 55: Means variation in satisfaction (past 2 weeks)(10/12 year olds)

	Satisfied	Happy	Relaxed	Active	Calm	Full of energy
Gender						
Boy	8.62	9.09	8.18	8.75	7.40	*9.12
Girl	8.46	9.02	8.13	8.61	7.18	*8.84
Age group						
10 year-olds	8.50	**9.17	8.19	**8.50	7.22	9.04
12 year-olds	8.57	**8.96	8.13	**8.84	7.35	8.92
Total	8.54	9.06	8.16	8.68	7.29	8.98

* p < 0.005 (gender), ** p < 0.05 (age)

Table 56: Summary of rankings by country
(8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, &
Bradshaw, 2016)

	Health	Appearance	Body
Algeria*	12	5	9
Colombia*	1	2	1
Estonia	15	11	13
Ethiopia	14	12	14
Germany	11	9	11
Israel	6	4	5
Malta	7	7	10
Nepal	16	14	16
Norway	9	8	8
Poland*	5	na	4
Romania	2	1	2
S Africa*	13	10	7
S Korea	10	15	15
Spain*	4	3	3
Turkey*	3	6	6
UK*	8	13	12

Table 57: Summary of rankings by country
(10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

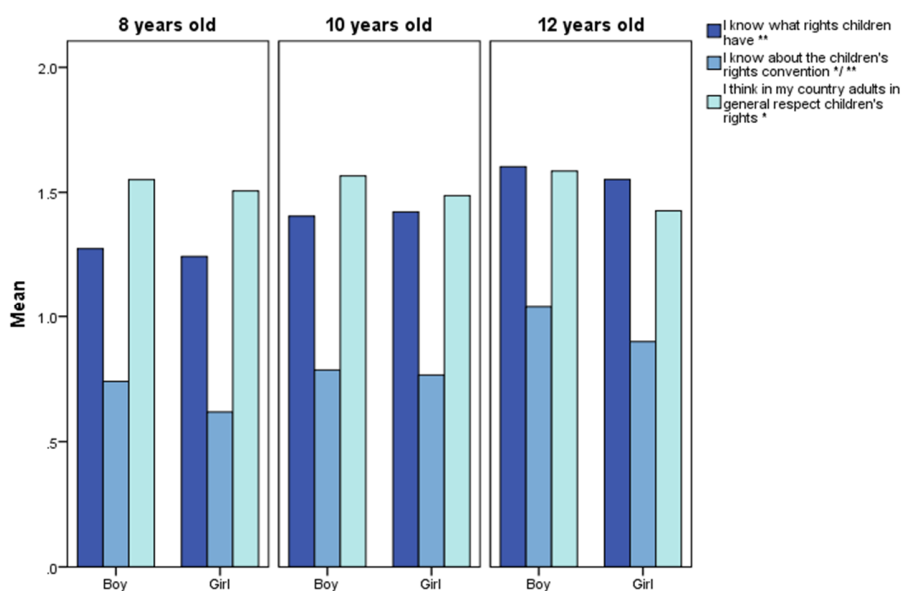
	Health	Appearance	Body
Algeria*	7	4	7
Colombia*	2	1	1
Estonia	13	11	13
Ethiopia	11	8	8
Germany	9	12	14
Israel	4	3	3
Malta	6	6	6
Nepal	15	13	10
Norway	8	10	12
Poland*	10		11
Romania	1	2	2
S Africa*	12	7	5
S Korea	16	15	16
Spain*	5	9	9
Turkey*	3	5	4
UK*	14	14	15

8. Children’s Rights

When asked about their rights, around half of children in the study said that they know what their rights are and that adults respect children’s rights, but less than one fourth know about the Children’s Rights Convention (Table 58). A look at Figure 34 shows that as children grow older, they become more aware of their rights; boys appear to be more cognisant of the children’s rights convention than girls and believe that adults respect more children’s rights. When compared to international peers, Maltese children are middle ranked in their knowledge of their rights and the extent to which adults respect their rights (higher up for 10/12 year olds), but are ranked relatively low in knowledge about the UN Convention on Children’s Rights, with 10/12 year olds ranked 15th out of 16 countries (Tables 59-60).

Table 58: Children’s rights (All age groups) (%)

	No	Not sure	Yes
I know what rights children have	9.9	37.9	52.1
I know about the children's rights convention	40.6	36.9	22.5
I think in my country adults in general respect children's rights	7.4	33.4	59.2



* p < 0.05 (gender), ** p < 0.0005 (age)

Figure 34: Gender and age differences in children’s rights (All age groups)

Table 59: Country ranking for children's rights questions (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

	Know about rights	Know about UN convention	Adults respect child rights
Algeria*	7	5	8
Nepal	9	13	13
Estonia	10	6	10
Spain*	11	8	4
Colombia*	1	1	5
Turkey	2	3	2
Ethiopia	3	9	12
S Korea	12	14	15
Germany	6	12	11
UK*	14	10	9
Israel	13	7	6
Romania	4	4	3
Norway	5	2	1
S Africa*	15	15	14
Malta	8	11	7

Table 60: Country rankings for children's rights questions (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

	Know about rights	Know about UN convention	Adults respect child rights
Algeria*	12	10	15
Colombia*	2	2	13
Estonia	10	4	6
Ethiopia	7	13	10
Germany	13	16	7
Israel	14	7	11
Malta	8	15	4
Nepal	4	9	2
Norway	1	1	1
Poland*	3	6	12
Romania	6	5	9
South Africa*	9	12	14
South Korea	15	11	16
Spain*	11	8	8
Turkey*	5	3	3
UK*	16	14	5

9. Overall subjective well-being

Over 90% of children in the study are satisfied to very satisfied with their overall life (Tables 61-62). More than three fourths feel that their life is going well and that they are having a good life, with excellent things happening in their life (Tables 63-64). A considerable minority of eight year olds, however, appear to be less satisfied with their lives, particularly disagreeing that they have what they want in life. When compared to the other countries, Maltese eight year olds are ranked in the middle of the list of countries in terms of overall wellbeing and percentage of children with low wellbeing (8th place), but are with the top three countries in terms of children with very high level of wellbeing; 10/12 year olds on the other hand, are in fourth place with regards to the percentage of children with low wellbeing (Tables 65-66).

Table 61: Overall life satisfaction (8 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4
Your life as a whole	2.7	1.2	4.7	12.3	79.1

Table 62: Overall life satisfaction (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your life as a whole	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	3.2	2.1	4.5	7.8	16.3	63.4

Table 63: Student's Life Satisfaction Scale items (8 year olds) (%)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My life is going well	3.8	3.8	4.0	18.4	70.0
My life is just right	3.8	4.3	3.5	18.6	69.8
I have a good life	2.3	2.8	4.7	16.6	73.5
I have what I want in life	10.3	5.8	7.6	16.3	60.0
The things in my life are excellent	4.8	4.1	5.9	18.4	66.7

Table 64: Student's Life Satisfaction Scale items (10/12 year olds) (%)

	0	1	2	4	3	5	6	7	8	9	10
My life is going well	.9	.4	.8	.6	1.0	3.1	3.1	6.0	10.7	16.5	56.8
My life is just right	1.5	.8	.8	.9	.9	3.7	3.7	5.7	10.2	14.5	57.4
I have a good life	1.2	.5	.4	.5	1.4	2.1	2.5	3.8	8.9	14.4	64.4
I have what I want in life	1.9	.8	.4	1.0	2.0	3.9	2.8	6.1	9.8	17.7	53.6
The things in my life are excellent	1.4	.7	.7	1.1	2.1	3.5	3.4	4.9	9.0	15.7	57.5

Table 65: Country ranking of overall wellbeing (happiness and satisfaction) (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

	Mean score (out of 10)		% with low well-being (<5 out of 10)		% with very high well-being (10 out of 10)	
	Mean	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Algeria*	8.78	6	4.7%	7	42.1%	8
Colombia*	8.93	3	2.6%	1	50.5%	5
Estonia	8.41	10	7.1%	11	35.5%	12
Ethiopia	7.49	16	12.4%	16	22.3%	15
Germany	8.39	12	7.9%	12	35.2%	13
Israel	8.89	4	3.8%	5	53.2%	3
Malta	8.60	8	5.6%	8	47.1%	6
Nepal	7.68	15	7.0%	10	13.3%	16
Norway	8.64	7	6.6%	9	37.1%	11
Poland*	9.00	2	3.9%	6	52.5%	4
Romania	9.08	1	2.7%	2	58.4%	1
S Africa*	8.54	11	3.7%	4	38.8%	10
S Korea	7.91	14	9.2%	15	30.0%	14
Spain*	8.83	5	3.0%	3	44.9%	7
Turkey*	8.59	9	8.2%	13	55.3%	2
UK*	8.39	13	9.1%	14	40.9%	9
All	8.50		6.1%		41.0%	

Table 66: Country ranking of overall wellbeing (happiness and satisfaction) (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

	Mean score (out of 10)		% with low well-being (<5 out of 10)		% with very high well-being (10 out of 10)	
	Mean	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Algeria*	9.13	5	3.5%	6	67.9%	5
Colombia*	9.42	2	1.8%	2	77.0%	3
Estonia	8.97	9	3.6%	8	58.9%	9
Ethiopia	8.63	14	4.5%	11	50.7%	15
Germany	8.82	10	4.1%	10	52.6%	14
Israel	9.20	4	3.5%	7	73.1%	4
Malta	9.08	6	2.9%	4	63.7%	6
Nepal	8.65	13	6.0%	14	57.3%	10
Norway	9.00	8	3.4%	5	60.3%	8
Poland*	8.81	11	4.8%	12	56.7%	12
Romania	9.51	1	1.5%	1	77.1%	2
S Africa*	8.56	15	7.4%	16	62.8%	7
S Korea	8.10	16	7.4%	15	39.5%	16
Spain*	9.02	7	2.8%	3	56.8%	11
Turkey*	9.27	3	4.1%	9	78.0%	1
UK*	8.66	12	5.5%	13	53.4%	13
All	8.92		4.2%		61.5%	

10. International ranking of strengths and weaknesses

Tables 67 and 68 illustrate Malta's ranking in different aspects of children's lives for 8 and 10/12 year olds respectively. The tables provide a portrait of the strengths and weaknesses of Maltese children's wellbeing when compared to the other 15 countries in the study. Money and possessions, friends and relationships with teachers are the three major strengths for 8 year olds. Ten and twelve year olds in Malta, appear to have more positive views of their wellbeing, being ranked 5th place or above on money and possessions and friends, as well as the people they live with, their class peers, the things they have learnt, their use of time and what they do in their free time, and feeling safe. On the other hand, the relative weak areas in the wellbeing of Maltese 8 year old children are related to relationships and the local area, namely the people in their area and the area where they live, family life, the way they are dealt with by doctors, relationships in general and the freedom they have. For ten and twelve year olds, the local area is the weakest link to the wellbeing, namely the people and the outdoor areas for children in their area, as well as doing things away from home.

Table 67: Malta's ranking* for different aspects of life (8 year olds) (Rees, Andresen, & Bradshaw, 2016)

Aspects of life	Ranking	Aspects of life	Ranking
The house/flat where you live	12	Other children in your class	6
The people you live with	8	Your school marks	10
All the other people in your family	8	Your school experience	7
Your family life	15	Relationship with teachers	5
All the things you have	3	What do in your free time	7
Your friends	3	Your health	7
Your relationships with people in general	14	The way that you look	7
How you are dealt with at the doctors	15	Your own body	10
Outdoor areas children can use in your area	11	The freedom you have	13
The people in your area	16	How you are listened to by adults	7
The area you live in general	12	How safe you feel	8
*Ranking out of 16 countries			

Table 68: Malta's ranking* for different aspects of life (10/12 year olds) (Rees & Main, 2015)

Aspect of life	Ranking	Aspect of life	Ranking
The house or flat where you live	8	The people in your area	13
The people you live with	5	The local police in your area	7
All the other people in your family	7	How you are dealt with at the doctors	8
Your family life	10	The outdoor areas for children in your area	11
All the things you have	5	The area you live in general	8
Your friends	4	Your health	6
Your relationships with people in general	8	The way that you look	6
Other children in your class	3	Your own body	6
Your school marks	7	Your self-confidence	7
Your school experience	7	The freedom you have	8
Your life as a student	7	The amount of opportunities you have	6
Things you have learned	5	How you are listened to by adults in general	6
Your relationship with teachers	6	How safe you feel	5
How you use your time	4	The things you want to be good at	6
What you do in your free time	5	Doing things away from your home	11
* Ranking out of 16 countries			

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Home and Family

Most Maltese children lead a stable and happy life, feeling safe and happy at home, having close relationships with their parents, talking, learning and having fun together most days of the week. Girls appear to have a better family life than boys, having more quiet place to study, parents/carers listening more, and spending more good time together. The older children appear to be more satisfied with their families than younger ones, including feeling safer, having more quiet spaces to study, having parents/carers listening more, being treated better by parents and satisfied with home and the people they live with. On the other hand, the 8 year olds spend more time having fun and learning with parents than the older children.

A substantial percentage of children, however, would like a better life at home: 12% of eight year olds are not satisfied with their home and the people they live with, while another 10% are only partially satisfied. One in five children want more space to study at home, one in ten more attention from parents, and one in twenty do not feel safe at home. When compared to children from the other countries in the study, Maltese children rank low on how safe they feel at home and very low on having a quiet place to study. Satisfaction with family life is indeed one of the weakest aspects of the subjective wellbeing of Maltese children when compared to the other 15 countries, particularly amongst 8 year olds. A substantial number of children, particularly 8 year olds, would like to feel safer at home, more loved, supported and understood, more listened to and being treated fairly by their parents, and have more space to study at home.

Economic wellbeing

On the whole Maltese children feel cared for economically and happy with their possessions and the money they and their families have, with 95% being satisfied with the things they have. They compare very well with children in the other countries, being placed with the group of children least lacking in items. Almost all children said that at least one adult in the family has a paid job, with over 70% saying that there is more than one adult with a paid job in the family; the great majority of 12 year olds said their parents are spending the same as or more on their children than a year ago. On the other hand, 20% of 10/12 year olds do not have own room, while almost half of 12 year old either do not get any pocket money or get it only irregularly. Having own room or a private space in a shared room is particularly important for the developing adolescent's individuality and sense of autonomy. This is the space where they could be themselves, define themselves and have the space to make their own choices.

Friends

Maltese children are happy and satisfied with their friends, with more than 80% having enough friends and feeling that their friends are nice to them. More than 90% are satisfied with their friends, putting Malta with the top four countries in this aspect of wellbeing. Indeed this is one of the strengths of Maltese children's subjective wellbeing when compared to international peers. When asked about relationships with people in general, the great majority also expressed satisfaction with their relationships, with girls being more satisfied than boys. For the great majority of participants time with friends is spent having fun such as talking and playing, but only 20% meet frequently to study together. This could be an area worth exploring, particularly in cultures and peer groups where studying and academic achievement have little value, with the potential recruitment of peers as mentors.

Local Area

The local area where children live, including places where to play and have a good time, people in the area and issue of safety, is one of the relative weaknesses of the wellbeing of Maltese children, particularly when compared to other countries. Maltese eight year olds in particular are amongst the least satisfied children from the sixteen countries with the area they live in, the places where they can play, and the people in their area. Three fourths of all children are satisfied with the outdoor areas children can use in their area, but about one third expressed doubts about there being sufficient places to play or have a good time, while about one in five children do not feel totally safe to walk in their area, particularly girls and the younger children. Children from poorer social-economic background, are less satisfied with their local area than more affluent peers. While around three fourths of all children are satisfied with the people in their area, a substantial number are not so sure, which may be related to the lack of safety expressed by various participants. Maltese children would like more child-friendly and safe public spaces in their own locality where they can socialise, play with their peers and engage in other activities, such as sports. Indeed, Malta is rated as the worst and most dangerous country for cycling in the EU (Today Public Policy, 2015), while Maltese children have the highest rate of overweight and obesity in the EU and one of the highest in the world (Inchley et al., 2016; Decelis, Jago and Fox, 2014); they also engage less frequently in sports and exercise when compared to most children in the other countries in this study. On the other hand, watching television and spending time on the computer are favourite leisure time activities amongst Maltese children. Maltese eight year olds are also at the bottom of the list of countries with regards to the way they are treated by the doctor. Overall, these findings suggest poor health literacy amongst Maltese children and call for more health promotion initiatives, including education at home, at school and in the community, accessibility to health promoting spaces and provisions, as well as more child-friendly health care services, particularly in their own community.

School

The great majority of children in this study like going to school, feel safe at school, and believe that teachers treat them fairly and listen to them. Girls and primary school children report more satisfaction than boys and middle school students. The vast majority of 8 year olds are satisfied with school, including other children in their class, school grades, relationship with teachers and school experience. Higher figures are found amongst the older students with over 90% being satisfied with various aspects of their school life, there is relatively less satisfaction with school grades and other children in class when compared to the other aspects. On the whole, girls appear to be more satisfied, particularly with their school experience and relationship with teachers than boys, but boys are more satisfied with their classmates. Relationships with teachers is one of the strengths of Maltese children's wellbeing when compared with the other countries; on the other hand, Maltese 8 year olds score quite low on feeling safe at school. In fact, more than one fourth of the children reported frequent physical or relational bullying. Boys reported higher levels of physical victimisation than girls, while girls reported higher levels of relational bullying. Primary school children experience more victimisation, both physical and relational than middle school students, with 8 year olds reporting more physical bullying and 10 year olds more relational bullying. When compared to the other countries in the study, Malta ranks third place in physical bullying amongst 8 year olds and fourth place in relational bullying amongst 10/12 year olds. Bullying is a serious health hazard for children, with short term and long term negative impact on academic engagement and mental health and wellbeing (Downes and Cefai, 2016). Children have a right to be protected from bullying and assured of bullying-free learning and play environments and the findings of this study call for urgent action to prevent and stop bullying in Maltese schools.

Use of time

Maltese children spend most of their time doing homework, watching TV, and using computers, while helping with housework, reading for fun and sports and exercise are also quite popular. Gender differences reflect stereotypical gender roles, with boys spending more time on organised activities, sports and computers, and girls on reading, helping with housework, doing homework and taking care of others. Younger children spend more time reading for fun than older ones, while older children spend more time doing homework, watching TV and on computers than young ones. The great majority are satisfied with their use of time, but girls are less satisfied than boys, perhaps reflecting lack of choice and freedom and having to spend more time helping others than enjoying themselves. Twelve year olds are less happy than 10 year olds with their use of time, maybe reflecting the pressure of homework at this transitional age; in fact the latest HBSC study (Inchley et al., 2016) reports that Maltese students are the most pressured by school work. Maltese children are ranked at the top of the list of countries on spending most time on the

computer, reading for fun and doing homework. On the other hand they are almost at the bottom in sports and exercise. A more healthy balance needs to be found between academic work and computer/internet on one hand, and spending time on sports, exercise and organised activities, on the other. Girls may be given more freedom and choice on how to spend their time and encouraged to engage more in sports and exercise; boys on the other hand may be encouraged to spend more time helping others.

Life and self satisfaction

The great majority of Maltese children are satisfied with the various aspects of their life and their future. Eight year olds are most satisfied with their use of time, their life as a whole, their health, their bodies and the way they look, but less satisfied on freedom and being listened to by adults. Similarly 10 and 12 year olds scored high on health, free time and life in general, but lower on items such as use of time, freedom, opportunities, listened by adults, and doing things away from home. Eight year old boys are more satisfied with their bodies than girls, while girls feel more listened to by adults. Ten and twelve year old boys are more satisfied than girls on use of time, self-confidence, things they want to be good at and the future, possibly indicating girls' lack of choices in their life. Twelve year olds are less satisfied than ten year olds on use of time, self-confidence and things they want to be good at, maybe indicating issues related to the emerging adolescence. When asked how they felt in the past weeks, 10/12 year old felt very happy and energetic, active and satisfied. While on the whole Maltese children are satisfied with themselves and their future, they appear to be expressing their desire for more freedom, autonomy and choice in their lives; this is particularly true of girls and the older children on the threshold of adolescence. Adults may provide more space and opportunity for voice and choice for children, while ensuring their support, guidance and mentoring in the process. One of the main findings of the first wave of the International Study of Children's Subjective Wellbeing, was that children's wellbeing was related to their sense of freedom and autonomy (Lee and Yoo, 2015).

Maltese children appear to possess sound and healthy values, giving priority to such values as friendliness, relationships, family, kindness and personality, but less importance to money, power and image. Boys gave more importance to money, power and image than girls, maybe reflecting gender stereotypes, and underlining the need for more education on the value of prosocial and supportive behaviours such as collaboration, respect for diversity, solidarity, and kindness.

Children's Rights

Around half of Maltese children know what their rights are and agree that adults respect children's rights. As expected, as children grow older they become more aware of their rights. Boys appear to be more cognisant of the children's rights convention than girls and believe more than girls that adults respect

children's rights. On the other hand, less than one fourth of Maltese children know about the children's rights convention, and when compared to children from other countries, they rank quite low on their knowledge of the convention. Maltese children will benefit from more education on the UN convention on children rights and their rights as young citizens in Maltese society within a framework of rights and responsibilities. As described in the previous section, Maltese children yearn for more freedom and autonomy in their lives, for more space to have a voice and to make choices.

CONCLUSION

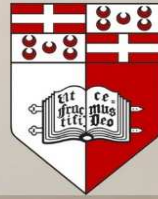
The overall picture which emerges from Maltese children's evaluations of their lives and wellbeing is a very positive one. Maltese children in general are satisfied and happy with their overall life, putting Malta with the top countries in the study on children's overall satisfaction about different aspects of their lives. Such a portrait resonates with that of the adult population, with Malta bring ranked 30th place out of 157 countries in the world on the latest World Happiness Report (2016), being the happiest nation in the Mediterranean (together with Israel) outperforming such countries as Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. An analysis of the findings, however, reveal a portrait of strengths and weaknesses which need to be addressed to ensure a better quality of life and health for all Maltese children. Maltese children appear to be more satisfied with their economic wellbeing and possessions, friends, school experience, relationship with teachers, and use of time, but less satisfied with their family, people in their area, the area where they live, and bullying at school. There are also a number of variations with regards to age and gender which need to be examined within each area as illustrated in this report. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be useful for the key stakeholders in their efforts to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of children in Malta. By listening to what the children themselves have to say, the stakeholders may help to create healthier and more child friendly spaces, systems and services for children. It is equally important however, that the children themselves are included as stakeholders in this process, being provided with the opportunity to take an active part in decision making, planning, policy development and implementation and provision of services.

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CENTRE FOR RESILIENCE & SOCIO-EMOTIONAL HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, 2016



ISBN: 978-99957-890-0-8