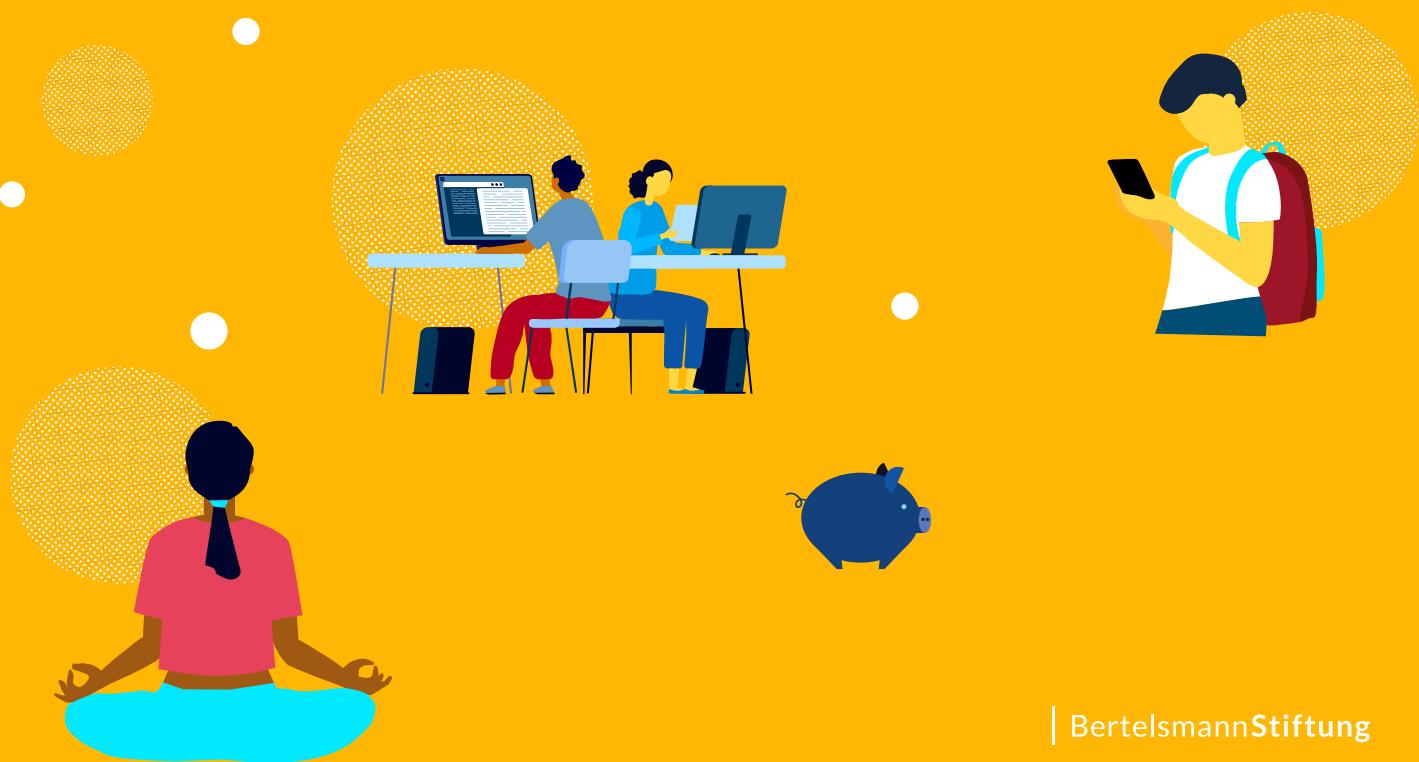




“With Us!”

Young Experts' Comments on the Study “The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing”



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2025

Publisher

Bertelsmann Stiftung

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www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

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Citation Information

Young Experts Team (2025): With us! Young Experts' Comments on the Study "The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing". Bertelsmann Stiftung (Publisher). Gütersloh.

Graphic und Illustration

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DOI 10.11586/2025120

ID_2921

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,



Hardly any generation has been put into boxes as quickly as ours. But how much truth is there in these clichés? Are children and young people really that sensitive, that uninterested, that demanding? Or are we simply seeing a pattern that every generation goes through – namely that adults don't take children and young people seriously?

The stereotypes placed on children and young people aren't just frustrating – to us, they reveal a bigger problem: a systematic underestimation of children and young people by adults. Why are young people so often seen as unexperienced or naive? Sure, we don't have decades of experience yet. But honestly – how well is the world doing right now, even though only adults with experience are in charge? And why do we have so little say, even though it's our future on the line?

What do children and young children really need? What challenges do they face in a world shaped entirely by adults? And most importantly: What can all of us do to make their voices heard?

What children and young people truly need to grow up well has barely been researched to date. The pilot and feasibility study "The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing" conducted by the Institut für soziale Arbeit e. V. (ISA) is therefore something genuinely new. What was also new was that, as the Young Experts Team (JEx-Team), we were involved from the very beginning – even in developing the questionnaire.

We are experts simply because we are young people, because we know the lived realities of children and young people from our own experiences. That's all – and that's precisely what matters. This allowed us to help improve the planned large-scale survey. Our goal was to reflect on the study, comment on it and then develop communication formats for its key findings.

One result is what you're holding in your hands right now: Our Point of View.

The JEx-Team

The link to the study:

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bedarfserhebung-jugend

The link to the original brochure (in German):

<https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/publikationen/publikation/did/mit-uns>

How children and young people in Germany are doing.



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"It's really a shame how children and young people are always underestimated. We should finally stop underestimating children so much."
(Nele)

A "successful" upbringing ... what is that?

"The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing" is the title of the ISA study, to which we were able to contribute to. But what does that mean? When does upbringing "succeed"? Does it succeed when children and young people are "capable to perform", fit for the job market? When they contribute to society and take on responsibility? Or does it mean that they can develop in a healthy way, well and autonomously? Unfold their talents and be satisfied with their lives? And how satisfied are children really? Before we address this question and the results of the study, we want to first pick up on what we often hear and read:

"Typical GenZ?"

"We used to just do things – now everyone complains," "Young people don't want to work anymore," "They're just constantly glued to their phones and have no idea how real life works," "They have no experience. They have to grow up first," "They have to accomplish something first"

...

"Adultism" refers to the attitude that adults generally know more and therefore have the right to decide for children and young people – without taking their opinions seriously. But is that true – are children and young people today lazy, ungrateful, dissatisfied and entitled?

How satisfied are you with your life?

49.3%  "rather satisfied"

45.8%  "very satisfied"

 Only 5% of the children and young people surveyed said they were "not satisfied"



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First, the good news

In general, children and young people in Germany are satisfied with their lives – 49.3% are “rather satisfied,” 45.8% are even “very satisfied,” 5% of children and young people are not. This means that children are more satisfied than adults. So no “whining.”

So everything is fine?

Not quite. The ISA study shows one thing above all: children and young people know very well how they feel – and also how others feel. They recognize the privileges they have, but also what is unfair and where there are problems. Financial worries of the family, anxiety about the future, school stress... – all these aspects influence how young people see their future and what challenges they have to overcome. However, they are too often not heard.

High standards? Rightly so!

Children and young people have rights that are intended to protect and promote their successful development. This includes: the right to a safe home, protection from violence and discrimination, the right to education and equal opportunities, the right to express one's opinion and be heard, the right to health and a healthy environment, time to play and relax, and the right to privacy and personal development. For all of this to happen, we don't have to accomplish anything. Demanding all of this is not an “entitlement”

but simply a right. These rights derive from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Germany has committed to respecting and implementing these rights.

What's important to us

The ISA study examined primarily the “financial needs” and “educational needs” of children and young people. That is to say: What do we need? What role does money play? How do we experience school? And what do we want there? Both topics are very important. Also, health-related needs of children and young people were considered in the study, and we have focused on this aspect as well, because we believe that health – both physical and mental – plays a key role in the well-being of children and young people. More on the needs of finances, education and health can be found on the next pages.

“Children – no matter what age – can reflect on what they have right now that makes their lives enjoyable, what a privilege is, and what influences them positively.” (Lukas)

“It's concerning that such young children notice differences in life situations. Something must change. If children from privileged families feel this way, how do children from financially disadvantaged families feel when comparing themselves to others?” (Diyana)

“Children notice differences and remember everything. They think about it differently than adults do.” (Finn)



[https://youtu.be/
HwQTCWwPygA](https://youtu.be/HwQTCWwPygA)





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"Actually, grades are pretty stupid. But they can also motivate you to study." (Adel)

"A single grade, disguised as a number or letter, doesn't show where more learning is needed." (Jonathan)

"Grades create social pressure. They are always a form of bias. Grades manifest that in such a brutal way. Teachers function on them, like, this is a straight-A student, that's a straight-F student." (Lukas)

New World. Old Curricula?

How children and young people experience education and what they would change.

Children and teenagers spend a large portion of their time at school – for many years, it is their central point of life. Therefore, school must be both a place of learning and a place of living, where we can participate and have a say. Because education is essential for our lives and our future. It is one of the most important needs of children and young people. But how do children and young people evaluate their school? And what do they need to learn well?

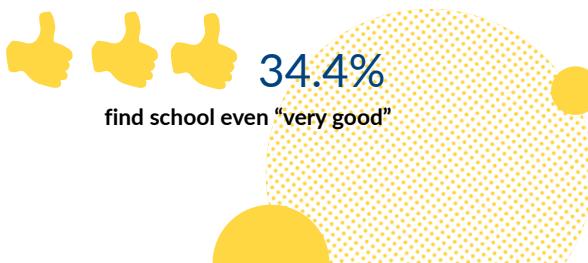
Grade "B"

If schools were given report cards, their overall grade wouldn't be as bad. Altogether, most children and young people view their school positively: 61.1% find it "rather good," and 34.4% even "very good." They also feel that their teachers treat them mostly fairly (50.4% "always," 42.5% "often"). Here as well, children and young people take a differentiated view: They appreciate what works well – and they critically recognize what needs to improve. We support that.

Rating grades ...

What surprised us: If children and young people were to rate grades, they would rate them slightly less than a C. What does that mean? That's exactly the problem with grades – they don't say much. Specifically, that means: When asked what children and young people need to learn, only 12.7% say they need grades. 35% find them somewhat helpful. The majority (52.3%) find grades little or not at all necessary for their learning process. So, grades don't seem to be important for learning, but only for report cards. Let's be honest: There are no grades on an employer's certificate. But does that stop adults from doing well career-wise?


61.1%
find school "rather good" overall




52.3%
find grades little or not at all necessary for their learning process

63.7%

of children and young people need homework "a little" or "not at all"



59.7% 51.5%

59.7% of elementary school students and 51.5% of secondary school students say they do not have enough say in the methods and content of their schoolwork



Homework – learning aid or stress factor?

Homework scores even worse: 63.7% of students say they need "little" or "none" of it to learn well.

Homework is a burden for many: About a quarter of the respondents say they don't have enough time for themselves. But free time is important – for friends, for sports, to stay healthy and be able to learn well. And we have also seen that homework is often used as a "punishment". It also increases inequality because it often depends on the family whether students receive help with their homework or not.

What really matters

According to the survey, the following aspects are far more important than grades and homework: the ability to ask questions when something is not understood, places where one can concentrate, interesting tasks, clarity about why something is being taught in class, collaboration with other peers, and the opportunity to help determine the topics of the lessons.

"There's just a disparity between students who can be supported by their families and those who can't. Grades foster pressure and fear of failure, which in turn promotes school absenteeism. Grades can be something really negative at times." (Nele)

"Teachers often use homework as punishment, and no one likes to be punished, but homework is also a form of learning assessment that can be useful." (Carlotta)

"Homework promotes inequality of opportunity, as some people cannot get support at home." (Nele)

Everyone is different

Every child and every young person learns differently. Schools need to take that into much greater consideration. We want things to change so that we all have the same chance for a good future and so that schools can continue to develop together with all of us. Teachers should not only be knowledge providers but also support us as coaches and learning mentors. School needs to be tailored to us, not the other way around. This is also shown in the responses to the ISA study.

Learning guidance for teachers

The study asked what teachers should learn next. Specifically mentioned were: better consideration of individual learning needs and more methodological competence. We have a few more points to add: teachers should know more about psychology – for example, why everyone learns differently and therefore needs different methods, or what happens in the brain during puberty.



<https://youtu.be/dQm-PTDKbto>



Upgrade needed.

“How” and “What” we want to learn.

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“In a digitalized world, a school can't simply say, 'We're staying out of this.' That would be so typically German.” (Lukas)

“Digital teaching materials have a big advantage. You always have everything with you and can learn something here and there. But there is also distraction – for example, games on the iPad. And the exams still take place with paper and pen – it's weird when you suddenly have to do something with a compass and you don't do that otherwise.” (Carlotta)

“In a digital world, we also need digital schools. Anything else is out of touch with reality.” (Sude)

While the world is developing rapidly, schools are falling behind. But problems arise when schools cling to old methods. School is there to teach the basics and prepare us for the future. In class, we learn many things that aren't really necessary for our own future while vital information – from tax returns to retirement planning, job applications, a balanced diet or health – is overlooked. School needs to be closer to real life.

School is loading ... please wait

In hardly any area, the difference between school and life is as clear as in the field of digitalization. While we naturally research online for homework, digital media rarely has any role in the classroom. Society and the professional world are becoming increasingly digital – but schools aren't. We want to learn digital content in a digital world: to use applications safely, to critically examine sources, and to develop media literacy. These are essential skills that everyone needs today.

Strengthening strengths

Too often, the focus in school is on what you can't do. Of course, working on weaknesses is important. But everyone has talents. And we need more space to discover and develop them. Because those who have success experiences, work harder – also in subjects that are difficult for them. Therefore, the principle should be: strengthen strengths, weaken weaknesses – in that order.

Learn how to live together

School is not only a place of learning, but also where we spend most of our time and where our social life takes place. Therefore, it must be a space that we are able to shape. Soft skills such as communication and teamwork, tolerance and conflict resolution are necessary for our personal development and also a “preparation for working life.”



OUR POINT OF VIEW

Where does that appear in the curriculum?

Math and English are important, but we also need more practical skills: How do I find an apartment? How can I establish a balanced diet? Where can I get help? Rent, finances, taxes, retirement – we need knowledge that helps us in everyday life and in the future. These things belong in school; it is also a question of equal opportunities for everyone.

Ignorance leads to powerlessness

Children and young people not only have rights, they also have the right to learn about their rights, to know what support options are available, and to know who they can turn to with which problem. We think that all of this should be included in the curriculum.

We are interested not only in "How" but also in "What"

We want a future-oriented school where we learn what is important for us and our future. According to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and young people have the right to express their views and to participate. In all matters that affect them, they must be heard – this must also apply to education. We want to be heard, we want to participate – not just in the learning methods, but also in the content. We demand real participation in the design of curricula and subjects, because we know best what we need. Less "for", more "With us!"



"IPads require a lot of discipline when learning, so you don't get distracted by notifications or games." (Carlotta)

"The biggest problem with school is that it doesn't consider students' individual weaknesses and strengths. In fact, weaknesses are often reinforced at school which can lead to students being excluded." (Lukas)

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Money to live – not just to survive.

What we need for participation and individual development.

"As a young person you often can't find jobs in rural areas." (Adel)

"Also, because you're young, you can't find a job. They'd rather hire an 18-year-old if they have the choice – it's less complicated." (Erik)




https://youtu.be/yT_dzEK-dic

When asked what children and young people need to live, they mention financial resources at the end – although still at a high level. Family, friends, a safe home, time for oneself and others – all of these are more important to children and teenagers. But financial resources function as a foundation as they are necessary to maintain these relationships. A successful development comes at a price. And that is exactly why we are addressing it.

The focus of the ISA-study

The study asked children and teenagers what they needed money for. The focus is on the direct needs of children and young people that they can manage themselves, not what a family with children needs. So, this is about what children and young people themselves consider important. Housing, food, infrastructure, and all other elements essential for basic existence are regarded as given.

Children and teenagers need their own financial resources

Having their own money for activities with friends and personal interests is extremely important for children and young people. Children and teenagers are not simply small adults. They have their own needs, interests, and desires. Having the ability to manage one's own money means independence, the chance to live out one's own personality, and social participation.

What is money important for?

There is a clear number one: for 90.6% of children and young people, having money for shared activities with friends is crucial. That has the highest priority. The largest expenses from their own money are for food and drinks and going to the cinema or theater. Hobbies such as music, art, and sports are also of very highly relevant to them. In addition, mobile phone and internet costs as well as mobility costs, for example for bus and train tickets, play a major role. Slightly less important, but still very relevant, are "smaller extras" such as apps, games, snacks, movies, books, or comics.



consider having money for shared activities with friends important

Participation comes at a cost

Children and young people set a high value on having money to go out with friends. On a scale of 1 ("I don't spend anything at all") to 4 ("I spend a lot"), the average is 2.7. This shows that many children and young people regularly spend their own money on shared activities. However, only about 20% of parents pay for such activities. This means that the rest must be financed by their own pocket money. Since social contacts play a key role for children and young people, it becomes problematic when they have to cover most of the costs themselves. Those who don't have enough money often stay at home, which can make them feel lonely in the long run.

We have made some calculations...

We looked at how weekly pocket money compares with the reported spending of 10- to 15-year-olds, and a clear pattern emerged: at age 10, children receive an average of €5.58 per week and spend about €4.75. This results in a small plus of 83 cents. For 13-year-olds, income and expenses are almost balanced – their pocket money is €8.54, their expenses are only 2 cents less. But from this age onwards, the balance tips: 14-year-olds already spend €1.25 more than they actually have. For 15-year-olds, the deficit becomes even clearer – they run short by approximately €2.50 per week. Reasons why the money isn't enough may include pocket money that is too low or the need to cover more expenses themselves because parents increasingly withdraw their financial support.

When things get tight ... a job on the side?

"Then just find a job!" we often hear. In our view, a young person should not be required to earn money. Besides ... that is also difficult. Moreover, job opportunities for young people are limited – especially in rural areas and in case they are underage. Nevertheless, many young people work. But if they have to, it should at least be fair: minors shouldn't have to work more than an adult for the same amount of money – just because they are not entitled to a minimum wage. This is a contradiction that many can't understand.



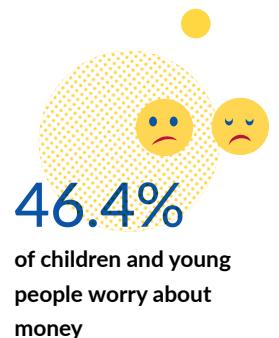
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"Children realize that something has changed. For example, when receiving fewer gifts than usual. They notice that their family is doing worse."
(Jonathan)

"What I don't understand is that minors don't get a minimum wage. They have to work more to earn the same amount as adults."
(Romance)

Children are aware of financial worries

Nearly half of the children and young people (46.4%) worry "often" or "sometimes" about how much money their family has. 49% have already been unable to afford something that their friends could buy. It's often enough just to know the situation the family is in and what the family budget can't cover. And it's no secret that food and housing have become more expensive. Parents are therefore more stressed. Even children notice when their family is having a harder time. Financial limitations are perceived by children and young people. 36% believe they need more money to live well.



66.5%

of children and adolescents
find it important to spend
money on things that are
currently trendy

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"If you don't have a mobile phone, you're not up to date, you're excluded. The mobile phone is also important for security reasons. You also need a stable internet connection for homework." (Romance)

"How dependent are you on WhatsApp groups: if I'm not part of it, I miss out on a lot, even when it comes to my hobbies. Then I stand alone in front of the gym, because I didn't know that my sports practice was cancelled that day." (Fabienne)

There is no such thing as a “wrong” need.

We know what we need.

Being able to “keep up”

66.5% of children and young people say that it is “rather important” or “very important” to them to spend money on things that are currently trendy. It comes second after activities with friends. However, the average teenager doesn’t buy “luxury items” like expensive watches, designer clothes, or expensive jewelry. However, a 15-year-old has higher demands than a 10-year-old. But while costs increase, pocket money is only rising slightly. This creates an imbalance that presents financial challenges for children and young people.

To try things out, express oneself and grow

Adults often express disdain and condescension about what children and young adults spend their money on, especially when it’s not something necessary like fashion or electronics. However, there is no “wrong” need: self-development is not a luxury. Often, one’s social role depends on what one has or doesn’t have – what one wears, owns, or whether one can participate in social activities. All of this influences whether one is accepted in the group and feels comfortable. For this to happen, it’s not enough to just “have decent clothes.” Children and young people want to try things out, express themselves, and develop their personalities. Clothing is also part of identity formation. Some can go without fashion and status – but not having to think about it is also a privilege.

The never-ending mobile phone debate

For 53.8% of children and young people, a mobile phone and mobile internet are essential for a good life. Many cover these expenses themselves, but parental support is also high. When teenagers say they “need” a mobile phone, it’s often discussed as if it were a luxury item. They have long been indispensable: for communication, organization, and security. Without a mobile phone, you won’t know if sports practice is cancelled, can’t do homework digitally, or are excluded from group activities. It also has an emotional value, storing memories and personal moments – an important part of life. The question is not whether teenagers need a mobile phone, but why it’s still being questioned.

53.8%

find that a mobile phone and mobile internet are
indispensable for a good life

OUR POINT OF VIEW



Culture and sports cost money too

Museums, cultural activities, sports, and leisure activities are especially important for the development of children and young people. But all of this costs money. The opportunity to practice any sport should not depend on one's family background. Those who want to be active in a club not only need equipment, but often also have to pay membership fees. A lot of this has to be paid for by children and young people themselves. Children and young people need more support. Sports should be accessible to everyone.

Without bureaucracy and stigma

When we talk about financial needs, it's not just about pocket money and individual needs. It's also about what society provides for children and young people and what should be available to all of them: free public transportation, free museum visits, affordable sports programs – all of this would help ensure that no one is excluded without having to go through a complicated application process. Adequate basic provision enables participation and prevents stigmatization.

Participation is not a savings model

Financial needs must ensure more than just survival. For children and young people, a good life means participation, safety, and the ability to develop to their full potential. When families can't afford it financially, they need support. But our needs are not simply a wa-

tered-down version of adult needs. While adults have their exact cost-of-living needs calculated, we receive only a fixed allowance – depending solely by our age. Politics must rethink this. A needs-based basic child benefit (Kindergrundsicherung) would be an important step.

Financial education must be taught in schools

Last but not least: we need more knowledge about money – that's what 65.6% of children and young people say. Dealing with money and topics such as tax returns, insurance, or rental law are encountered in life, but hardly come up in school. Therefore, financial education should be a regular part of the curriculum.

"A mobile phone is an emotional object for someone – contacts, photos. It's not just about social media – it would be a lot harder in school and all areas of life without a phone." (Erik)

"There is no wrong need. It's presumptuous to tell others what 'enough' is." (Alana)

"The financial situation of the family is a problem for many parents – it's no secret that food and housing have become more expensive. That also has a big impact." (Sude)

65.6%
of children and young people demand more knowledge about money



Half healthy doesn't exist.

What children and young people need for a healthy life.

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"I want to live a healthy life. But how? That costs money too." (Amina)

"What belongs to a healthy life is something you should also learn at school." (Nele)



<https://youtu.be/pHHoB730rHQ>

Children and young people are underestimated by politicians as well as in everyday life. This is where a problem begins: they are left on their own when it comes to their health. Children and young people know that they need sports, exercise, a balanced diet and time for themselves for a good, healthy life. They want to learn how to stay healthy – physically and mentally. They must be taken seriously and they need education and knowledge. The excuse that health is an adult matter doesn't hold.

Our Topic: Health

The ISA study asked children and young people what was most important to them in their lives: health was at the top of the list, followed by friends and family. Over 80% (combined "rather strongly" and "absolutely") of children and young people have knowledge about a healthy life. But 72.4% ("rather strongly" and "absolutely" combined) want more knowledge for their physical health.

Environmental protection is human protection

That a healthy environment is important for a good life was stated by 92.6% of the children and young people (the highest value). It's quite simple: only when the environment is healthy can people stay healthy too. But in our view, it goes much further: a healthy environment, climate protection, and environmental protection are crucial for a stable society, for peace and security – for our future. Still, that often doesn't matter...

Those who know more eat healthier

It is now well known that a balanced diet is important for a healthy life. 91.1% of the children and young people surveyed share this view. But knowing that isn't enough – you also need to know how to eat properly. This should be a topic in school. It becomes more difficult to implement this in everyday life. In schools and cafeterias, the food is often not good. With many products, you can't immediately see what's in them and, above all, many healthy options are more expensive. You have to be able to afford them.

No child on the sidelines

Children and young people respond that they need sports and exercise "very much" or "absolutely" for a healthy life (89.8%). Playing and sports also have a social function for younger children. Children should have the opportunity to try out different sports. Some sports are expensive and therefore not accessible to all children – we think that's wrong. Sport brings people together and should therefore be inclusive: accessible to everyone.



For a healthy life we need ...

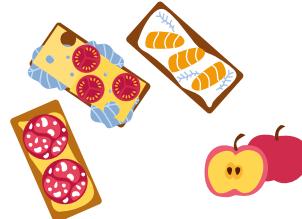
healthy environment

92.6%



balanced diet

91.1%



sports and exercise

89.8%



When children and young people are ill ...

A healthy environment, balanced diet and exercise, that's what it takes for a healthy life. But what if children and young people aren't healthy? Many of them have chronic illnesses (16.2% of those under the age of 18).¹ For them, a "normal" childhood and "normal" life should be just as possible. Whether in school, vocational training or university, they have the right to participate. We need accessibility everywhere – and that means much more than just removing stairs.

Ideal? Unreal

The way children and young people relate to their own bodies is becoming increasingly problematic due to the constant presence of social media and AI-generated images. Children and young people in particular are influenced by idealized body images that are spread on social networks. This pressure can lead to serious problems such as anorexia, as many develop a distorted view of beauty. It is necessary to take these problems seriously and regulate social media to reduce the negative influence on the self-image of children and young people.

Health belongs in school

Health includes knowledge about everything you need for a healthy life: the environment, nutrition, education about drugs and addiction, and very practical things as well – such as how to access psychotherapy. And all of that belongs in the classroom, too: healthy living can't start only after school is over.

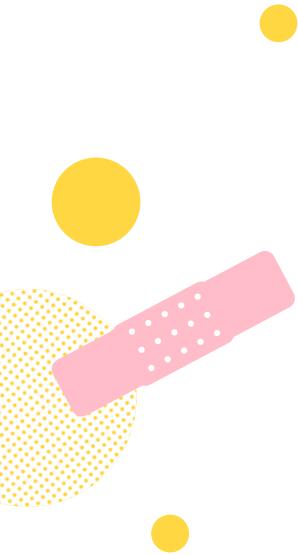
"Social media creates a level of dopamine that didn't exist before, and it can't be compensated for by other areas like sports. This leads to addiction and dependence on mobile phones, and the problem will only become bigger."
(Mikail)



1 Results of the KiGGS Study – visit <https://edoc.rki.de/bitstream/handle/176904/2901/26BY7goEC75mE.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

A band-aid won't fix it.

Why mental health is as important as physical health.



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*"Peers who aren't dealing
with mental illnesses make
fun of those who are."
(Fabienne)*

We are probably the first generation to engage with mental health as something completely normal. And again, we hear the voices of adults in our ears, "Typical GenZ, they only care about themselves..." Then, it is usually demanded that children and young people must become "capable of performing" again. We're back to the beginning. Problems are downplayed and feelings are dismissed. As if it were something negative to deal with your emotions and your own mental health – to pay attention to your well-being, and to seek help when you're not doing well. Developing an awareness of this is not a minor issue – and certainly not a "trend," but rather a necessity.

Why is mental health so important for children and young people?

74.1% (combined "rather strongly" and "absolutely") of children and young people say they need more knowledge about mental health and how to deal with stress and anxiety. There are many reasons why mental health is an issue for children and young people. Here are a few of them...

Too busy to simply be a child?

Many children and young people experience stress. "I don't have enough time for myself" – 16% of elementary school students and 24.3% of young people agree. It is important that children and young peoples have time for themselves to pursue their own interests and develop their personalities or just to do nothing. Without this time, they quickly get into a stressful and overwhelming situation that can affect their long term well-being.

Some young people face many problems

The problems of the world don't stop at children and young people. They feel stress and worry – and that doesn't go unnoticed by their mental health. Some children and young people have a harder time than others because the stress is greater: stress in the family, a chronic illness, violence, the loss of a loved one. Some experience racism, or they live in uncertainty because they have not been in Germany for long and do not know whether they will be allowed to stay. Many also take on responsibility at a young age.

Bullying

Bullying is a reality – and the reactions to it are often too late and too superficial. 30.3% of students state that they are insulted or made fun of at least a few times a month. 8.6% report having been beaten by others. Action is often only taken once things escalate:

Talking with parents, signing class rules, maybe a disciplinary measure... It should not be left to chance whether teachers intervene or not. We need binding measures against bullying. Everyone must be able to rely on that. Even better would be a school climate that prevents bullying from occurring in the first place. This would require making it a topic, it takes time, trained teachers and contact persons.

Anxieties about the future

Every generation has problems – these are ours: Our society is ageing, and we are needed. We are expected to finish our education as quickly as possible. Apprenticeship wages are low, hardly anyone receives BAföG (student financial aid) anymore. It is often not enough to live on – especially with high rents. Many young people are working part-time jobs, more than at any time since 1990. We will have to work longer than the generations before us and pay contributions for more retirees. At the same time, we should have as many children as possible and take care of the older generations... Climate crisis, war, and social conflicts – many children and young people have anxiety about the future. And decisions that affect us and our future are often made without us.

We still have a lot ahead of us

That's why it's important to engage with mental health early – as a form of prevention. School could be a place where socially and globally relevant issues are discussed, where fears are taken seriously and where strategies for dealing with stress are taught. This way, you're not alone and this helps to prevent emotional escalation. Speaking things out creates visibility, and understanding helps. It leads to realistic assessments, protects us from feeling overwhelmed or powerless and strengthens our resilience.

74.1%

would like to have more knowledge about mental health and dealing with stress and anxiety



Access to mental health for all

Mental health isn't just an issue when you're feeling down. Even those who are healthy should know what is good for them and where they can find help. Those who have experienced violence, exclusion or discrimination need support. Support should be as accessible as possible, ideally on-site, such as through school chaplaincy or school psychology. Knowing that help is available and where to find it is part of prevention.

"When bullying happens, the usual "social-work anti-bullying mechanisms" are typically run through: meetings with parents, signing class rules, maybe some disciplinary measures. After that, the whole issue is usually forgotten." (Nele)

30.3%

of students feel exposed to insults and verbal attacks



8.6 % of children and young people experience physical violence from their peers

"We face many challenges: climate change, wars, an aging society. We have to stay strong – mentally too." (Amir)

"Children witness parents who are overwhelmed and experiencing burnout. When it comes to mental health, adults are often not role models." (Diyana)



JEx-Team: This is us

We are the Young Experts Team, a group of young people between the ages of 14 and 20 from all over Germany who are committed to social justice and the participation of children and young people. We are advocating for a louder voice for children and young people in political processes. We believe that decisions about us should not be made without us.

To this end, we create participatory formats from young people for children and young people. In workshops and conferences, we invite other children and young people to advocate for their interests and needs.

Our topics? Everything that moves and affects children and young people: child poverty, social inequality, participation, education, (mental) health – and anything else that is important. We contributed to the ISA study “The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing” and our editorial team created this brochure.



OUR POINT OF VIEW:



Lukas



Romance



Diyana



Now.

- Recognize children and young people as experts of their own lives.
- Being Heard: Our Right. Our Future.
- School as a place for living and learning, with genuine participation – this includes deciding what we learn.
- Learning for life: financial education and digital skills.
- Incorporate knowledge about the rights of children and young people into the curriculum.
- Teachers as coaches and learning mentors – with more knowledge about psychology and methodology.
- Individual support: strengthening strengths.
- More money: for development and genuine social participation.
- Culture, sports, buses and trains – for everyone, without an application.
- Basic child benefit (Kindergrundsicherung) that enables a good life.
- Psychological counseling and accessibility.
- Mental health: education, prevention, support.

Not about us. With us!



[https://youtu.be/
MsnV65NNODc](https://youtu.be/MsnV65NNODc)

Dear readers,

When it comes to the question "What do children and young people need for a successful upbringing?" the Young Experts Team (JEx-Team) has a strong position: "These are our needs – and therefore our perspective. That means talking with us, not about us!"

This is exactly what frustrates children and young people: they are not taken seriously, adults attest them lacking experience and consequently decisions are made about them – without them. Yet they are the experts of their own lives, and therefore also the experts on their individual needs, worries and wishes. They have the right to be heard and they are demanding it – because it's their future at stake.

The young people of the JEx-Team make this very clear in this "With us!" brochure. They were involved in the study "The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing" conducted by the Institut für soziale Arbeit e. V. (ISA) from the very beginning: from selecting the topics, developing and testing the questionnaire, all the way to discussing and interpreting the results. Over the past months, an editorial group compiled the central aspects of these discussions and the resulting political implications in this publication.

The brochure – enriched by personal quotes and videos from the young people – clearly shows what matters to them: experiencing school as a place of living and learning, with genuine participation, lifelong-relevant learning, and individual support. They need their own financial resources to be able to spend time with friends, be part of things and participate in youth culture. And they demand greater awareness and stronger measures for their mental health.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all members of the JEx-Team for their outstanding work and the time they have invested. A special thank-you also goes to Iris Stegmann, who provided editorial support to the young people – independently and without any content-related instructions from us.

We hope you enjoy reading and that you will join us in strengthening the voices and addressing the needs of children and young people.

Simone Aistermann

Lena Budach

Antje Funcke

Arne Halle

Sarah Menne

How are children and young people doing? More information.



The JEx-Team's commentary on the study "Children's Worlds" can be found here:

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fragt-uns



The JEx-Team's commentary on the study "The Life of Young People during the Corona Pandemic" can be found here:

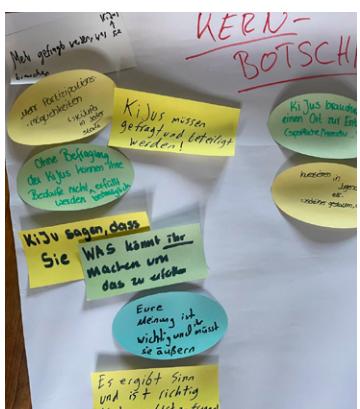
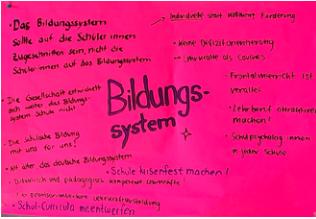
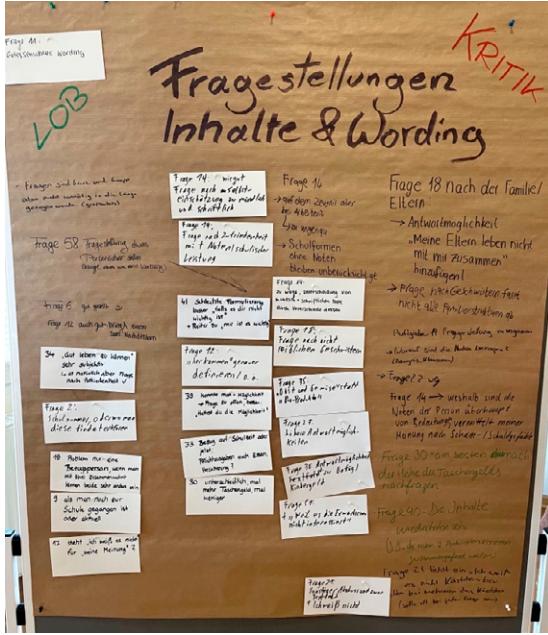
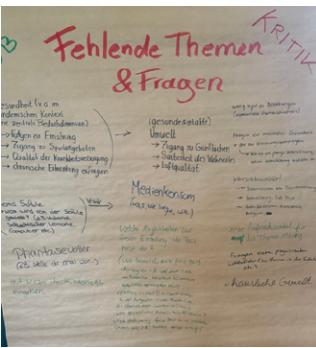
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The study on "The Needs of Children and Young People for a Successful Upbringing" can be found here:

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bedarfserhebung-jugend

MAKING OF



From the first note to the last line – discuss, doubt, think further, sort ideas, sharpen statements and save commas. That's what participation looks like!

