

WELL-BEING AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN IN BALTIC COUNTRIES: A SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Latvian Child Welfare Network, in collaboration with NGO partners Ziburio Fondas (Lighthouse Foundation Lithuania) from Lithuania, Lapse Huvikaitse Koda (Child Advocacy Chamber) from Estonia and Stiftelsen Fyrljuset from Sweden implemented a joint project Well-being of Children in Baltic countries. The project implementation was launched in August 2016 and continued until May 2017. The total project budget was EUR 16,950, of which 55% of the funding was granted by the Nordic Council of Ministers in Latvia.

The main project objectives and deliverables were as follows:

1. To establish and pilot a system of children's well-being indicators that would allow for carrying out a regular and internationally comparable assessment of children's well-being in Baltic countries.
2. To create a Children's Well-Being Platform at the Baltic level that would strengthen cooperation and information exchange between non-governmental organisations operating in Baltic countries and between experts in the field who work for and with children.

In the future, it is planned to continue work on the improvement of the indicators and, in cooperation with the academia and the state authorities responsible for the well-being of children, to carry out an in-depth study of children's well-being and use the results in policies and support programmes to improve children's well-being both in Latvia and the other two Baltic countries.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The study was aimed at developing a model of children's well-being indicators that would allow for carrying out regular and comparable measurements of children's well-being in Baltic countries. In turn, the results of such a study would provide an opportunity to establish an evidence-based child and family support policy.

Children's well-being measurements, indicators and monitoring are widely used worldwide to assess children's development. The focus in Latvia so far has been on collection of statistical data, while children's subjective well-being has been less analysed. Therefore, the goal of this study was to establish and pilot a model of indicators, which includes both objective (statistics) and subjective (children's self-assessment) indicators and provides an analysis of their correlation. Consequently, collection of statistical data was carried out in addition to conducting a quantitative survey of children aged 10 to 17 years in each country. To find out what aspects of daily life children raise when talking about well-being, nine focus group discussions (three in each country) were implemented at the start-up phase of the study. The resulting content was used to design a quantitative survey questionnaire as well as to define the initial indicators model.

Building on foreign experience and practice of international organisations, the statistical indicators (over 500 different indicators) and children's subjective self-assessment indicators (over 100 different indicators) used in different measurements have been summarised. Thereafter, they have been adapted to the situation in Baltic countries by identifying indicators that are the most relevant, are available for all three countries and are methodologically comparable.

For ease of the analysis and use of data, all the indicators were categorised into five thematic groups: material well-being, education and school, housing and living environment, family and peers, and health and risk behaviour. Each of the thematic groups included statistical data characterising the specific area and subjective self-assessment

characterising children’s well-being based on the children’s survey. The total number of objective and subjective indicators in the model is around 150.

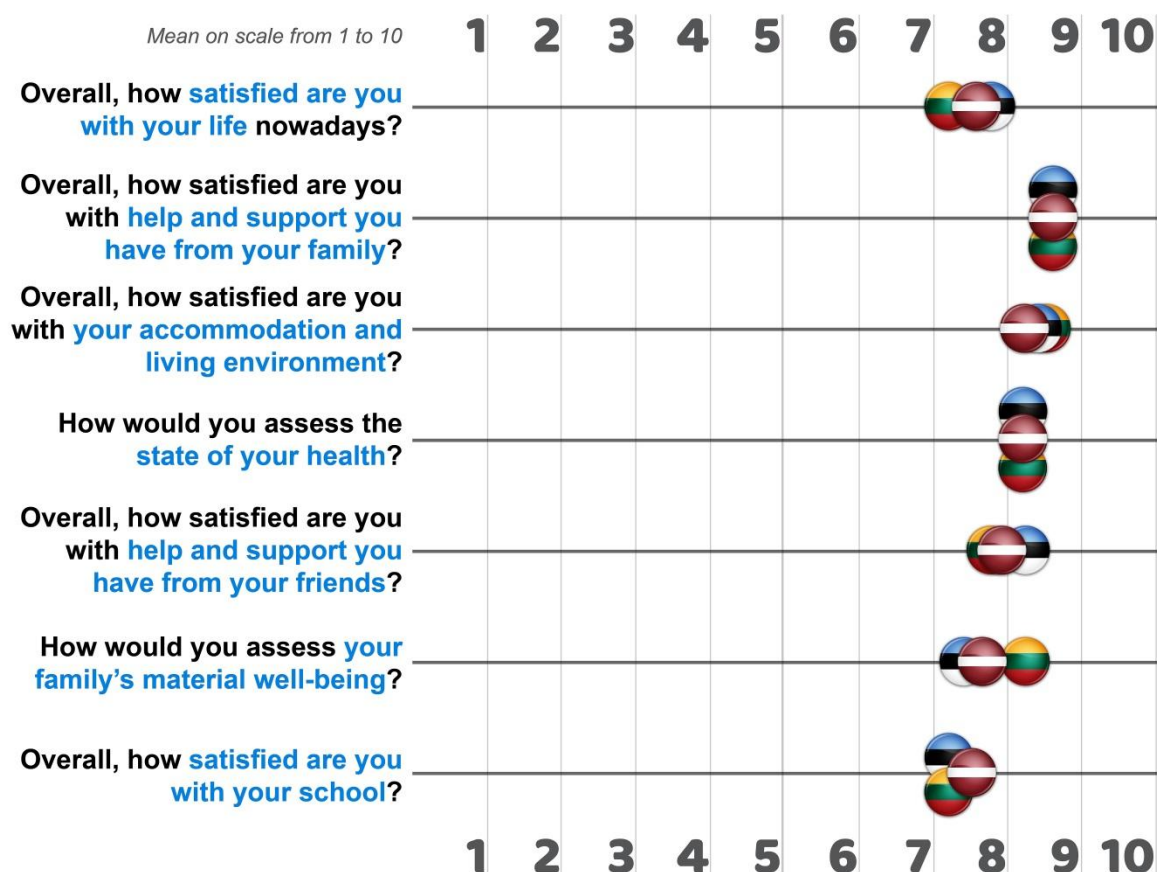
The study was carried out during the period from May 2016 to May 2017. The statistical data were obtained from the international databases (Eurostat, World Health Organization, UNICEF, OECD, PISA, World Bank, etc.), while the data on the children’s well-being self-assessment were obtained from the children’s quantitative survey, which involved responses from a total of 2,000 children in all three Baltic countries.

The full report on the results of the study will be available on the website of the Latvian Child Welfare Network www.bernulabklajiba.lv in June this year.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The data on the children’s subjective self-assessments indicate that children feel most positive in relation to family environment as well as housing and living environment, while the evaluation of their school and family’s material well-being is relatively lower. The biggest differences between Baltic countries are observed in regard to family’s material well-being and relationships with peers and friends.

It can also be observed that the children’s subjective personal welfare is significantly different in each country. Children in Lithuania feel worried, depressed, angry and lonely markedly more often than children in Latvia and Estonia. Children in Estonia feel happy, inspired and self-confident more often than children in Latvia and Lithuania.



Although the subjective self-assessment of well-being is expressed in a positive way as a whole, there are several aspects of the children’s daily life where the statistical indicators demonstrate serious shortcomings (such as health, material well-being of households, school environment, etc.). Such a mismatch between the objective and subjective indicators supports the previous conclusions of different researchers: children’s subjective well-being is a relative indicator of the actual situation, because children are characterised by a high adaptability to particular living and housing conditions. This largely

explains why children's subjective well-being indicators are often similar in the countries which are very different in terms of development.

Although the overall well-being data are expressed in a positive way, there are several aspects where negative indicators can be observed. 33% of the children often feel worried, 25% – depressed, 40% – bored, 23% – angry 23% – lonely and 22% – sad. 9% of the children are faced with violence at school (the figure among 15-year-olds is as many as 18%), 53% feel overloaded and tired at school, 58% claim that they have too much homework and 24% of 15-year-olds feel like outsiders at school. 32% of the children claim they do not have enough free time for their hobbies, 10% of the children are often smacked in the family, while 19% often quarrel with their parents. 14% of boys and 38% of girls aged 15 assess their health as poor. These data suggest that although it cannot be stated that children in Latvia live in a more unfavourable living and development environment, there is a relatively large proportion of children (approximately one in four) who are faced with some negative situations or feelings on a daily basis.

Transnational comparisons show that the well-being of children in Lithuania is substantially lower than that in Latvia and Estonia (children more often feel depressed, worried, angry and tired at school and have poor relationships with school mates; they quarrel with their parents more often, feel ill more often, etc.), whereas the situation in Estonia is considerably better than in Latvia and Lithuania in several respects (children feel happy more often, like to go to school, feel safer in the area where they live, have more free time for their hobbies, have better relationships with their family members and peers, etc.).

At the same time, transnational comparisons also show that better socio-economic indicators do not always ensure better indicators of children's subjective well-being. Although Estonian human and economic development indicators are much better than in Latvia and Lithuania, many of the subjective well-being assessments by Estonian children are not different from those given by Latvian and Lithuanian children. On the other hand, the above-mentioned aspects where the Estonian children's self-assessment is expressed in a more positive way show that the reforms carried out in the Estonian education and family support policies have yielded positive results even in the short term.

It should also be noted that the indicators of families' material deprivation observed in the statistical data are very little correlated with children's subjective feeling of material well-being. At the same time, it certainly should not be interpreted as evidence that the material well-being of families has no effect on children's well-being: although material well-being has only an insignificant impact on the subjective well-being, opportunities for the development of children in the long run are largely determined precisely by the material well-being of families.

The data of the study also point to a number of aspects where there is a need to ensure evidence-based policies. The problem of minor children emigration is relevant in all three countries. Every year, each of the countries loses about 1% to 2% of the total number of minor children due to emigration (which means approximately 3,000 children in Latvia). Minor children who have emigrated over the past six years account for 21% of the number of newborn infants (approximately 122,000 have been born and 26,000 have emigrated). At the same time, the question of the birth rate increase is on the agenda more often than the question of emigration reduction.

Another aspect where there is a mismatch between policies and the data representing the actual situation relates to family support policy. Of all the children born in Latvia only 58% are born in wedlock and only 55% of all children live with both parents (while 28% live in single-parent households). At the same time, policies put a strong emphasis on traditional marriage as a factor of children's proper development. 72% of children are born in wedlock in Lithuania, but at the same time the children have markedly more negative well-being indicators than in Latvia. By contrast, only 42% of children are born in wedlock in Estonia, but children's welfare and well-being indicators are often significantly higher than in Latvia. These and other aspects make it necessary to assess the extent to which policies and political agenda are evidence-based and address the issues that have an impact on children's well-being in the long run.

The statistical data allows the identification of a number of the aspects of children's development and well-being that can be considered as policy challenges. As far as the aspect of society's sustainability is concerned, significant challenges are related to the increase in the demographic dependency: while the proportion of children and young people in society will not change significantly in the short term and in the medium term, the proportion of the elderly population will grow, thereby creating a substantial load on the social budget. The above-mentioned emigration problem is an additional burden on such development trends.

Material well-being of households is one of the factors that have an impact on both birth rate and emigration process. Data show that one in five children in Latvia lives at the poverty line, while more than 1/3 of households have "difficulties to make ends meet". Single-parent households are particularly disadvantaged: more than half of them struggle to "make ends meet".

The school environment in Latvia is characterised by a big proportion of those children who feel overloaded and tired (53%) at the educational institution, feel like an outsider at school (24%) as well as those who are faced with physical or emotional violence at school (9%). This leads to putting on the agenda not only the question of the content of teaching, but also the question of the school environment and relationships between pupils and teachers as well as between peers.

Family and peer environment is also an area where a number of indicators point to serious deficiencies. Latvia has one of the lowest indicators on the international scale in regard to receiving emotional support from family (more than one in three children claim that they feel no family support). One in ten children is smacked in the family and one in five often quarrels with the parents. Furthermore, every fourth child claims that he or she does not have enough friends and acquaintances with whom to spend time together. These data directly and indirectly point to the need to pay attention to whether the children are properly cared for, whether they receive the necessary emotional support from family and whether they are not neglected and left alone.

The most critical assessments in the aspect of subjective well-being indicators can be observed in the field of health. Latvia has the second highest indicator on the international scale in regard to the proportion of the negative self-assessment of one's health. Furthermore, every second child claims that he or she does not have enough time to sleep and has too little time for his or her hobbies. Statistics also show that Latvian children are characterised by a high proportion of smokers and a high rate of injuries (injuries that require medical attention).

Significant differences in children's well-being data are seen in the aspect of the place of residence: children living in Riga claim more other than those living in rural areas they are tired and overloaded, that they have too much homework, that parents smack them and that they often quarrel with their parents, while rural children are more likely to say that they are satisfied with their school, feel safe in the area where they live and feel well at home. Some differences can also be observed in the aspect of the children's age: the older the children, the lower and more critical assessments they provide in regard to the aspects of the study (satisfaction with life in general, school, housing, friends and family support as well as their health).

The data of the study on the whole allow the identification of the school environment, relationships with peers and parents, health and material well-being of households as the most relevant areas in promoting children's welfare.

KEY INDICATORS OF CHILDREN'S WELFARE AND WELL-BEING

Children's personal welfare

- General assessment of children's subjective well-being is about the same in all countries: the mean life satisfaction indicator is from 7.7 to 7.9 on a 10-point scale. It can be observed that as the age increases children's satisfaction with life decreases, which is particularly pronounced among girls.

- According to the children, the most significant problems in their city or parish are: personal issues, relationships with family, friends and schoolmates; smoking; and alcohol consumption.
- Children’s self–assessments of well–being and different emotions experienced on a daily basis point to a particularly different situation of the Lithuanian children: they feel lonely, angry, depressed, sad, etc. much more often than children in Estonia and Latvia do.
- Children in Estonia are the happiest (89% claim that they are happy often or always), while the share of happy children in Lithuania and Latvia is the same (80%). It is interesting to note that despite the fact that Lithuanian children are much more likely to feel different negative emotions, they are as happy as Latvian children, where these negative daily feelings are less typical. At the same time, Estonian and Latvian children are very similar in their self–assessments of everyday feelings, and statistically significant differences can be seen only in two aspects – the feeling of happiness and the fact that the Estonian children claim that they feel bored markedly more often.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Self–assessment (for 10–17 yo)				
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (Mean, 1–10)	7,9	7,8	7,7	2017
<i>Indicate, please – how often you experience such feelings? (Often+Always, %)</i>				
Happy	89	80	81	2017
Calm, peaceful	71	75	56	2017
Worried	34	33	45	2017
Depressed, low–spirited	24	25	39	2017
Joyful	89	85	82	2017
Bored	47	40	36	2017
Energised	73	75	69	2017
Angry	20	23	30	2017
Inspired	56	52	49	2017
Lonely	23	23	35	2017
Self–confident	72	64	66	2017
Sad	25	22	33	2017

Data source: The Survey of Well–being of Children in Baltic Countries.

Material well–being

- Gini coefficient scores (income equality) in all three countries are relatively similar: 35 in Estonia and Latvia and 38 in Lithuania.
- At the same time, the self–assessments of the material status of households with children are significantly different: while only 14% of such households in Estonia claim that it is difficult for them “to make ends meet”, this figure in Lithuania is 28% and in Latvia it is 38%. Single–parent households are at a particular disadvantage, where these figures are 26% in Estonia, 44% in Lithuania and 56% Latvia respectively.
- The indicator regarding children under 6 years of age living below the poverty line is similar in Estonia and Latvia (about 20%), while in Lithuania it is slightly higher (24%). The share of children under 16 years of age living below the poverty line is 19% in Estonia, 22% in Latvia and 28% in Lithuania.
- One in ten children in Lithuania lives in a jobless household, while this figure in Latvia and Estonia is slightly lower (7%).
- Despite the fact that approximately 1/5 to 1/4 of children are faced with some conditions of material deprivation, the subjective self–assessments are markedly positive. The

self-assessments of family's material well-being are highly positive: 8.1 in Lithuania, 7.6 in Latvia and 7.3 in Estonia.

- It is interesting to note that in Lithuania, where the highest material deprivation statistical indicators are observed, the subjective assessments are the most positive, while in Estonia, where the material deprivation rates are the lowest, the subjective assessments are also the lowest.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Statistics				
GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$) ¹	28 390	24 840	27 770	2015
Gini coefficient ²	34,8	35,4	37,9	2015
Central government debt, total (% of GDP) ¹	0,6	59,4	43,7	2013
At risk of poverty rate: Less than 6 years ²	20,1	19,9	23,5	2015
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion: Less than 6 years ²	22,8	27,7	25,8	2015
At risk of poverty rate: Less than 16 years ²	19,2	22,4	28,1	2015
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion: Less than 16 years ²	21,8	30,3	31,5	2015
Children aged 0–17 living in jobless households, % ²	7,5	7,2	11,4	2015
Households making ends meet with difficulty: Single person with dependent children ²	26,0	55,6	44,4	2016
Households making ends meet with difficulty: Households with dependent children ²	13,6	37,5	27,9	2016
Youth unemployment ratio (15–24 yo) ²	5,5	6,7	5,5	2016
Self-assessment (for 10–17 yo)³				
How would you assess your family's material well-being? (Mean, 1–10)	7,3	7,6	8,1	2017
<i>How often you experience such situations and feelings? (Often+Always, %)</i>				
My family provides everything I need (food, clothes, hobbies, school supplies, etc)	96	94	95	2017
I have enough pocket money to spend on myself	82	71	81	2017

Data source: ¹The World Bank; ²EUROSTAT; ³The Survey of Well-being of Children in Baltic Countries.

Education and school

- Education indicators in each of Baltic countries are different. Lithuania is characterised by a low proportion of early leavers and a higher proportion of the pupil-teacher ratio along with the lowest general indicators of educational attainment. By contrast, Estonia has the highest rate of early leavers from schools and the lowest pupil-teacher ratio along with the highest pupil performance indicators. Latvian indicators, in turn, are an average between Lithuania and Estonia.
- The proportion of low performers in Estonia is 5%, while in Lithuania it is 15% and in Latvia it is 10%. Meanwhile, proportion of top performers in Estonia is 20%, while in Lithuania it is 9% and in Latvia it is 8%.
- Latvia is characterised by a markedly lower proportion of the 15-year-olds who plan to pursue higher education: while their share is 54% in Lithuania and 43% in Estonia, they account only for 25% in Latvia.
- Although the subjective self-assessment of satisfaction with school is relatively positive in all countries, however, the survey data also show that Baltic countries have one of the highest indicators of child bullying and humiliation. 10% of 15-year-olds in Lithuania and Estonia and 18% of 15-year-olds in Latvia are faced with this problem. These figures are even higher among 11-year-olds.
- More than half of the children claim that they often or always feel overloaded and tired at school (as many as 65% in Lithuania) as well as that there is too much homework.
- Overall, it can be observed that approximately 1/5 to 1/4 of children are faced with some problems at school or generally do not feel well at school.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Statistics				
Net enrolment ratio (%): Pre–primary education ¹	88,0 (2012)	88,9	88,1	2014
Net enrolment ratio (%): Primary education ¹	95,4	96,4	97,9	2014
Net enrolment ratio (%): Secondary education ¹	94,4	94,3	96,4	2014
Out–of–school children of primary school age ¹	3 429	3 395	561	2014
Out–of–school rate for children of primary school age ¹	4,4	3,0	0,5	2014
Effective transition rate from primary to lower secondary general education (%) ¹	99,4	98,3	99,3	2013
Early leavers from education and training (18–24 yo; %) ²	9,7	10,7	5,0	2016
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (15–19 yo; %) ²	5,4	3,0	2,9	2015
Participation rate in non–formal education and training (15–19 yo) ²	4,2	3,0 (2014)	9,2	2015
Percentage of students expecting to complete a university degree (15 yo; based on self–reports) ³	42,8	24,7	53,6	2015
Pupil–teacher ratio: primary education (number of pupils per teacher) ⁴	11 (2013)	11	13	2014
Pupil–teacher ratio: secondary education (number of pupils per teacher) ⁴	8 (2013)	8	8	2014
Low performers in all subjects (maths, reading and science, %) ⁵	4,7	10,5	15,3	2015
Low performers in at least one subject (among maths, reading and science, %) ⁵	16,9	28,4	35,4	2015
Top performers in all subjects (science, reading and maths, %) ⁵	6,1	1,5	1,8	2015
Top performers in at least one subject (among science, reading and maths, %) ⁵	20,4	8,3	9,5	2015
Self–assessment (for 10–17 yo)⁶				
Overall, how satisfied are you with your school? (Mean, 1–10)	7,1	7,4	7,1	2017
<i>How often you experience such situations and feelings? (Often+Always, %)</i>				
At school I get physically bullied (getting hit, pushed around or threatened, or having belongings stolen)	5	9	6	2017
Percentage of frequently bullied students (15 yo) ³	10	18	10	2015
I like to go to school	61	52	57	2017
I feel overloaded and tired at school	55	53	65	2017
11–year–olds who feel pressured by schoolwork: Boys ⁷	28	22	35	2014
11–year–olds who feel pressured by schoolwork: Girls ⁷	31	19	28	2014
15–year–olds who feel pressured by schoolwork: Boys ⁷	45	33	50	2014
15–year–olds who feel pressured by schoolwork: Girls ⁷	59	44	58	2014
I have bad relationships with classmates	7	11	17	2017
My teachers listen to my views and take me seriously	68	78	70	2017
Teachers are too strict/ unfair to me	17	12	21	2017
If I have problems at school I know to whom to turn to solve them	74	66	69	2017
I have too much homework	54	58	62	2017
During breaks we can spend time outside the school	28	58	56	2017
I have enough time for lunch at school	82	73	79	2017
I feel like an outsider (or left out of things) at school (15 yo) (strongly agree+agree) ³	13	16	31	2015
I feel awkward and out of place in my school (15 yo) (strongly agree+agree) ³	17	24	34	2015

Data source: ¹UNESCO Institute for Statistics; ²EUROSTAT; ³OECD/PISA; ⁴The World Bank; ⁵PISA 2015 Results; ⁶The Survey of Well-being of Children in Baltic Countries; ⁷World Health Organization.

Housing and environment

- Latvia has a markedly high proportion of children living in overcrowded spaces: a total of 57% of minors do not have their own separate room or they share a room with adults or more than one other minor. This indicator in Lithuania and Estonia is 40% and 23% respectively.
- Furthermore, it is also observed that Latvia has the highest indicators of children who live in dwellings without adequate amenities or are out of repair. For example, 14% of children live in dwellings without either a shower or bath, 13% have no indoor toilet, while 9% of children claim that their dwelling is too dark.
- The overall subjective assessments, however, are highly positive: the absolute majority of the children are satisfied with their housing and living environment.
- Approximately 1/3 of the children claim that they do not have enough time for their hobbies and leisure activities. This indicator is largely linked with the indicators mentioned in the previous section in regard to overload at school and excessive amount of homework.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Statistics				
Average time, in minutes, per day, spent using the Internet outside of school, on weekdays (15 yo) ¹	163	147	137	2015
Average time, in minutes, per day, spent using the Internet outside of school, on weekend days (15 yo) ¹	192	179	162	2015
Overcrowding rate: Less than 6 years ²	21,2	50,8	35,7	2015
Overcrowding rate: Less than 18 years ²	22,8	57,5	40,1	2015
Children (aged 0 to 6) living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames of floor ²	11,8	23,7	15,3	2015
Children (aged 0 to 18) living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames of floor ²	11,9	26,0	16,7	2015
Children (aged 0 to 6) having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling ²	3,9	11,0	9,2	2015
Children (aged 0 to 18) having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling ²	3,9	14,4	12,4	2015
Children (aged 0 to 6) not having indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household ²	2,6	10,6	9,4	2015
Children (aged 0 to 18) not having indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household ²	3,7	13,2	12,9	2015
Children (aged 0 to 6) living in households considering their dwelling as too dark ²	4,1	6,7	5,9	2015
Children (aged 0 to 18) living in households considering their dwelling as too dark ²	4,2	8,8	4,9	2015
Self-assessment (for 10–17 yo)³				
Overall, how satisfied are you with your accommodation and living environment (flat, neighborhood, neighbors)? (Mean, 1–10)	8,4	8,2	8,5	2017
<i>How often you experience such situations and feelings? (Often+Always, %)</i>				
I feel safe in area I'm living	96	88	94	2017
I have enough time for my hobbies, leisure activities	78	68	71	2017
I have a quiet place to study at home	87	85	85	2017
I like to be at home	94	89	94	2017
At home I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions	91	88	88	2017

Data source: ¹OECD/PISA; ²EUROSTAT; ³The Survey of Well-being of Children in Baltic Countries.

Family and peers

- The proportion of households with children is about the same in all three Baltic countries: minor children live in about 30% of households. Slightly more than half of

these households have 1 child, about 1/3 have 2 children and about 10% have more children.

- Latvia has the highest proportion of parents with a lower level of education among other countries: the parents of one in ten children have a basic or lower level of education. At the same time, Latvia has the lowest indicator of parents with higher education: while this figure in Estonia is 56%, it is 46% in Latvia and 50% in Lithuania.
- In Estonia, only 42% of children are born in wedlock, while this figure in Latvia is 58% and in Lithuania it is 72%. Only about half of the children live with both married parents (66% in Lithuania). 27% of the children in Latvia live in a single-parent household.
- It can be observed that, in comparison to children in Estonia, Latvian and Lithuanian children are smacked and argue with their parents more often, and parents take into account the children's opinions and spend time together less frequently. Approximately one in five children is generally faced with such situations in Latvia and Lithuania.
- There is a relatively high proportion of children in Lithuania and Latvia who claim that they do not have enough friends and acquaintances with whom to spend time together. While the share of such children in Estonia is only 18%, it is 25% in Latvia and 28% in Lithuania.
- Approximately one in ten children in Latvia and one in five children in Lithuania admit that they have bad relationships with their peers (in Estonia it is only 7%).
- International comparisons demonstrate that Latvia has one of the lowest indicators among all countries in the children's assessments as to whether they feel family and peer support on a daily basis.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Statistics				
Households with dependent children ¹	29,8	31,4	31,2	2015
Distribution of children (aged less than 18) by educational attainment level of their parents: Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0–2) ¹	8,6	9,8	5,8	2015
Distribution of children (aged less than 18) by educational attainment level of their parents: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) ¹	34,6	44,1	43,8	2015
Distribution of children (aged less than 18) by educational attainment level of their parents: Tertiary education (levels 5–8) ¹	56,8	46,1	50,4	2015
Marital births, % from total births ¹	42,0 (2012)	58,5	72,3	2015
Share of children (aged less than 18) living with both married parents ¹	53,6	55,6	65,8	2015
Share of children (aged less than 18) not living with parents ¹	0,9	1,7	2,5	2015
Share of children (aged less than 18) living with a single parent ¹	15,2	27,9	22,2	2015
Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household ¹	23,6	27,5	25,6	2015
Number of children out of family ²	2 554	7 281	9 220	2015
Share of children out of family in total number of children ²	1,0	2,0	1,7	2015
Number of children in social care institutions (residential care) ²	1 068	1 429	3 275	2015
Number of children adopted ²	93	267	190	2015
Number of children under guardianship ²	1 281	4 620	X	2015
Number of children living in foster families ²	205	1 232	5 493	2015
Number of children in social families ²	X	X	452	2015
Self-assessment (for 10–17 yo)³				
Overall, how satisfied are you with help and support you have from your family (parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters)? (Mean, 1–10)	8,7	8,7	8,7	2017
Overall, how satisfied are you with help and support you have from your friends? (Mean, 1–10)	8,1	7,9	7,8	2017
<i>How often you experience such situations and feelings?</i>				

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
<i>(Often+Always, %)</i>				
If I have problems, my parents will help me	89	86	86	2017
My parents take into account my opinion	90	83	85	2017
My parents are too strict	12	19	15	2017
My parents like me to make my own decisions	78	72	78	2017
My parents ask about my day in school	83	85	81	2017
We spend time together with parents	71	69	68	2017
When I have done something wrong my parents smack me	3	10	9	2017
I quarrel with my parents	13	19	24	2017
I have enough friends and acquaintances with whom to spend time together	82	75	72	2017
I have bad relationships with peers/children of my age	7	12	18	2017
11-year-olds who report feeling high family support: Boys ⁴	73	68	No data	2014
11-year-olds who report feeling high family support: Girls ⁴	80	72	No data	2014
15-year-olds who report feeling high family support: Boys ⁴	68	55	No data	2014
15-year-olds who report feeling high family support: Girls ⁴	68	54	No data	2014
11-year-olds who report feeling high peer support: Boys ⁴	46	40	62	2014
11-year-olds who report feeling high peer support: Girls ⁴	59	55	74	2014
15-year-olds who report feeling high peer support: Boys ⁴	52	42	53	2014
15-year-olds who report feeling high peer support: Girls ⁴	71	51	67	2014

Data source: ¹EUROSTAT; ²Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia/Estonia/Lithuania; ³The Survey of Well-being of Children in Baltic Countries; ⁴World Health Organization.

Health and risk behaviour

- Health and risk behaviour are the areas in which Baltic countries, in some respects, have one of the worst indicators in international comparisons, which allow identification of this sphere as one of the most important in the context of children's development.
- The three Baltic countries are those that have one of the highest proportions of smoking children, a high child and youth mortality rate (including due to road traffic accidents), a high injury rate, etc.
- Approximately every second boy and 40% of girls in Baltic countries started smoking before the age of 13, and it is the highest figure on the international scale. Among 15-year-olds, Estonia has the highest indicator for those who have used cannabis (29% of boys and 19% of girls), while Latvian figures are only slightly lower (23% and 19% respectively).
- Youth and child mortality rates in Lithuania are the highest on the international scale. Besides, Latvia and Lithuania have one the highest child injury rates: about 60% of boys and 55% of girls seek medical attention due to injury at least once a year.
- Although the overall subjective health self-assessments are markedly positive, Latvia has the highest indicator for children who rate their health as poor or fair (on average 17% of 11-year olds and 25% of 15-year-olds, whereas this figure is markedly high among 15-year-old girls at 38%).
- More than half of the children claim that they often or always feel tired, while Latvia has a markedly low proportion of children who say that they have enough time to sleep (52%).

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Statistics				
Body mass index (BMI) (15–19 yo): Underweight ¹	13	8	11	2014
Body mass index (BMI) (15–19 yo): Overweight and obese ¹	20	18	8	2014

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Daily consumption of fruit and vegetables (15–19 yo): 0 portions ¹	42	48	41	2014
Daily smokers of cigarettes (15–19 yo): Total ¹	9	10	7	2014
Daily smokers of cigarettes (15–19 yo): Males ¹	14	13	10	2014
Daily smokers of cigarettes (15–19 yo): Females ¹	4	7	4	2014
15-year-olds who report first smoking at age 13 or younger: Boys ²	49	47	53	2014
15-year-olds who report first smoking at age 13 or younger: Girls ²	40	41	39	2014
Frequency of alcohol consumption (15–19 yo): Not in the last 12 months ¹	10	7	10	2014
Frequency of alcohol consumption (15–19 yo): Never ¹	32	43	47	2014
15-year-olds who have ever used cannabis: Boys ²	29	23	19	2014
15-year-olds who have ever used cannabis: Girls ²	19	19	10	2014
Time spent on health-enhancing aerobic physical activity (15–19 yo): Zero minutes per week ¹	25	13	18	2014
Infant mortality rate ³	2	7	3	2015
Under-five mortality rate ³	3	8	5	2015
Life expectancy at birth: Males ¹	73	70	69	2015
Life expectancy at birth: Females ¹	82	80	80	2015
Youngster (15–17 yo) fatality rate per million population ⁴	56	58	88	2014
Road accidents: Child (0–15 yo) fatality rate per million population ⁴	5	24	35	2014
Legally induced abortions by mother's age: Less than 15 years ¹	13	2	5	2015
Legally induced abortions by mother's age: From 15 to 19 years ¹	431	242	314	2015
Immunization coverage: DTP (diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), and tetanus) ³	95	93	97	2015
11-year-olds who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months: Boys ²	58	63	60	2014
11-year-olds who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months: Girls ²	50	54	54	2014
15-year-olds who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months: Boys ²	54	62	54	2014
15-year-olds who report at least one medically attended injury in the last 12 months: Girls ²	46	54	45	2014
11-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily: Boys ²	9	7	16	2014
11-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily: Girls ²	6	5	9	2014
15-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily: Boys ²	7	8	13	2014
15-year-olds who consume soft drinks daily: Girls ²	3	5	7	2014
11-year-olds who brush their teeth more than once a day: Boys ²	57	45	45	2014
11-year-olds who brush their teeth more than once a day: Girls ²	72	58	57	2014
15-year-olds who brush their teeth more than once a day: Boys ²	55	40	42	2014
15-year-olds who brush their teeth more than once a day: Girls ²	79	63	61	2014
Self-assessment (for 10–17 yo)⁵				
How would you assess the state of your health? (Mean, 1–10)	8,1	8,1	8,1	2017
11-year-olds who rate their health as fair or poor: Boys ²	9	16	7	2014
11-year-olds who rate their health as fair or poor: Girls ²	9	18	6	2014
15-year-olds who rate their health as fair or poor: Boys ²	14	14	10	2014
15-year-olds who rate their health as fair or poor: Girls ²	20	38	25	2014

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
<i>How often you experience such situations and feelings? (Often+Always, %)</i>				
I'm happy with the way that I look	77	71	70	2017
I feel myself tired	55	60	66	2017
I regularly playing sports or doing exercises outside school	63	64	44	2017
I eat hot meal at least once a day	96	91	94	2017
I have enough time to sleep	68	52	58	2017
I am feeling sick and ill	14	16	21	2017

Data source: ¹EUROSTAT; ²World Health Organization; ³UNICEF; ⁴European Commission; ⁵The Survey of Well-being of Children in Baltic Countries.

Socio-demographic profile of Baltic countries

- The UN Development Programme's Human Development Index identifies the overall development trends of three Baltic countries: in the context of the three countries, Estonia has the highest index (ranked 30 in the world) and Latvia has the lowest index (ranked 44 in the world), while Lithuania has a medium index between Estonia and Latvia (ranked 37). A small increase in the index has been observed for all three countries over the past three years.
- The total fertility rate in Latvia and Lithuania is the same (1.70), while in Estonia it is lower (1.58). It can also be observed that the mean age of women at birth of the first child continues to increase: it is now 26 years of age in all countries.
- The proportion of minor children in the general population is the same in all countries and amounts to 1/5. At the same time, it can be observed that the proportion is decreasing in Lithuania, but in Estonia and Latvia it is slightly increasing. Long-term demographic forecasts, however, show that the proportion of children and young people will not change significantly because not only the number of young people, but also the total population will decline.
- At the same time, it is essential that the demographic dependency ratio is increasing as the proportion of older people in society as a whole is growing. Currently, the proportion of the people over the age of 65 in all three countries is identical to the proportion of the minor children (20%), but it is growing faster than the proportion of children (by 1% in the last four years).
- Data on the emigration of minor children show that Estonia lost about 1.5 thousand children due to emigration in 2015, while Latvia lost 3.2 thousand and Lithuania lost 6.7 thousand. This means that every year each country loses at least 1% of minor children due to emigration. Over the recent years, these figures have been declining, but are still markedly high.

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Year
Human Development Index: Index (UNDP)*	0,865	0,830	0,848	2015
Human Development Index: Rank (UNDP)*	30	44	37	2015
Resident population [^]	1 315 944	1 968 957	2 888 558	2016
Fertility rate, total (births per woman) [^]	1,58	1,70	1,70	2015
Mean age of women at birth of first child [^]	26,5	26,0	26,6	2015
Live births [^]	13 907	21 979	31 475	2015
Number of children (0–18 yo) in resident population [^]	258 835	369 085	551 610	2016
Share of children (0–18 yo) in resident population [^]	20	19	19	2016
Proportion of population aged 65 and over [^]	19	20	19	2016
Emigration by age (0–18 yo), number [^]	1 471	3 210	6 777	2015
Emigration by age (0–18 yo), share in population 0–18 [^]	0,6	0,9	1,2	2015

Data source: *UNDP; [^]EUROSTAT.

About the Latvian Child Welfare Network (www.bernulabklajiba.lv): The Network is a public organisation founded on 11 November 2014 and its main aim is to promote children's welfare and well-being in Latvia, including children's advocacy and participation.

The network brings together non-governmental organisations and individuals working in education, health, social field and/or children's advocacy, including organisations well-known in Latvia, such as the foundation Centre Dardedze, the association EAPN-Latvia, the foundation Latvia Children's Fund, the Rural Family Doctors Association of Latvia, the association SOS Children's Villages Latvia, the foundation Ronald McDonald House Charities Latvia, the association Save the Children, the Centre for Education Initiatives, the Latvian Parents Movement, the Latvian Foster Families Association and others.

The Network sees as its main task a dialogue with policy-makers and the public in addition to promoting interdisciplinary awareness and approach centred on children's needs.

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