

Children's Worlds National Report

Switzerland



ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences,
Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family

Dr. Tim Tausendfreund
Ida Ofelia Brink, MSc
Dr. Samuel Keller
Prof. Dr. Thomas Gabriel

Study Funding

The Project Children's Worlds Switzerland has been funded by Fondation Botnar¹.

1. Introduction

Switzerland is situated at the confluence of Western, Central, and Southern Europe. Its governmental tradition as a semi-direct democratic federal republic², its linguistic and cultural diversity,³ and high ranking socio-economy⁴ are among its most prominent features. As one of the richest countries in the world⁵, Switzerland ranks seventh in the worldwide ranking of living quality.⁶ However, it is unclear to what extent this also relates to the quality of child-well-being in Switzerland. As part of the international Children's Worlds project, this report aims at contributing answers to this question.

1.1 Context and population

Switzerland covers a total area of 41,285 square kilometres, or one thirteenth of the size of its eastern neighbour, France. The Alps mountains comprise about 70% of the national territory. And even though Switzerland features many rural regions and mountainous areas, around 85% live in urban areas⁷. 8.6 million people live in Switzerland⁸, with a population density of 213.7 inhabitants per square kilometre in 2018⁹. The Swiss population has been growing at around one percent per annum since the 1970s. A rising average age, partly caused by one of the highest life expectancies in the world¹⁰, and migration are noticeable population trends. Children and juveniles under the age of 20 account for 20% of the Swiss population and those between 8–12 years, addressed in the Children's Worlds project, account for 5%¹¹.

Non-Swiss residents comprise 25% of the population, with the majority of this permanent foreign population originating from the EU/EFTA countries. Most foreigners have Italian citizenship (14.9%), followed by German (14.3%), Portuguese (12.3%), French (6.3%) and other of European countries combined (20.2%).¹² In 2017/2018, children and juveniles

¹ <https://www.fondationbotnar.org>

² <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/de/home/politik/uebersicht/foederalismus.html>

³ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/en/home/gesellschaft/sprachen/mehrsprachigkeit.html>

⁴ <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/switzerland/>

⁵ <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us/en/reports-research/global-wealth-report.html>

⁶ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/732084/umfrage/top-20-der-laender-mit-der-hoechsten-lebensqualitaet-nach-dem-best-countries-ranking/>

⁷ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/de/home/gesellschaft/bevoelkerung/die-bevoelkerung---fakten-und-zahlen.html>

⁸ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population.assetdetail.12247184.html>

⁹ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases/publications/overviews/statistical-yearbook-switzerland.assetdetail.11587684.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264725/ranking-of-the-20-countries-with-the-highest-life-expectancy/>

¹¹ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/stand-entwicklung/alter-zivilstand-staatsangehoerigkeit.assetdetail.9566416.html>

¹² <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/migration-integration/auslaendische-bevoelkerung.html>

foreign nationality accounted for 27.5% of the school-age population. This proportion varies largely between the cantons. The city canton of Geneva has highest share (43%) and the rural canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden the lowest (just under 9%)¹³. The relatively high rates of non-Swiss residents are partly caused by a lengthy and onerous process to obtain Swiss nationality. More than half of the foreign population have been resident for more than 10 years or were born in Switzerland, but are obliged to keep the nationality of their parents¹⁴.

Political System

Political powers are shared between the federal state, the cantons and the municipalities in a highly federalised system. Switzerland has 26 cantons (six of them being so-called half-cantons) which contain 2,202 municipalities. National rules and regulations are imposed in specific cases only and 'direct democracy' plays a large part in the federal decision-making process¹⁵. In the area of upbringing and childcare, the Swiss system is independent of federal bureaucracies or governmental agencies. Hence, Switzerland has no federal Ministry of Child, Family or Welfare. Welfare, education, and legal policy are largely cantonal responsibilities. The political landscape is also defined through socio-economic variation, as well as by cultural, linguistic, and religious difference.

Cultural, linguistic and religious diversity

Switzerland shares borders with France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy. This geographic condition is reflected by the linguistic diversity of Switzerland; four official national languages and numerous regional dialects are spoken. In 19 of 26 cantons Swiss-German dialects are spoken. French predominates in the cantons of Geneva, Vaud, Neuchâtel and Jura. In the cantons of Berne, Fribourg and Valais, French and German are balanced on the tongues of the youth. Italian is spoken in the canton of Ticino and four southern valleys of Graubünden. The fourth national language is Rhaeto-Romanic the smallest Swiss language group with 0.5%. Foreigner resident and language education contribute to the linguistic diversity in Switzerland. 5.1% of the population lists English as one of their main languages, followed by Portuguese at 3.7% and Albanian at 3.1%. At school, pupils learn at least two of the national languages as well as English¹⁶.

While around quarter of the Swiss population has no religious affiliation, Switzerland has notable influences of Christianity. The Roman Catholic faith is practiced by 35.8% of the population. The Protestant Reformed churches account for the second largest share with 23.8% of the population. Orthodox churches make up 2.5% and other Christian communities (e.g. Free Churches) account for another 5.5% of the population. Belonging to Muslim and

¹³ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/personen-ausbildung/obligatorische-schule.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/catalogues-databases/publications/overviews/statistical-yearbook-switzerland.assetdetail.11587684.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/en/home/politik/uebersicht/direkte-demokratie.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/languages-religions/languages.html>

other Islamic communities are 5.3% of the population, while 4.9% of the population are part of communities of Jewish faith, Hinduism and Buddhism¹⁷. The legal status and content of religious education in public schools is different in every canton of Switzerland. Confessional religious education is an optional subject that must be taught separately from the rest of the curriculum, in accordance with the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion in Switzerland.

Economy

Swiss GDP per capita was CHF 80'986 (USD 82'950) in 2018, placing it third in the OECD¹⁸. The service sector accounted for 74% of GDP, industry for 25% and agriculture for less than 1%. 99% of Swiss companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The most important trading partner is the EU with 53.7% exports and 71.8% imports. At 8%, Switzerland has the lowest VAT rate in Europe.¹⁹

The unemployment rate in Switzerland, based on ILO-definition, was 4.7% and youth unemployment (among 15–24 year olds) was 7.9% in 2018²⁰. In Switzerland, women are significantly more likely than men to be part-time workers, with the total number of part-time workers increasing between 2013 and 2018 for both women (+6.9%) and men (+24.5%). Women with children have the lowest employment rates.²¹

Family and child care

With an average age of 30.7 years at the birth of their first child, Swiss women are among the oldest mothers in Europe. Overall, the number of young mothers is generally declining, while the proportion of mothers aged 30–34 has been rising continuously since 1970. That also explains partly the frequency of couple households or single-parent households with only one child. Compared with the EU average of 1.59, the total fertility rate of 1.52 in 2018 in Switzerland was slightly below the average, with a total of 87'851 live births. Switzerland has the lowest proportion of extramarital births in Europe with 25%.²²

In order to promote the compatibility of family life and work, a wide range of non-family childcare services is being developed, ranging from playgroups to day-care centres and day families. Each canton handles early childhood education and child care differently. While the more popular form of childcare is informal care by family relatives such grandparents, around 30% of children under three years of age are cared for institutionally. This means that in comparison with other European countries, where the duration of non-family

¹⁷ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/languages-religions/religions.html>

¹⁸ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-economic-surveys-switzerland-2019_7e6fd372-en

¹⁹ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/de/home/wirtschaft/uebersicht/wirtschaft--fakten-und-zahlen.html>

²⁰ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/regional-statistics/regional-portraits-key-figures/country-portraits/switzerland.html>

²¹ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/familien/internationale-vergleiche.html>

²² <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/familien/internationale-vergleiche.html>

childcare is relatively high (e.g. Denmark: almost two-thirds of children under three spend more than 30 hours a week in a childcare institution), young children in Switzerland are cared for more frequently, but for a shorter period, in a crèche or by a day-care mother²³.

Due to the decentralized federal system, each of its 26 cantons is taking responsibility for its own social welfare policy. Thus, the Swiss institutional child care system does not rely on a national child care legislation or federal agency. The Swiss State at the cantonal level does, however, play a significant institutional, legal, and practical role especially in the lives of marginalised families. Switzerland can be characterised as liberal conservative welfare state, as it combines features that are typical of the liberal model (e.g. large private sector role in the delivery of welfare), with aspects of the conservative model (e.g. social insurance system aiming at preservation of social status; low employment rates for mothers).

For much of the twentieth century, welfare authorities regarded the dissolution of families and the out-of-home placement of children as an effective remedy against poverty as well as a mean to structuring social relations. Hence, out-of-home placements were part of a social welfare policy that deployed arguments about “discipline” or “costs” ahead of children’s well-being, their participatory rights or equal opportunities. This rhetoric aided the separation of children from their families in residential care homes²⁴. Despite much recent progress at cantonal and federal level, experts point out that policies to secure the rights and the participation of the children have only been implemented marginally to this day.

School system

Education is constitutionally protected and compulsory for all children and young people in Switzerland including children without a legal residency status. The education system in Switzerland is characterised by strong federalism as the cantonal educational departments each hold authority. Generally, children enter the school system at the age of four.

Compulsory schooling in Switzerland covers primary and lower secondary levels and takes 11 years. Most children in primary education in Switzerland attend public schools (87.1%)²⁵. The pre-primary level includes the compulsory kindergarten, which usually lasts two years.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Switzerland is late in ratifying international conventions or standards, at least as far as human rights are concerned. Only since 2010 a competence centre for human rights exists in Switzerland²⁶. But there is no national authority on human rights, as the national

²³ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/familien/internationale-vergleiche.html>

²⁴ Gabriel, T., Keller, S., Bolter, F., Martin-Blachais, M.-P., & Séraphin, G. (2013). Out of home care in France and Switzerland. *Psychosocial Intervention*, 22, 215-226. <https://doi.org/10.5093/in2013a25>

²⁵ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bildung-wissenschaft/bildungsinstitutionen/hochschulen.assetdetail.12307560.html>

²⁶ <https://www.skmr.ch/>

government is not supportive. It comes therefore as no surprise that Switzerland was also one of the last countries to ratify the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child in 1997. The UN convention is now undisputedly important in defining standards for child well-being and child protection in Switzerland.

After the 2nd to 4th Swiss periodic reports to the attention of the United Nations inter alia the UN-CRC-Committee voiced main concerns in 2015 that relate to: (1) inadequate general measures of UN-CRC implementations, (2) a lacking respect for general principles, such as non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, respect for the views of the child, and (3) the fact that corporal punishment is still not considered physical violence if it does not exceed the level generally accepted by society²⁷. Swiss NGO's additionally highlight a substantial lack of coordination between the federal and cantonal levels in UN-CRC-implementation, which profoundly affects the everyday life of vulnerable groups, such as children with physical or mental impairments, children affected by poverty, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum or imprisoned minors. Children in general are still not heard frequently enough in affairs that affect them the reports conclude²⁸.

Nevertheless since the 1st report in 2002 the Swiss government focused more on promotion of national standards in child care, professionalism (apprenticeship and training) and national collection of statistical data. Switzerland ranks 8th of all 29 countries surveyed in the Innocenti Report Card No. 11 in terms of child well-being²⁹, with a positive development during the last decade, as it started as 11th in early 2000s. The first place in in the dimension "housing and environment" is a sharp contrast to 16th rank in the dimension "education". Concerning the dimensions health and security and behaviours risks Switzerland ranks at the 11th, a bit lower in the dimension material well-being (9th rank).

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

The Swiss sample for the Children's Worlds study was compiled through stratified, multistage random sampling. The sampling frame included all Swiss municipalities with public and government-dependent private schools divided into strata by (1) *language* and (2) *population density* in each municipality. The latter is known in Switzerland as the «Bernese sampling plan»³⁰: "The basic principle of the Bernese sampling plan is to divide the population according to the size of municipalities and perform simple random sampling in large municipalities each as its own stratum. Conversely, in small municipalities, a cluster sample is drawn using probability-proportional-to-size sampling of municipalities, in each of

²⁷ https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/Empfehlungen-Ausschusses-Bericht-Uebereinkommens-Rechte-Kindes-2015_EN.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.humanrights.ch/en/switzerland/internal-affairs/groups/children/ngo-report-implementation-convention-rights-child-sees-urgent-action>

²⁹ https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc11_eng.pdf

³⁰ Jann, B. (2007). Überlegungen zum Berner Stichprobenplan. *Swiss Journal of Sociology*, 33(2), 307–325

which a fixed number ...” of school classes are selected per sampling point³¹. Thus, administrative burden and travel costs were minimized without diminishing the samples’ representativeness, as the method still features equal probability of selection. All schools sampled were primary schools because of the age range of the Children’s Worlds sample. In each of the sampling points (municipalities) two primary schools were chosen. The initial sample contained 84 sample points, assuming an average class size of 17 children, with an additional elevenfold oversampling to accommodate for possible participation refusals. In case of a refusal the next sampling point (municipality) from the same language region was moved up the list from the oversample into the sample.

Field Access

The Swiss federal system described above, with individual responsibilities at cantonal and municipal level, required a correspondingly stepwise approach to field access in each canton. Each canton has a designated educational authority, which had to be approached before informing the municipalities and thereafter inviting the schools. Educational authorities of city-states (St.Gallen, Zug, Luzern, Bern, Zürich) were treated the same as cantonal authorities. The initial draw of the sample resulted into having to contact 28 governmental authorities³².

A total of 13 cantonal and city-state authorities responded positively, nine from German-speaking cantons, three from French-speaking cantons and one Italian-speaking canton. Reasons given for *not* granting study permission were either that the maximum of studies in schools for the school-year was reached or that such requests are generally not granted.

After having received positive responses from 13 cantonal and city-state authorities, we informed the respective municipalities about the study and contacted selected schools with a study invitation.

Survey Administration

Each head of selected primary schools received a personalized study invitation. They were asked to provide contact details of teachers from their school who would be willing to participate if both the head of the school and the teacher decided to participate. Teachers who agreed to participate in the study received printed information material by mail³³:

- a) Flyer to hand out to the parents
- b) Flyer for children (a) aged 8–10-years and/or (b) aged 11-years and above, explaining the scope, aims, objectives and ethical guidelines (anonymity, free-will, support) in age-adapted and child-friendly language and images.

³¹ Mohler-Kuo M, Jann B, Dey M, & Zellweger U. (2011). A recruitment method to obtain community samples of children for survey research in Switzerland. *International journal of public health*, 56(3), 353–356.

³² 21 authorities in German-speaking cantons; six in French-speaking cantons and one Italian-speaking canton

³³ Compare the flyers attached to the milestone report separately.

Parallel to the dispatch of the package, a (coordinating) expert from our contracted field-work partner "gfs-zürich, Markt- und Sozialforschung" contacted the teacher to inform them about the next steps and arranged a suitable date for survey administration.

The survey was administered as a pen-and-paper questionnaire in three languages and three age-dependent versions. The survey was administered in the presence of an entrusted teacher during one school lesson (45-min) in the child's school, with all children present at the same time. If children did not participate, the teachers engaged them in meaningful activities elsewhere (in the class or another safe place). Anonymity of the participants was guaranteed and guarded throughout the entire research process. Teachers received the study incentive for the class (a voucher equal to CHF 100) designated for class-activities.

Survey responds

The Children's Worlds project Switzerland started administering surveys at the beginning of 2019. In that short timeframe it was possible to achieve a good survey responds before the summer school-vacation in June/July 2019, especially so for rural and urban strata. On average cantonal authorities and schools replied very timely to our study requests (positively or negatively). Permission to conduct the study took longer in bigger city-states and french-speaking cantons, in which in a second wave a significant amount of data could be gathered after summer school-vacation. The following survey responds could be realized for Children's Worlds project Switzerland.

Table 1. Survey responds by questionnaire version

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old	Total
Classes^{a)}	44	54	32	130
Children	612	801	433	1846
(% of children)	33.2%	43.4%	23.5%	

Note: ^{a)} Two classes were mixed age groups and therefore counted twice here, which explains the deviation in the total row compared to the tables below.

Table 2. Survey responds by language region

	German-speaking	French-speaking	Italian-speaking	Total
Classes ^{a)}	61	54	13	128
Children	849	795	202	1846
(% of children)	46.0%	43.1%	10.9%	

Table 3. Survey responds by population density cluster

	Rural	Urban	City	Total
Classes ^{a)}	24	66	38	128
Children	308	921	617	1846
(% of children)	16.7%	49.9%	33.4%	

2. Results

Results reported in the following section deviates from the international data set by including data here about the questionnaires for 8 year olds and where appropriate splitting the data-set obtained with the questionnaires for the 10 and 12 year old children³⁴.

2.1 The participants

The overall distribution by gender is close to equal. It varied slightly between ages.

Table 4. Age by gender, *n* (%)

	8 year-old	10 year-old	12 year-old	Total
Boy	285(50.5)	364(48.7)	216(52.2)	865(50.1)
Girl	279(49.5)	383(51.3)	198(47.8)	860(49.9)
Total	564	747	414	1725

Missings: 8y: 48(7.8);10y: 54(6.7);12y: 19(4.4)

2.2 The home and the people children live with

The vast majority of children in our sample lived with their families. Close to 2% of the children however, were living in other types of families or homes.

³⁴ Data gathered with the 8-year old questionnaire featured a high proportion of class-wise missings on some Likert-scaled variables for surveys conducted after the summer-holidays. A lower age average in the classes and some classes being newly composed prompted the decision to shorten the questionnaires in the interview. Variables reported on in this country reports were not affected by class-wise missings.

Table 5. Home type (%)

The home you live in	Family	Adoptive Family	Residential Care	Foster Care	Other type of home
10 & 12 year-old (N=1188)	98.2	0.2	0.5	0.1	1.1
8 year-old (N=560)	98.6	0.5	0.5	–	0.4

Missings: 8y: 52(8.5); 10–12y: 24(1.9)

The children were asked how satisfied they are with the people they live with. Most of the children reported the highest scores, with more than 95% scoring above the mid-point of the age-dependent scales (😊 or 5).

Table 6. Satisfaction with the people you live with (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
The people you live with	1.2	0.5	3.0	13.0	82.3

Missings: 19(3.1)

Table 7. Satisfaction with the people you live with (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The people you live with	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.9	1.5	3.9	7.4	17.9	65.5

Missings: 12(1.0)

In the Children's Worlds questionnaire children were asked how much they agree with various statements in relation to their home and family. The statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 8.

Most of the children agreed with the statements that "there are people in my family who care about me" ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .64$) and that they "feel safe at home" ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .68$). The least children agreed with the statements that "my parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account" ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .917$) and that "I can have a say in decisions" ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .839$). The latter item had more than double the rate of missings scored as "I don't know" ($n = 77$, 6.2%) compared to other items in the list (0.2–2.5%).

Table 8. Variations in questions about home and family (10 & 12 year old; %)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
There are people in my family who care about me (n=1192)	0.9	0.6	3.5	13.7	81.3
If I have a problem, people in my family will help me (n=1186)	0.8	1.7	3.8	16.5	77.2
We have a good time together in my family (n=1208)	0.7	1.7	6.3	19.8	71.5
I feel safe at home (n=1207)	1.2	0.9	3.6	11.2	83.2
My parent/carers listen to me and take what I say into account (n=1184)	1.9	3.0	9.6	25.4	60.1
I can have a say in decisions (at home) (n=1134)	2.8	4.4	14.4	31.0	47.4
My parents allow me enough (n=1196)	0.8	2.3	10.7	22.7	63.4
I get along very well with my parents (n=1207)	0.2	1.3	6.1	17.9	74.4
My parents spend enough time with me (n=1204)	1.7	4.2	11.1	23.0	60.0

N=1234

2.3 The home where children live

The children were asked how satisfied they are with the house or flat they live in. The satisfaction rate is similar to “people I live with”. Most of the children reported the highest scores, with more than 95% scoring above the mid-point of the age-dependent scales (😊 or 5). Seen together this indicates that home for most children from these age groups is generally a satisfying place.

Table 9. Satisfaction with the house or flat where you live (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
the house or flat where you live	1.2	0.8	4.7	9.7	83.6

Missings: 13(2.1)

Table 10. Satisfaction with the house or flat where you live (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
the house or flat where you live	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.4	1.8	1.8	3.1	6.7	16.8	67.9

Missings: 24(1.9)

Children were asked if they had a room for their own or a place to study. Percentages of agreement are shown in table 10. While not all children have a room they call their own, a place to study was more frequently available to them at home. Still close to 10% do not have a designated place to study at home.

Table 11. Things you have (%)

Whether you have ...	10 & 12 year-old
Own room	71.1
Place to study	90.3

Missings: Room:16(1.3); Studyplace: 22(1.8)

2.4 Friends

The children were asked about the satisfaction with their friends. Most of the children reported the highest scores, with more than 93% scoring above the mid-point of the age-dependent scales (😊 or 5).

Table 12. Satisfaction with your friends (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
Your friends	1.2	0.5	5.2	21.1	72.0

Missings: 15(2.5)

Table 13. Satisfaction with your friends (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Your friends	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.8	2.5	2.2	4.0	11.3	21.1	57.0

Missings: 9(0.7)

More specifically, children were asked about their agreement with four statements on the quality of their friendships. The statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 14. Children agree the most with having “enough friends” ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .85$) and “having enough time for them” ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .821$).

Table 14. Agreement with statements about friends (10 & 12 year old, %)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I have enough friends (n=1194)	1.5	2.6	6.8	19.5	69.6
My friends are usually nice to me (n=1209)	0.8	1.9	10.3	28.6	58.3
If I have a problem, I have a friend who will support me (n=1192)	2.1	3.5	8.0	27.9	58.5
I have enough time for my friends (n=1187)	0.7	2.5	9.9	27.8	59.1

N=1234

Most of the children meet their friends outside of school on a regular week. The relative distributions are displayed in table 15.

Table 15. Frequency of seeing friends (10 & 12 year old, %)

Per week	Never	Less than once	Once or Twice	Three or four days	Five or six days	Everyday
How often do you see your friends (not including when you are at school)	3.9	13.1	27.8	24.1	16.7	14.5

Missings: 47(3.8)

2.5 School

Children were asked how satisfied they are with their life at school. The various statements as well as the relative distribution are displayed in tables 16 and 17. Most Children report relatively high levels of satisfaction with their school life. The satisfaction with “other children in your class” had the lowest scores.

Table 16. Satisfaction with school life (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
Life as a student (n=591)	1.7	1.0	9.5	24.7	63.1
Things you have learned (n=589)	1.4	1.5	7.0	22.1	68.1
Other children in your class (n=575)	1.7	2.8	11.1	25.4	59.0

N=612

Table 17. Satisfaction with school life (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Life as a student (<i>n</i> =1223)	0.6	0.2	0.9	0.7	1.6	4.4	3.8	6.9	14.6	24.4	41.9
Things you have learned (<i>n</i> =1223)	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.3	2.6	2.9	6.4	12.4	22.7	50.0
Other children in your class (<i>n</i> =1223)	0.4	0.5	0.4	1.3	2.0	3.3	6.0	8.8	13.3	25.1	38.9

N=1234

More specifically, children were asked about their agreement with seven statements on the quality of school life. The statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 18. Most of the children agreed with the statements that “if I have a problem at school my teachers will help me” ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .78$), that “my teachers listen to me and take what I say into account” ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .87$) and that “my teachers care about me” ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .80$). The least children agreed with the statements that “there are a lot of arguments between children in my class” ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.27$) and that “At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me” ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .99$). The rate of missings scored as “I don’t know” ($n = 91$, 7.4%) was higher than other items in the list (2.0–4.5%). A similar pattern in the missing answers of this question was observed for the questions about home and the people children live with (compare chapter 2.1).

Table 18. Views about school (10 & 12 year old; %)

	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
My teachers care about me (n=1164)	0.8	2.0	9.3	31.4	56.6
If I have a problem at school, my teachers will help me (n=1180)	0.6	2.3	7.2	25.5	64.4
If I have a problem at school, other children will help me (n=1156)	2.2	4.6	13.6	31.9	47.8
There are a lot of arguments between children in my class (n=1142)	26.8	30.2	20.1	13.7	9.2
My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account (n=1154)	1.3	2.9	9.1	26.3	60.5
At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me (n=1101)	2.1	5.3	15.4	30.8	46.4
I feel safe at school (n=1173)	2.1	4.2	8.5	24.7	60.4

N=1234

Children were asked how about the frequency of bullying related experiences at school. The various statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 19. More than half of the children reported they were called unkind names, a third of the children between 10–12 reported that they were hit and 40% reported being left out by others in the last month. The vast majority in turn also reported hearing something nice about them by others.

Table 19. Bullying and hearing something nice (10 & 12 year old; %)

How often in the last month:	Never	Once	Two or 3 times	More than three times
Hit by other children in your school (n=1115)	67.5	14.3	9.6	8.6
Called unkind names by other children in your school (n=1133)	44.6	22.2	13.9	19.3
Left out by other children in your class (n=1121)	59.9	20.0	12.1	7.9
Did someone say something nice to you (n=1093)	2.2	7.8	18.2	71.8

N=1234

2.6 The area where children live

Children were asked how satisfied they are with the area they live in. Most Children report relatively high levels of satisfaction with the area they live in. The relative distributions are displayed in table 20 and 21.

Table 20. Satisfaction with local area (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
The area where you live	1.4	0.9	3.8	13.9	80.0

Missings: 37(6.0)

Table 21. Satisfaction with local area (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The area where you live	0.6	–	0.3	0.4	0.8	2.6	1.9	3.2	6.8	16.8	66.6

Missings: 42(3.4)

The Children’s Worlds questionnaire in addition asked about how much they agree with various statements about the area the children live in, similar to the statements given about their home and school. The statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 22.

Most of the children agreed with the statements that “I feel safe when I walk in the area I live in” ($M = 3.48, SD = .82$) and that “in my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time” ($M = 3.47, SD = .99$). The least children agreed with the statements that

“adults in my area listen to children and take them seriously” ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.06$) and that “In my local area, I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things that are important to me” ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.25$). Both items also had unusually high rates of missings scored as “I don’t know” (Participating in Decisions: $n = 224$, 18.2%; Taken seriously by Adults: $n = 153$, 12.4%) compared to other items in the list (1.6–6.1%).

Table 22. Views about local area (10 & 12 year old, %)

In my area, I live in...	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe when I walk ($n=1189$)	1.0	2.3	8.2	24.4	64.1
There are enough places to play or to have a good time ($n=1200$)	3.4	2.5	8.1	15.7	70.3
If I have a problem there are people who will help me ($n=1142$)	3.1	5.3	9.3	25.1	57.3
Adults are kind to children ($n=1174$)	1.3	2.3	8.9	26.5	61.0
I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things that are important to me ($n=991$)	8.1	7.4	16.3	27.7	40.5
Adults listen to children and take them seriously ($n=1063$)	3.2	5.2	14.6	27.1	50.0

$N=1234$

2.7 Money and the things children have

The Children’s Worlds questionnaire asks children about things they have or use and how satisfied they overall with things at their possession. The various statements as well as the relative distributions are displayed in table 23–29.

While most of the children report high levels of satisfaction with all the things they have (*cf.* table 24 & 25), half or more of them reports also that they worry more or less frequently about how much money the family has (*cf.* table 25). In terms of possessions the vast majority of the 10–12 year olds has good clothing (99.6%) and has the equipment necessary for school (99.4%). Mobile phones (57.5%) and animal pets (4.93%) are the least frequent possessions (*cf.* table 26). Close to all homes of children are equipped with one or more computers and 89.9% report that their family owns at least one car (*cf.* table 28). The fact that less children report having a washing machine (96.9%) than a computer has to be interpreted by having in mind that tenement buildings in Switzerland often have communal laundry rooms. The vast majority of children reports being on holiday with the family in the past 12 months of whom the majority was also on holiday abroad (91.2%). The later seems to be a relatively high proportion if compared to national averages (with Switzerland itself

being a popular tourist location, only 67% of the Swiss population stays abroad on overnight trips)³⁵.

Table 23. Satisfaction with all the things you have (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
all the things you have	1.0	0.7	3.5	13.7	81.0

Missings: 37(6.0)

Table 24. Satisfaction with all the things you have (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
all the things you have	–	–	–	–	0.4	1.3	1.2	3.0	7.1	18.0	69.1

Missings: 18(1.5)

Table 25. How often do you worry about how much money your family has? (%)

How often:	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
10 & 12 year-old (n=1083)	51.3	31.4	11.0	6.3
8 year-old (n=446)	45.1	26.0	10.5	18.4

Table 26. The things children have (10 & 12 year old, %)

Which of the following do you have	Yes	No
Clothes in good condition (n=1206)	99.6	0.4
Enough money for school trips and activities (n=1191)	96.9	3.1
Access to the Internet at home (n=1208)	97.8	2.2
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies (n=1202)	96.1	3.9
Pocket money/ money to spend on yourself (n=1199)	83.4	16.6
Two pairs of shoes (n=1209)	98.8	1.2
A mobile phone (n=1208)	57.5	42.5
The equipment/things you need for school (n=1210)	99.4	0.6
Bicycle, pedal scooter or inline skates (n=1211)	97.0	3.0
Brand new clothes (n=1165)	79.4	20.6
A Pet (n=1209)	49.3	50.7

N=1234

³⁵ <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/tourism/travel-behaviour.html>

Table 27. Having a washing machine (10 & 12 year old, %)

	Yes	No
Does your family have a washing machine?	96.9	3.1

Missings: 15(1.2)

Table 28. Having cars and computers (10 & 12 year old, %)

	None	One	Two	More than two
Does your family own a car? (n=1224)	10.9	44.1	34.3	10.6
How many computers does your family own ? (n=1220)	1.5	9.7	17.1	71.7

N=1234

Table 29. Going on holiday (10 & 12 year old, %)

	Not at all	Once	Twice	More than twice
In the last 12 months did you travel away on holiday with your family (n=1189)	5.1	14.0	19.8	61.1
How many of these were outside your country? (n=1199)	8.8	18.6	21.2	51.4

N=1234

2.8 Time use

The Children’s Worlds questionnaire asks children about their satisfaction with the use of time. Most reported high levels of satisfaction with their time use, with more than 94% scoring above the mid-point of the age-depended scales (😊 or 5).

Table 30. Satisfaction with time use (8 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...					
How you use your time	1.5	1.1	5.2	20.3	71.8

Missings: 76(12.4)

Table 31. Satisfaction with time use (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with ...	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How you use your time	0.5	–	0.1	0.5	0.6	2.4	2.4	5.9	12.2	22.7	52.8

Missings: 21(1.7)

2.9 Subjective well-being: how children feel about their lives

CW-SWBS (Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale)

Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Huebner³⁶ combines six items that measure cognitive subjective well-being. In the Children's Worlds questionnaire children were asked to indicate how far they agree with each items statement on an 11-point scale ranging from "do not agree" to "totally agree". The items as well as the percentages for each items original score are displayed in table 32 below.

Table 32. CW-SWBS items (10 & 12 year old, %)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I enjoy my life (n=1209)	0.5	–	0.2	0.4	0.9	3.1	2.3	5.0	9.3	17.9	60.2
My life is going well (n=1208)	0.5	–	0.6	1.2	1.6	3.7	3.4	4.9	12.1	19.0	53.0
I have a good life (n=1203)	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.7	3.1	2.0	4.4	7.4	17.1	64.1
The things that happen in my life are excellent (n=1196)	0.5	0.7	0.5	1.3	1.8	4.2	4.0	7.3	13.2	22.4	44.2
I like my life (n=1198)	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.8	2.3	2.2	3.0	8.8	14.2	67.5
I am happy with my life (n=1207)	0.7	0.2	0.3	1.0	1.0	2.4	1.9	3.2	6.8	15.2	67.1

N=1234

The individual score for the CW-SWBS scale is calculated by the sum of the item scores and transformed to a scale of 0–100 by multiplication with 10 divided by 6. The mode of the CW-SWBS statistic for the sample was 100, with 33.5% of the children scoring the maximum. Just 3% of the children scored below the mid-point of 50. The mean for our sample was 90.2 with a standard deviation of 14.48.

CW-DBSWBS (Children's Worlds Domain Based Subjective Well-Being Scale)

The DBSWBS Scale is based on the Brief Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale by Seligson, Huebner and Valois³⁷ and consists of five items measuring domain based cognitive subjective well-being. In the Children's Worlds questionnaire children were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with each item on an 11-point scale ranging from "Not at all satisfied" to "totally satisfied". The items as well as the percentages for each items original score are displayed in table 33 below.

³⁶ Huebner, E. S. (1991). Initial development of the student's life satisfaction scale. *School Psychology International*, 12(3), 231–240. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0143034391123010>

³⁷ Seligson, J. L., Huebner, E. S., & Valois, R. F. (2003). Preliminary validation of the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS). *Social Indicators Research*, 61(2), 121–145. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021326822957>

Table 33. CW- DBSWBS items (10 & 12 year old, %)

Satisfaction with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The people you live with (n=1222)	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.9	1.5	3.9	7.4	17.9	65.5
Your friends (n=1225)	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.8	2.5	2.2	4.0	11.3	21.1	57.0
Your life as a student (n=1223)	0.6	0.2	0.9	0.7	1.6	4.4	3.8	6.9	14.6	24.4	41.9
The area where you live (n=1192)	0.6	–	0.3	0.4	0.8	2.6	1.9	3.2	6.8	16.8	66.6
The way that you look (n=1170)	1.3	0.6	0.5	1.2	1.2	3.3	3.8	4.6	10.5	20.3	52.6

N=1234

The individual score the CW-DBSWBS is calculated by the sum of the item scores and transformed to a scale of 0–100 by multiplying the sum by 2. The mode of the CW-DBSWBS statistic for our sample was 100, with a mean of 89.9 and a standard deviation of 10.74. Scores ranged from 36 to 100. Just 0.7% of the children scored below the mid-point of 50.

CW-PNAS (Children's Worlds Positive and Negative Affects Scale)

The CW-PNAS is based on a Scale by Feldman Barrett and Russell³⁸ and consist of six items that measure affective subjective well-being. Three items for positive affect and three items for negative affect.

Table 34. CW-PNAS items (10 & 12 year old, %)

Last two weeks: How often feeling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Happy (n=1187)	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.9	3.5	3.4	7.8	15.3	22.5	45.3
Calm (n=1177)	3.3	1.7	2.7	4.2	5.4	11.8	8.8	11.0	13.7	11.6	25.7
Full of energy (n=1181)	1.0	0.8	1.6	2.8	3.3	6.3	5.1	9.8	12.4	14.1	42.8
Sad (n=1174)	27.6	19.6	14.5	10.1	4.8	7.8	2.4	4.9	3.6	2.6	2.1
Stressed (n=1172)	22.2	10.8	12.4	8.5	7.6	9.7	7.3	6.5	5.3	4.0	5.7
Bored (n=1178)	23.0	11.7	12.4	10.1	8.1	10.0	5.3	5.4	5.1	3.4	5.4

The individual score was independently calculated for the CW-PA and the CW-NA. For both scales the sum of the three item scores was transformed to a scale of 0–100 by

³⁸ Feldman Barrett, L., & Russell, J. A. (1998). Independence and bipolarity in the structure of current affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(4), 967–984. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.4.967>

multiplication with 10 divided by 3. The mode of the CW-PA was 100 and the mode of the CW-NA was 0. The mean of the CW-PA is 79.6 with a standard deviation of 15.81. The mean of the CW-NA is 32.30 with a standard deviation of 22.40. Scores ranged from 16.67 to 100 for the CW-PA and from 0 to 100 for the CW-NA. For the CW-PA only 4.2% scored below the mid-point of 50 and for the CW-NA 20.5% scored above the mid-point of 50.

CW-PSWBS (Children's Worlds Psychological Subjective Well-Being Scale)

The CW-PSWBS is based on a Scale Ryff³⁹ and consists of six items that measure psychological subjective well-being. It was asked only in the questionnaire version for 12 year olds.

Table 35. CW-PSWBS items (12 year old, %)

How much you agree with	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I like being the way I am (n=431)	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.5	1.9	1.4	3.7	7.9	11.6	18.6	53.6
I am good at managing my daily responsibilities (n=431)	1.4	0.2	0.2	1.4	1.2	3.0	2.8	8.8	17.2	26.3	37.4
People are generally pretty friendly towards me (n=431)	–	–	–	0.9	0.7	2.3	2.6	5.6	12.8	24.4	50.8
I have enough choice about how I spend my time (n=431)	–	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.7	3.3	3.0	5.8	11.2	16.6	58.6
I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment (n=431)	2.3	1.4	2.3	3.0	3.3	5.1	10.7	12.4	15.2	18.2	26.1
I feel positive about my future (n=431)	0.5	0.2	0.9	0.7	1.2	2.8	3.0	4.6	10.4	18.1	57.5

N=433

The individual score for the CW-PSWBS scale is calculated by the sum of the item scores and transformed to a scale of 0–100 by multiplication with 10 divided by 6. The mode of the CW-PSWBS statistic for the sample was 100, with 10% of the children scoring the maximum. Just 0.7% of the children scored below the mid-point of 50. The mean for our sample was 86.6 with a standard deviation of 11.96.

³⁹ Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.57.6.1069>

Table 36. Subjective well-being measure (10 & 12 year old, %)

	CW-SWBS (n=1182)	CW-DBSWBS (n=1109)	Positive Affect (n=1171)	Negative Affect (n=1166)	CW-PSWBS (12y only n=420)
Mean (SD)	90.2 (14.5)	89.9 (10.7)	79.6 (15.8)	32.3 (22.4)	86.63 (12.0)

2.10 Children perceptions about their country

Most children in Switzerland aged between 10 and 12 do not know the rights children have or are unsure about them. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is known only to ca. two children out of 10.

Table 36. Children’s rights (10 & 12 year old, %)

	No	Not Sure	Yes
I know what rights children have (n=1177)	15.3	45.5	39.3
I know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (n=1175)	46.8	35.4	17.8

N=1234

3. Conclusions

The third wave of the international Children's World study was the first wave Switzerland took part in. Data on personal well-being and living conditions of children were largely lacking in Switzerland. The international comparative research design of «Children's Worlds» offers a wide range of topics on child well-being, the results will also serve as a basis to compare the subjective well-being of other hard-to-reach groups to, such as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers or other particularly vulnerable groups, such as children from families with multiple problems.

The Swiss results show that the a majority of children report overall high degrees of satisfaction and little worries. Vast majorities of children answered that they have places where they feel safe, that they are cared about at home, that they are highly satisfied with their friendships, that they have people who help them with problems and that they are satisfied with the things they have. High means and most frequent maximum scores on all standardized well-being scales (table 32–36) are reflecting this. However, there are also those who report otherwise. Even if descriptive statistics reveal low figures of dissatisfaction or negative experiences in total, those reports and life situations are reason for deep concern and will further be examined in multivariate analyses and correlational studies to better understand factors associated with child well-being.

Negative experiences with other children especially in the school environment are worrisome. Despite high levels of satisfaction with their social relations, signs of bullying were found in answers fairly often (table 19) and schools are places reported as the least safe (table 18) in comparison to the local area (table 22) and home (table 8). Close to a quarter of the children (22.9%) report that they totally agree or agree a lot with the statement that "there are a lot of arguments between children in my class" (table 18).

Participation in decision-making is a topic that needs to be further explored and improved. Having a say in decisions has lower levels of agreement than other items, a trend which increases between home (table 8), school (table 18) and the local area (table 22). Unusually high rates of missings, answered as "I don't know", are prompting questions about the item quality as well as the phenomenon of meaningful participation. A missing value analysis could prove insightful as well as additional insights from qualitative follow-up studies.

That only considerably few children report certain knowledge about their rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (table 36) underscores this point, as also reported on in our introduction on the status of children's rights in Switzerland.

The following questions become even more important in view of positive findings: Who are these children at risk? And how can we draw professional and political attention to their needs and worries to ensure their well-being in a rich country like Switzerland? Answers to these questions will be provided by more in-depth research.