



Children's
Worlds+
SIMPLY
EXPLAINED

How we live and what we need

What life is like for children and adolescents in Germany

If we want to know how children and adolescents are doing and what they need, we have to ask them. That's what we did. Your answers have really helped us understand what you think and feel, and what has to be done so that all children and adolescents can live safely and well.

Thank you for participating

Sabine Andresen

Johanna Wilmes

Renate Möller

What is the *Children's Worlds+* study?

Children's Worlds is a study carried out by researchers all around the world. They asked children in different countries how they are doing and what they need to have a good life.

Researchers at the University of Frankfurt wanted to find out what life is like for kids in Germany. For example, they were interested in discovering if children and adolescents in Germany have everything they need, if there are people who look after them and if they feel safe. This German part of the study is called *Children's Worlds+*.

How was the study carried out?

The researchers went to a number of schools to interview 3,500 students between the ages of 8 and 14. That's quite a lot for one study. They also spoke with groups of children and young people between the ages of 5 and 20. And then there was a team of young experts assembled by the Bertelsmann Stiftung – the YExTeam. These kids looked at the results of the study and commented on them.

That makes *Children's Worlds+* a very large study. It not only provides information about the children and young people who were interviewed, it also allows the researchers to draw conclusions about how all children and adolescents in Germany are doing and what they need. Or as the researchers say, it is a "representative" study.

What did the researchers discover?

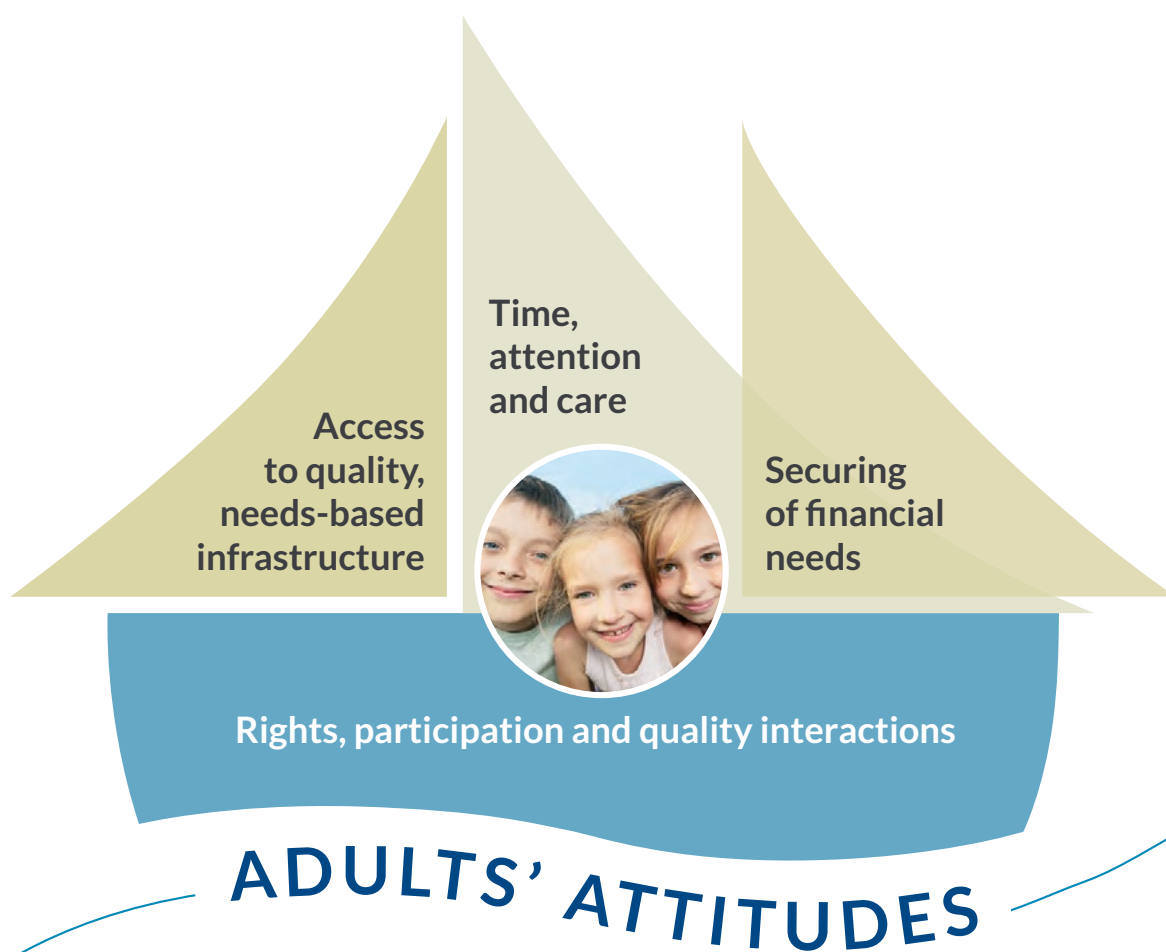
A whole lot. And since they found out so much, the researchers put all the answers into groups. They sorted the results into different dimensions, which reflect what children and adolescents in Germany need to live well. There are four dimensions. The entire study is actually a thick book. We've taken the most important results and summarized them in this brochure.

The language that researchers use is often complicated, so we've tried to explain things in a way that is clear. After all, it's important that children and adolescents themselves understand the results. The researchers met with children aged 8 and older. Since younger kids might not want to read so much, and older children and adolescents might want a little more information, we've structured everything like this: In each part of the brochure, there's a section called "Simply Put" which explains the most important results in simple language. Anyone who wants to know more about what the researchers discovered can just keep reading.

What children and adolescents need

There are some things that children and adolescents need if they are to live decent lives. We've called these things "dimensions" and have put them together so they look like a ship. The ship is riding on a wave that represents the attitudes that adults have. The kids who were part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's young experts team (YEx-Team) said this is a very important point. What they meant is: The thing children and adolescents need above all else is for adults to take them seriously.

1. Rights, participation and quality interactions
KNOWING KIDS' RIGHTS AND HELPING DECIDE
2. Securing financial needs
HAVING ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE ON
3. Quality, needs-based infrastructure
SAFE PLACES AND SUPPORT
4. Time, attention and care
TIME AND PEOPLE WHO CARE



Rights, participation and quality interactions

KNOWING KIDS' RIGHTS



Children and adolescents have rights. They are laid out in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. But do kids actually know what their rights are? That is what the researchers wanted to find out.

! "SIMPLY PUT" – THE FINDINGS

- Younger kids don't know as much about their rights as older kids.
- But not only is age important, the school a kid goes to is also important.
- The biggest differences can be found among secondary schools.
- Overall, many kids do not know enough about their rights.
- If they don't know their rights, they can't make sure those rights are respected.
- All children and adolescents should be told what their rights are.

What do children and adolescents know about their rights?

As the results from *Children's Worlds+* show: What children and adolescents know about their rights depends on how old they are. Among 8-year-olds, 33.3 percent say they don't know what their rights are – one child in three. As they get older, fewer kids remain unaware of their rights. Among 14-year-olds, it's only 4.2 percent. But age isn't the only important factor.

Children's rights at school

The school that children attend also plays a role in whether or not they are aware of their rights. There are big differences, especially among secondary

schools. For example, 17.4 percent of the students attending a Hauptschule¹ say they don't know their rights. The figure is 13.9 percent for students attending a Gesamtschule or Sekundarschule, 10 percent for those at a Realschule and 4.6 percent for students at a Gymnasium. Another 40 percent of all children and adolescents at all schools say they are unsure if they know what their rights are. That's a lot of children and adolescents who do not know they have rights or who are uncertain what those rights are.

What is the point of children's rights?

In the group discussions, two topics were important for the children and adolescents when they spoke about their rights: On the one hand, they view children's rights as a form of protection or defense. That

There are different types of secondary schools in Germany. Each offers the students there one or more options for continuing their education. For example, students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Since the answers given to the *Children's Worlds+* survey sometimes vary depending on the type of secondary school a student attends, we are using the German names of those schools in this English-language brochure to ensure the results are presented accurately.

is, they feel it's important that children's rights exist to prevent kids from being exposed to violence, war or exclusion. On the other hand, children and adolescents view their rights as an opportunity. That is, they have the right to ask for and get things such as a good education, or to have a say in issues that affect them.

Children and adolescents do not know their rights well enough

Although most children and adolescents know that they have rights, they often don't know them well enough. Only 14.2 percent of 8-year-olds are familiar with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among 14-year-olds, the figure is 28.7 percent.



WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

The results show that there's still a lot of work to do. Only people who know what they are entitled to and which rights they have can claim them. The next step is therefore to think about how all children and adolescents can learn more about their rights, regardless of how old they are or which kind of school they go to. Many of Germany's states have already decided that children's rights must be taught at school. However, it's not clear how that should happen during classroom lessons or how it should be put into practice in everyday situations at school. That means everyone needs to think together about what has to be done so that all children know what their rights are.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

If you don't know what rights you have, you can't claim them. We want children's rights to be included in Germany's constitution, and teachers to be trained so they know the best way to communicate which rights children and adolescents have. In addition, a list of children's rights should be put up for everyone to see, the same way the school rules are.

WHAT IS THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION?

In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations, an organization in which lots of countries are represented. The United Nations is also referred to as the UN. A total of 192 countries, almost all the nations on earth, have adopted the convention, including Germany.

The convention has 54 articles, which lay out very special rights that apply only to children and adolescents. These 54 articles are usually summarized as the 10 most important rights.

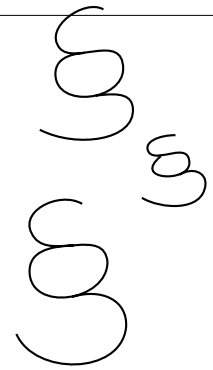


CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

1. Children have the right to be treated equally and to be protected from discrimination regardless of religion, heritage and gender.
2. Children have the right to their own name and a nationality.
3. Children have the right to health.
4. Children have the right to education and training.
5. Children have the right to leisure, play and recreation.
6. Children have the right to their own opinions, to seek information, to have a say and to be heard.
7. Children have the right to be raised without violence and the right to privacy.
8. Children have the right to assistance during catastrophes and emergencies, such as poverty, hunger and war, and the right to protection from neglect, exploitation and persecution.
9. Children have the right to a family and a safe home.
10. Children have the right to special care if they have a disability.

Rights, participation and quality interactions

HAVING A SAY



Children and adolescents have the right to have a say in all matters that concern them. The researchers wanted to know if this is the case when they are at home and at school, and if they feel they are heard and taken seriously. Here's what they discovered:

! "SIMPLY PUT" – THE FINDINGS

- Children and adolescents say that they are included when decisions are made at home. They think that their parents listen to them and treat them fairly.
- When the topic has to do with school, children and adolescents say their parents make most of the decisions.
- Children and adolescents feel they do not get to have enough of a say at school. Kids at primary schools are mostly satisfied with how things are, but older adolescents say they aren't given enough opportunities to help make decisions.
- As children get older, they are more likely to say their teachers don't listen to them.

Do children and adolescents get to have a say at home?

Most children and adolescents feel they get to have a say at home. Only 5.2 percent of the kids surveyed said that their family doesn't let them help decide things at all, and only 3.4 percent said "My parents don't listen to me at all and don't take me seriously." Only 3.6 percent of the children and adolescents totally disagreed with the statement "My parents treat me fairly." Overall, most children and adolescents feel that their parents are willing to talk with them and that they are heard at home.

Not deciding everything on your own is OK

In the group discussions it became clear that children don't always think it's good if parents let them do whatever they want. After all, children and adolescents don't want to decide everything themselves. They like it when parents say what will happen in certain situations. At the same time, many kids don't like it when things are forbidden for no good reason at all. And many children and adolescents say that decisions having to do with school are very often made by adults alone. They feel they are too rarely asked what they think, even though they are the ones who go to school every day.

Do children and adolescents get to have a say at school?

School is also a place where kids gain experience with rights and participation. Here, too, they can – and want to – help decide things. However, many kids – 28.2 percent – do not agree at all or they only agree a little with the statement “I can have a say at school.” Somewhat more girls than boys say they have a chance to participate. Children in primary school are pretty satisfied with the opportunities they are given to have a say. Older adolescents aren’t so happy. Here, too, there is a difference among the students at different kinds of schools: 17.9 percent of students attending a Hauptschule completely agree with the statement “I can have a say at school.” Among students attending a Gymnasium, it’s only 12.7 percent.

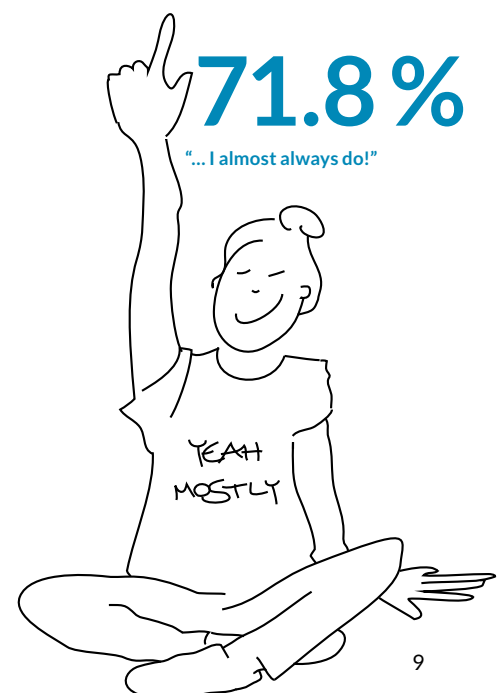
Do teachers listen?

Children and adolescents feel it is very important that teachers are there for them and listen to what they have to say. Of all the kids surveyed, 69.4 percent agree that teachers listen to them and take them seriously. But as students get older, they are less likely to agree. Among 14-year-olds, only 56.6 percent say that teachers listen to them and take them seriously.

Do adults take children and adolescents seriously?

According to the young people in the group discussions, when it comes to their rights and the opportunities they have to help make decisions, a lot depends on adults’ attitudes. They often feel they are not taken seriously or are belittled. In particular, adolescents in puberty feel that they are not taken seriously or that adults think they are incapable because of the life phase they are going through.

“CAN YOU HELP DECIDE WHAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL?”



WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Most children and adolescents can have a say at home. That’s a very good thing. At the same time, it’s important that we find out more about the children and adolescents who feel they don’t get a chance to have a say at home. There are many children and, in particular, adolescents who are not happy with the opportunities they have to participate at school. Children and adolescents clearly say they would like more freedom to get involved at school. As a result, there needs to be a discussion about how teachers can be given support so they can be there for their students despite the time pressure teachers are under, and how students can be given a greater say at school.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

Children and adolescents are often included in decisions about trivial things, but not when the decision is about something really important. Many adults are not aware that they are responsible for making sure everyone is treated as they should be. As part of their training, people who work with children and adolescents should learn what it means to interact well with young people and how to shape their interactions accordingly.

Securing financial needs

ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE ON



People need money if they are to live safely and well. Children and adolescents know this. From a very early age, they have a good idea of what's important in life – food, clothing and a home, for example. But money is required for other things too, such as free-time activities and feeling that you belong. The researchers asked about all of these things.



“SIMPLY PUT” – THE FINDINGS

- Children and adolescents know how important money is for having a good life. Sometimes, however, they are embarrassed to talk about it.
- They are good at judging what is important in life and what is not.
- The vast majority of children and adolescents in Germany have all of life's necessities, such as food, clothing and a home.
- And yet there are still children in Germany who live in poverty.

Talking about money

“Without money, nothing's possible.” That is something the researchers heard from children and adolescents of different ages. Nonetheless, it wasn't always easy for the children and adolescents to talk about money – for some it's awkward or unpleasant. In general, however, kids are good at saying how they spend money and what they need – and what they don't have and why. They think carefully about what people really need in life and what they could do without if they had to.

Children and adolescents in Germany are doing well. They usually have the things people really need in life: enough to eat, clothing, and a house or apart-

ment with a bathroom. Compared to children and adolescents in other countries, they have a lot. Most parents in Germany, even if they don't have much money, try to give their kids the things needed for a “normal” childhood and adolescence.

What is “normal”?

Children and adolescents spend time thinking about what is considered “normal” these days. They look at what others have and what they really need to live. They are very aware that a laptop is not essential. However, a laptop is something that shows a person fits in; it also offers access to information and the possibility of communicating with others. Those things are “normal” in today's society. That means

what is normal and what a person needs, and whether or not he or she “fits in,” depend on the time and place in which that person lives.

Having a mobile phone

Having a mobile phone is important to many children. Age is the main factor determining whether a child or adolescent in Germany has a phone. Compared to older adolescents, relatively few of the 8- and 9-year-olds included in the study have a mobile, at 41.9 and 55.1 percent, respectively. What is interesting, however, is that 28.4 percent of the 8-year-olds and 20.3 percent of the 9-year-olds say they don't have a mobile and they don't want or need one. Many adults think that when children and adolescents are asked what they need, they answer with a long “wish list” of unrealistic items. Yet this study shows that this is not true. Children and adolescents are very good at judging what they truly need.

There are poor children in Germany

Even if children and adolescents in Germany have a decent life, many are concerned about how much money their family has. The percentage of kids who always (5.6%), often (10.7%) or sometimes (35.5%) worry about their family's financial situation sums to over 50 percent. This shows that kids are aware of how their family is doing and are concerned about whether they have enough money. This can be very stressful.

Unequal opportunities

Children and adolescents compare their own situation with what others kids the same age have or get to do. A comparison of the study's results across different types of schools shows that the percentage of students who go on vacation with their family or have their own room at home is particularly high among students who attend a Gymnasium. The figures are lower for students of all ages at all other types of secondary schools in Germany. Traveling to a foreign country or having a room to oneself can be advantageous at school. That means not all children have the same opportunities.



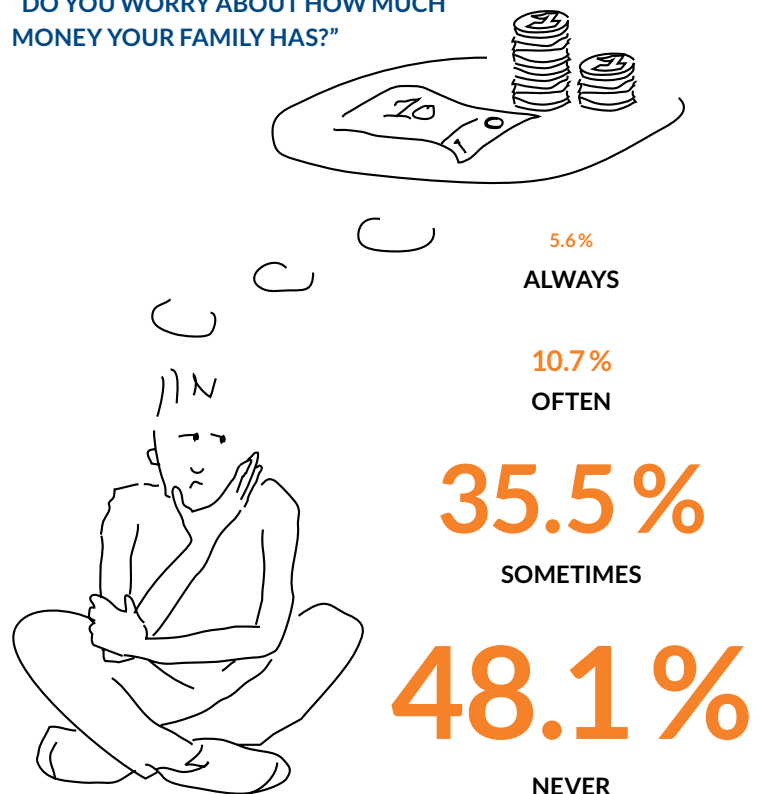
WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Our surveys show that children can assess their family's financial situation. Children and adolescents are very capable of talking about their needs, concerns and lives. That's why it's important to ask them what they think.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

Adults sometimes think that children and adolescents are immature, and if asked what they need, they'll just give a list of unrealistic things. That's not true, but it says a lot about the attitudes of those adults.

“DO YOU WORRY ABOUT HOW MUCH MONEY YOUR FAMILY HAS?”



Securing financial needs

BEING POOR IS A BURDEN

The researchers also looked at whether children who worry about their family's financial situation worry about other things more often than other children. The results show that this is unfortunately the case. Money worries are a burden for children and adolescents in many areas.

“SIMPLY PUT” – THE FINDINGS

- Many children and adolescents worry about whether their family has enough money.
- Children and adolescents who worry often do in fact have less than others. In addition, they more seldomly get to do things with friends if those things cost money.
- Children who worry more about their family's financial situation feel less safe.
- Adults must see to it that children and adolescents do not live in poverty and that everyone gets a fair chance.

Having to do without

The study reveals a connection between worrying about the family's financial situation and the things that children and adolescents actually have. Adolescents who never worry about how much money their family has also say they own more things. Those who have fewer things tend to worry more.

Children and adolescents who worry about their family's financial situation can also do significantly fewer things with friends if those things cost money. Of those children and adolescents who always worry, 12.7 percent are never able to do something if it costs money, and 33.3 percent can only do so occasionally. Of those who never worry about their family's finances, only 1.5 and 11.6 percent, respectively, say this is the case.

Do poor children experience more violence and exclusion?

The study shows something else: Children and adolescents who worry that their family doesn't have enough money not only own less and can do less than others, they also don't feel safe and they experience violence and being left out more often. You will find more detailed information about this in the next section.





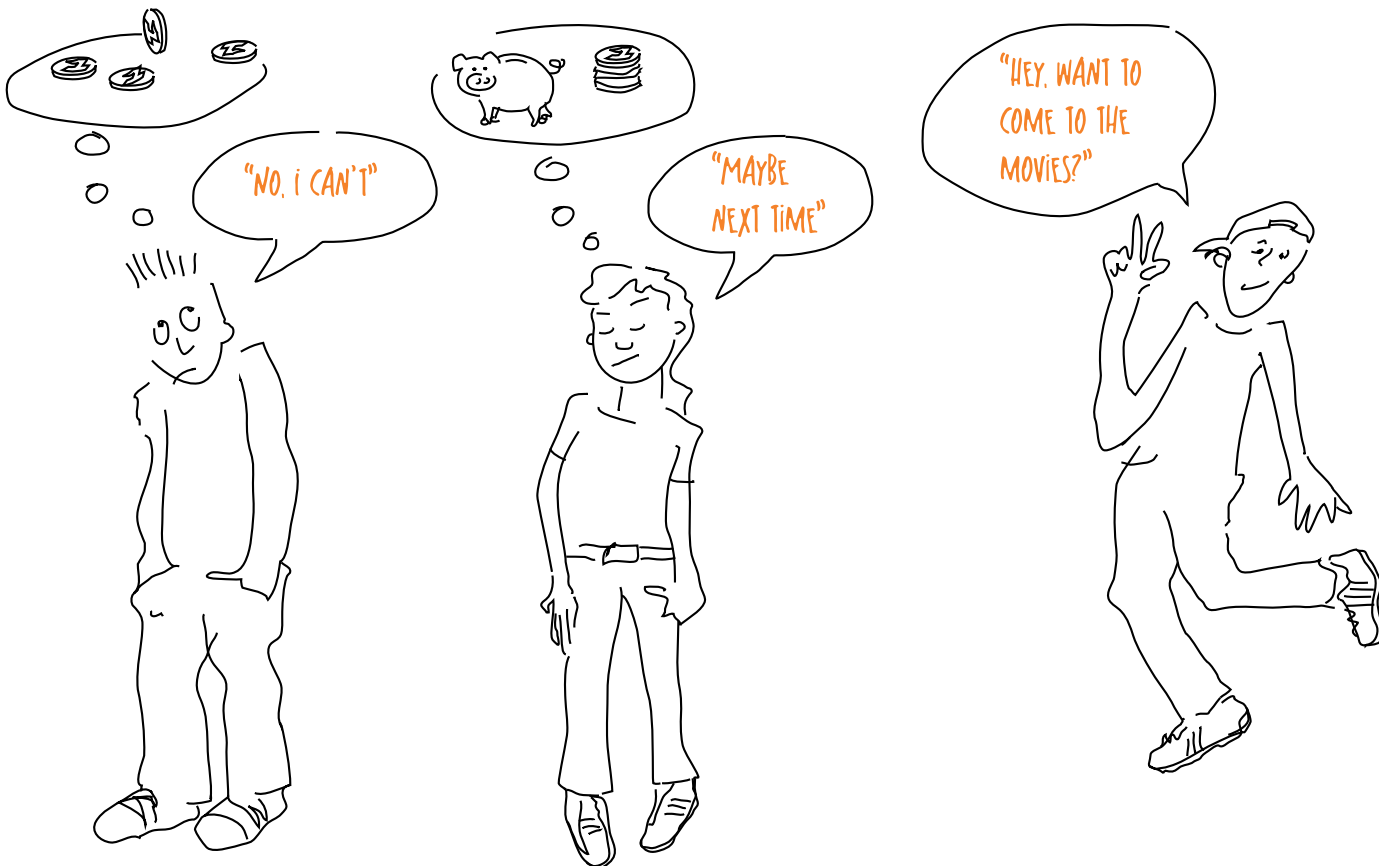
WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Financial worries limit children and adolescents in many areas. As a result, relieving children and adolescents of worries about family finances and doing something about child and youth poverty must be seen as a particularly urgent social challenge. Policy makers and society at large must take responsibility here, since young people cannot free themselves from poverty or their worries on their own.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

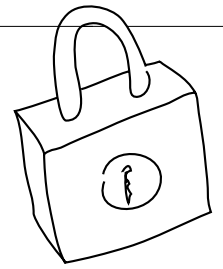
It makes a big difference whether or not a child comes from a financially secure family. Children and adolescents know exactly how their parents are doing and worry about it. The survey clearly shows that the less the respondents have, the more they worry about their family's financial situation. And that affects their everyday life, their decisions and the opportunities they have. Worrying about money is stressful and often results in social exclusion. We believe that ensuring all children and adolescents have the same chance to grow and develop as they should is one of society's main responsibilities.

"CAN CHILDREN WHO WORRY ABOUT MONEY DO SOMETHING IF IT COSTS MONEY?"



12.7%

33.3%



Access to quality, needs-based infrastructure

SAFE PLACES

Children and adolescents need more than just a home and parents who take care of them. They also need help from other adults. They need kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, gyms and much more. All of this is called “infrastructure.” And these places have to be safe. The researchers asked if they really are.



“SIMPLY PUT” – THE FINDINGS

- Home is a very safe place for most children and adolescents. However, there are also kids who say that they do not feel safe at home.
- Many children and adolescents also feel safe in their neighborhood and at school. But one in four says he or she doesn't feel safe there.
- Kids who worry about whether their family has enough money also feel less safe.
- Safety is an important factor determining whether children and adolescents can grow and develop as they should.

Is home a safe place for children and adolescents?

We know from various studies that being safe has a big impact on the lives and well-being of children and adolescents. Home is the most important place for kids when it comes to feeling safe, and 91.4 percent of children and adolescents in Germany say they feel very safe there. That makes it the safest place they know. But 8.6 percent say their home is not a safe place.

Are school and neighborhood safe?

Of the children and adolescents surveyed, 76.4 percent agree a lot or completely with the statement “I feel safe at school.” A similar number, 76 percent, say the same thing about their neighborhood. Yet that means 24 percent, about one in four, do not really feel safe there. Clear differences exist between school types: 19.1 percent of students at primary schools and 18.2 percent attending a Gymnasium say they don't feel safe or feel less safe. The figure is 26.9 percent for students attending a Realschule, 32.9 percent for students attending a Gesamtschule and 33.4 percent for those at a Hauptschule.



WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Children and adolescents clearly express that safety is a crucial factor for growing up as they should. Yet as they also make clear, action is required here, especially at school. Another key result is that we have to ask young people themselves if we want to find out what they think and are concerned about.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

It's terrible that 3 percent of children and adolescents do not feel safe at home, in their neighborhood or at school. It's even worse that many of them experience financial uncertainty and worry about how much money their family has. These kids need help, and they need to know where they can go to get it.

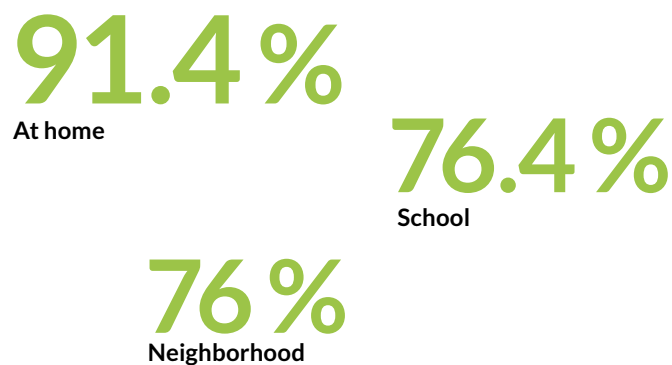
Safe everywhere or nowhere

Of the kids surveyed, 60.1 percent feel safe in all three places (home, school, neighborhood). On the other hand, 3 percent say they are not safe anywhere: not at home, not in their neighborhood and not at school.

Worrying about money reduces safety

Children and adolescents who worry about their family having enough money tend to feel less safe. Of the kids who are always concerned about their family's financial situation, 7.4 percent do not feel safe at home, at school or in their neighborhood. Another 13.4 percent do not feel safe at school or in the neighborhood, and another 6.0 percent do not feel safe at home. These numbers are much higher than for kids who never have to worry about their family's financial situation.

"WHERE DO YOU FEEL SAFE?"



Access to quality, needs-based infrastructure

PROTECTION FROM EXCLUSION AND VIOLENCE

The researchers asked whether and how often in the past month children and adolescents had been teased, left out or intentionally hit by other students.

What they found was:

! "SIMPLY PUT" – THE FINDINGS

- More than half – 60 percent – of all children and adolescents said that they had been teased, left out or intentionally hit in the past month.
- Here, too, children who worry about their family's financial situation were affected more often than those who don't.
- The children and adolescents have thus drawn

Exclusion and violence at schools

The *Children's Worlds+* survey included the question, "How often in the past month were you intentionally hit, left out or teased by other students?" The share of children and adolescents who had not been attacked in the past month – meaning they had not been teased, excluded or intentionally hit – varies depending on type of school, from 43.1 percent (Gymnasium) to 21.6 percent (primary school). One noticeable result is that children at primary schools say more often that they have experienced exclusion or violence. Almost 30 percent say there were hit, teased and left out in the past month. At four types of school (Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule and Sekundarschule), roughly 20 percent of the students say this is the case; among students attending a Gymnasium it is 10 percent.

Boys and girls affected

Overall, there is a high proportion of students at all schools who have been attacked not only in one way, but both physically and non-physically. As the study also shows, there is a connection between exclusion and violence and the feeling of being safe.

In terms of the three forms of attack, relatively more boys say they have been physically hit and relatively more girls say they feel left out. There is no difference between boys and girls when it comes to being teased. At the same time, the group of children who have experienced all three forms of attack includes significantly more boys.



Poor children experience more exclusion

The researchers also investigated if children who worry a lot about whether their family has enough money experience exclusion and violence more often. Of those children and adolescents who never worry about their family's financial situation, 69.8 percent say that they have not experienced any form of attack in the past month, while 18.7 percent have experienced one form, 7.1 percent two forms and 4.5 percent all three forms. The results are much different for children and adolescents who always worry about how much money their family has. Here, only 45.3 percent say they experienced no form of attack in the last month, while 18.2 percent experienced one form, 16.9 percent two forms and 19.6 percent three forms. Those are much higher figures than for children and adolescents who never worry about money.

Bullying has consequences

The participants in the group discussions also spoke about violence and being left out. Children and adolescents say that they are "bullied." Children who are bullied feel helpless, and want adults to help them. After all, being bullied can make you ill. Children and adolescents who are bullied cannot live decent, happy lives.

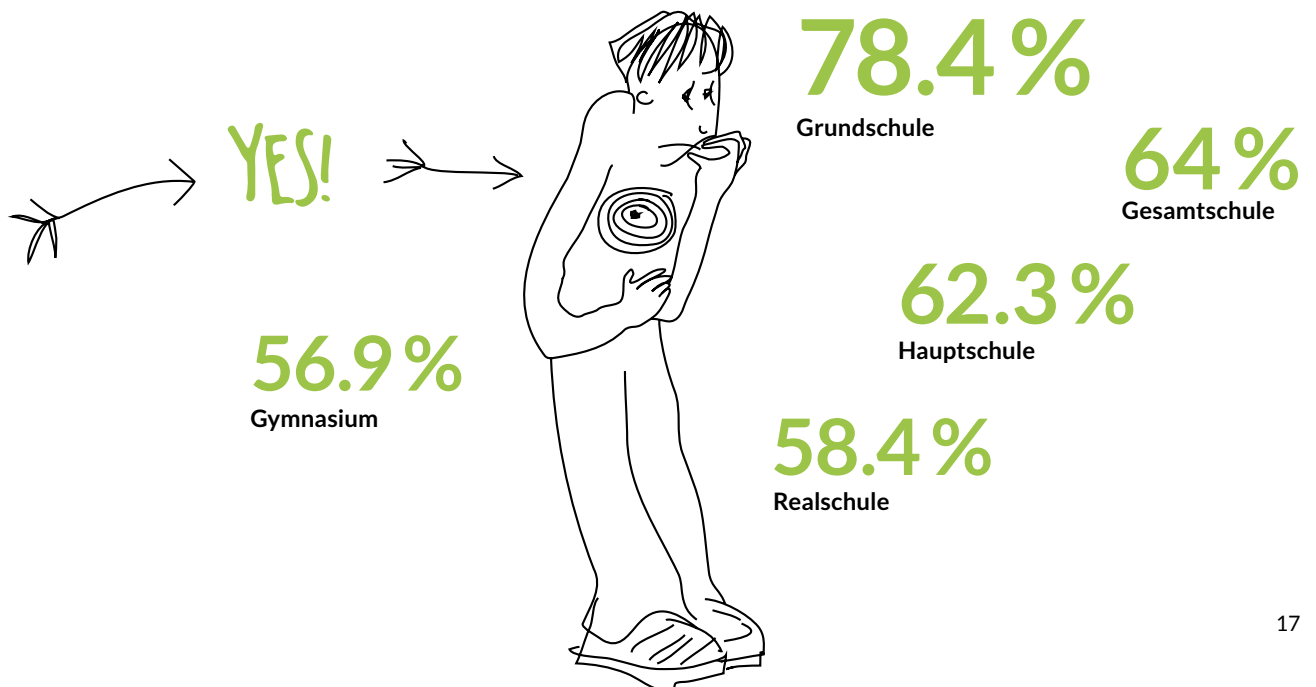
WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Problems between people, including children and adolescents, are normal. But they cannot become so bad that they turn into a burden for children and adolescents or make them feel helpless. Schools have a responsibility to help ensure this does not happen. That means adults (teachers, parents, politicians and social leaders) must see to it that schools are safe places. Children and adolescents have to be able to talk about conflicts and worries openly and receive help and support quickly.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

How kids get along at school and how conflicts are dealt with there are not talked about enough. There are some anti-bullying programs, but that just "out-sources" the problem to others. Moreover, the adults at school usually only react once it's too late. It's important that the atmosphere at school and in the classroom is so good that bullying doesn't occur in the first place. To make that happen, schools need time, additional teacher training and smaller classes. Above all, the ability to get along and learn together at school has to become just as important as the subjects taught in class.

"HAVE YOU BEEN TEASED, LEFT OUT OR INTENTIONALLY HIT BY OTHER STUDENTS IN THE PAST MONTH?"



Time, attention and care

TIME FOR ME AND TIME WITH OTHERS

Time and attention are essential for children and adolescents. It is vitally important that adults make time for children and adolescents. In addition, children and adolescents need time to themselves – time when they can decide what they'll do. They also need time with friends. The researchers wanted to know how children and adolescents spend their time. That's why they asked about time spent doing chores and about free time.

! "SIMPLY PUT" – THE FINDINGS

- Children and adolescents want to spend time with family and friends.
- But they also say they need time to themselves.
- Children and adolescents spend a lot of time doing things they have to do. They do homework, help out around the house and look after their younger siblings.
- Children and adolescents spend a lot of their free time on social media, but also with family and friends.
- Many do sports in their free time, younger children more than older ones.
- But "doing nothing" is also a favorite free-time activity.

Time for oneself and time with others

In the group discussions, the children and adolescents said that other people are very important for having a good life. They want to be able to spend time with their families and with their friends. But it's also important to have time alone. Yet children and adolescents say there's a difference between choosing to spend time by themselves and having to spend time alone. Many don't like it if they have to be alone because their parents are working or commuting.

Doing homework and studying

Of the activities that are seen as duties, doing homework and studying are the ones that take up the most time. Among 10-year-olds, 68.5 percent say they have to do these things more than three times a week; among 14-year-olds, the figure is only 51.8 percent.

Helping out at home

Children and adolescents have other everyday chores. For example, they help with the housework or look after their younger brothers and sisters. Among 12- to 14-year-olds, between 12 and 15 per cent help with the housework once a week, 36 per cent help two to three times a week, and 45 per cent help more than three times a week. When it comes to looking after siblings or other family members, 66.1 per cent of children under the age of 10 have to help out at least once a week; among 14-year-olds it is only 45.1 per cent.

Social media, time with family and friends

Social media take the top spot among older children and adolescents when it comes to how they spend their free time. Kids under the age of 11 spend more time with their family or playing outside than in front of a screen. Overall, it is clear that social media become more important as adolescents get older.

Family time is the second most important free-time activity for all children and adolescents. The older children are, the less time they spend with their family.

Play and sports ...

The third most important free-time activity is “playing or being outside.” Sports are among the most popular free-time activities. The share of kids who say they never participate in sports is, at the most, 6 per cent. How often children and adolescents are physically active also depends on their age. Among 10-year-olds, 58.9 per cent do sports more than three times a week, something that only applies to 46.6 per cent of 14-year-olds.

... and sometimes doing nothing

On the other hand, relaxing or “doing nothing” becomes more important as kids get older. All in all, however, children and adolescents do a lot in their free time – at least as much as adults.



WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

Children and adolescents want to decide for themselves how they spend their time. They also have the need to speak to someone when they have a problem. This person should have the time to talk with them and to respond to their needs.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

It's important for kids to be able to decide for themselves how they spend their time. School takes up a lot of the time children and adolescents have at their disposal. Many older adolescents do vocational training or have a job in addition to going to school. Researchers should look at how that affects the quality of the time these kids have.



Time, attention and care

PEOPLE WHO CARE

Everyone needs other people who are there for them. This is even truer for children and adolescents. It's important that there are adults who care, listen and help when the need arises. Friends are also important if children and adolescents are to have good lives. The researchers asked whether parents, teachers and friends are there for kids and take time for them.



“SIMPLY PUT” – THE FINDINGS

- The vast majority of children and adolescents have someone in their family who takes care of them and helps when there is a problem.
- But there are also children and adolescents who say they have no one.
- There are also people at school who care and who help. Younger children say that their teacher is there for them. As adolescents get older, however, fewer say this is true.
- Friends are important for children and adolescents. Most say that their friends help them with problems. That doesn't change as they get older.

Is there someone who cares and helps?

The findings show that the vast majority of children and adolescents have someone in their family who cares about them and helps when problems arise. However, there are also children and adolescents who say they don't have anyone. Among 13-year-olds, 14 percent say that they do not agree at all or only a little with the statement “My parents spend enough time with me.” About 10 percent of all children and adolescents say that their parents don't have enough time for them. And some kids agree more, some less with the statement “Someone in my family helps me if I have a problem.” For example,

only 4.2 percent of 8-year-olds do not agree at all or only a little, while 11.4 percent of 14-year-olds say they do not receive enough help from their family.

If there is only one parent ...

The researchers noticed that children in single-parent families do not say as often that someone is there for them or has enough time. That could be because it is harder for their parent to do everything he or she needs to. Overall, however, regardless of the type of family they have, children and adolescents say that their parent or parents do a good job.



WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT THE RESULTS

The findings reveal that children and adolescents are very willing to rely on the support of parents, teachers, peers and adults in the neighborhood. Adolescents, too, say they need attention and care. As kids get older, however, they are more likely to feel that their parents do not have enough time for them or do not help enough with problems – a finding that needs to be taken seriously.

WHAT THE YEX-TEAM SAYS ABOUT THE RESULTS

On the one hand, it's good that many children and adolescents say someone takes care of them. On the other hand, 10 percent of children and adolescents – far too many – say this is not the case. And too many older students do not view their teachers as willing to help. It would be interesting to find out more about the reasons for this. Is this a “normal” occurrence as children grow, or do some teachers at secondary schools no longer see it as their job to be there for students who want to talk? Moreover, children who only have one person looking after them are more likely to say that nobody has time for them. We believe this shows that single parents need more support.

Do teachers care enough?

Children's Worlds+ also looks at whether children and adolescents feel that their teachers care enough about them and help when there are problems. Here, too, the findings show that the older kids are, the more they doubt that their teachers are really there for them. Among 8-year-olds, for example, 52.9 percent agree completely that teachers care, something that is true for only 16.7 percent of 14-year-olds. The vast majority of children in primary school feel that their teacher cares for them and helps if there are problems – 80.4 percent agree very much that this is true. Things are different at secondary schools, however, where fewer students feel their teachers care.

Friends are important

Friends are especially important for children and adolescents, most of whom agree with the statement “My friends help me when I have problems.” Here, too, no big differences exist between the various age groups or types of school. It seems that kids can rely on their friends.

Who helps when there's a problem?

If we look at all areas in the lives of children and adolescents, the following picture emerges: Kids say they get the most help from their families, followed by friends. At school, they say teachers and friends are about equally helpful. There are also people in the neighborhood who help. As kids get older, however, the biggest decrease in agreement is with the idea that teachers are helpful.

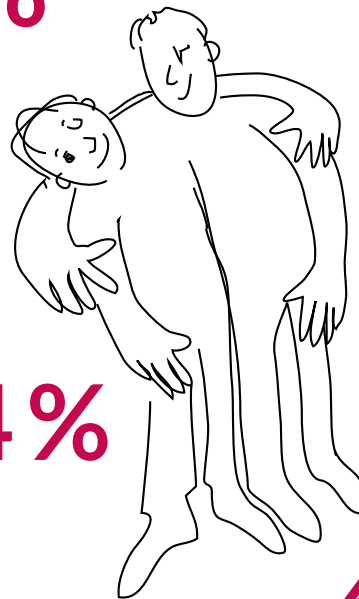
“WHO HELPS IN CASE OF A PROBLEM?”

Family

85 %

Schoolmates

66 %



Neighbors

53.3 %

Friends

78.4 %

Teachers

64.7 %

What's next?


The findings from the *Children's Worlds+* study show what is going well, but also where more needs to be done to ensure children and adolescents in Germany can grow and develop as they should.

We found a few things particularly striking:

- As children grow older, they become less satisfied. The explanation adults often give for this is that children going through puberty naturally rebel. Yet adolescents complain about exactly this attitude. They feel that their criticisms are not taken seriously. Children and adolescents want to be accepted and heard, and they want to help make decisions. They have a right to all these things.
- Children and adolescents are worried about being safe. Too many experience exclusion and even violence. They need support: people they can turn to and, at school, more time spent learning how everyone can get along.
- There are many children who worry about money and who therefore experience limitations. Adults must work together to ensure that every child has enough, can live a decent life and can participate in the community.

Above all, however, the study reveals how important it is to ask children and adolescents themselves what they think. They are very capable of talking about what they need, what worries them and what their lives are like. They know what is important and what isn't, and what they require to lead a "normal" satisfying life. Children and adolescents see a number of problems that adults are unaware of.

We therefore believe a regular, systematic survey of children and adolescents should be carried out in Germany, something we call a "needs survey." It would be a valuable opportunity for young people – and everyone else.



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More information on *Children's Worlds+*:



The complete findings from *Children's Worlds+* are available at: www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cwplus-gesamtauswertung



You can also read more about what the team of young experts thinks about the findings (*in German*): www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fragt-uns

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