



**The
Children's
Society**

Measuring eudaimonic wellbeing in children and young people aged 10 to 17 years old in the UK

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February 2024

About the author

Dr Alexandra Turner is the Applied Research Lead working in the research, evaluation, and impact team at The Children's Society. The main focus of her role is in providing expertise and guidance on the measurement and understanding of children's wellbeing. She is part of the research team who produce the annual Good Childhood Report.

About The Children's Society

The Children's Society is there for children and young people when they most need help. It supports them when they're facing huge life challenges like abuse, exploitation, or neglect, and campaign tirelessly for the big social changes needed to change the lives of the next generation for the better. The Children's Society has been doing this work for 140 years and won't rest until every child is safe, happy, and hopeful.

About the What Works Centre for Wellbeing

We are an independent collaborating centre and the aim of our work is to improve wellbeing and reduce misery in the UK. We believe that this is the ultimate goal of effective policy and community action. By accelerating research and democratising access to wellbeing evidence, we develop and share robust evidence for governments, businesses, communities and people to improve wellbeing across the UK.

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Introduction

The Children's Society first began exploring measures of eudaimonic wellbeing with children in 2013 and have found that relationships with others and a sense of autonomy are at the heart of children's wellbeing.^{1,2}

In 2021, The Children's Society in collaboration with the What Works Centre for Wellbeing set out to collate all known and validated measures that have been used to measure children's subjective wellbeing in the UK. This included a [Rapid Evidence Assessment](#) to identify measures of: cognitive (evaluations of life), affective (emotions) and eudaimonic wellbeing (meaning, purpose and control).³

The REA highlighted an absence of validated measures for eudaimonic wellbeing, which had received much less attention in the literature. There were very few identified measures for children, despite this being key to young people's quality of life. The [OECD](#) and others have also recently highlighted this as an area needing further exploration.^{4,5}

The gap is partly due to existing measures being designed and used with adults, rather than children. When exploring use of some of the adult measures with children, The Children's Society found that the wording of questions on purpose (including the ONS question), in particular, were a little complex or confusing for children.¹

The upcoming study - conducted by The Children's Society and introduced in this short paper - aims to address the gap by providing a robust measure of eudaimonic wellbeing for children and young people aged 10 to 17 in the UK, and to further the evidence on this comparatively neglected area.

It will present initial validation findings for the eudaimonic measure used in The Children's Society's annual household surveys, drawing on data from 2021-2023.

¹ [The Good Childhood Report 2013, pg. 9.](#)

² [The Good Childhood Report 2016.](#)

³ [Soffia and Turner 2021.](#)

⁴ [Mahoney 2023.](#)

⁵ [Khanna, Black, Panayiotou Humphrey, and Demkowicz O 2024.](#)

About the measure

The questions used in the Children's Society's annual household surveys are based on the six dimensions of eudaimonic wellbeing conceptualised by Ryff et al.^{6 7 8}

The **questions** and the *concepts* they align to are:

1. **I like being the way I am** (*Self – acceptance*)
2. **I am good at managing my daily responsibilities** (*Environmental mastery*)
3. **People are generally pretty friendly towards me** (*Positive relationships*)
4. **I have enough choice about how I spend my time** (*Autonomy*)
5. **I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment** (*Personal growth*)
6. **I feel positive about my future** (*Purpose in life*)

This set of questions has also been used in Children's Worlds, the [International Survey of Children's Well-Being \(ISCWeB\)](#), and researchers from The Children's Society were part of the [English survey team for the ISCWeB](#).⁹

While the Children's World's Psychological wellbeing scale (CW-PSWB) uses a 0 to 10 response scale (where 0 is 'Do not Agree' and 10 is 'Totally Agree'), the version used by The Children's Society's is aligned with their preferred multi-item measure of life satisfaction, using a five-point Likert scale from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.¹⁰ The scale used in ISCWeB has been validated in a cohort of children aged 12 in Indonesia.^{11 12}

⁶ [Ryff 1989](#).

⁷ Ryff and Singer 2008.

⁸ [Ryff, Boylan and Kirsch 2021](#).

⁹ [International Survey of Children's Well-Being \(ISCWeB\) No date](#).

¹⁰ Note: ISCWeB uses 'Psychological wellbeing' which is another term for Eudaimonic wellbeing.

¹¹ [Casas and González-Carrasco 2021](#).

¹² [Borualogo and Casas 2022](#).

Initial insights

Here, we present initial findings from exploratory analysis of three waves of cross-sectional survey data, collected in 2021, 2022 and 2023. See Good Childhood Reports [2021](#), [2022](#) and [2023](#) for sample methodology.

Each survey was completed by over 2,000 children aged 10 to 17 years from across the UK between April-June of each year. Three waves of data are considered, due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's wellbeing in 2021.^{13 14 15}

Can UK children, aged 10 to 17, answer questions on Eudaimonic wellbeing?

Looking at the level of missing data in children's responses to survey questions (i.e. the proportion of children and young people who respond 'don't know' to each of the individual items) can indicate how well children can answer them. High levels of 'don't know' responses could, for example, indicate that the wording of questions is unclear, or that children find them difficult to answer.

Children's responses to the six questions in The Children's Society's Eudaimonic Wellbeing Scale and, in particular, the small proportions selecting 'Don't know' (ranging between 0.4% and 2.4% across items (Table 1)) suggest that children can indeed answer these questions.¹⁶

¹³ [The Children's Society 2020.](#)

¹⁴ [The Good Childhood Report 2021.](#)

¹⁵ [COSMO Study 2023.](#)

¹⁶ A 'don't know option' is included to ensure validity of items. Table one presents the proportions for the full sample for each wave of data.

Table 1. Item level responses to Eudaimonic Wellbeing Scale in 2021-2023

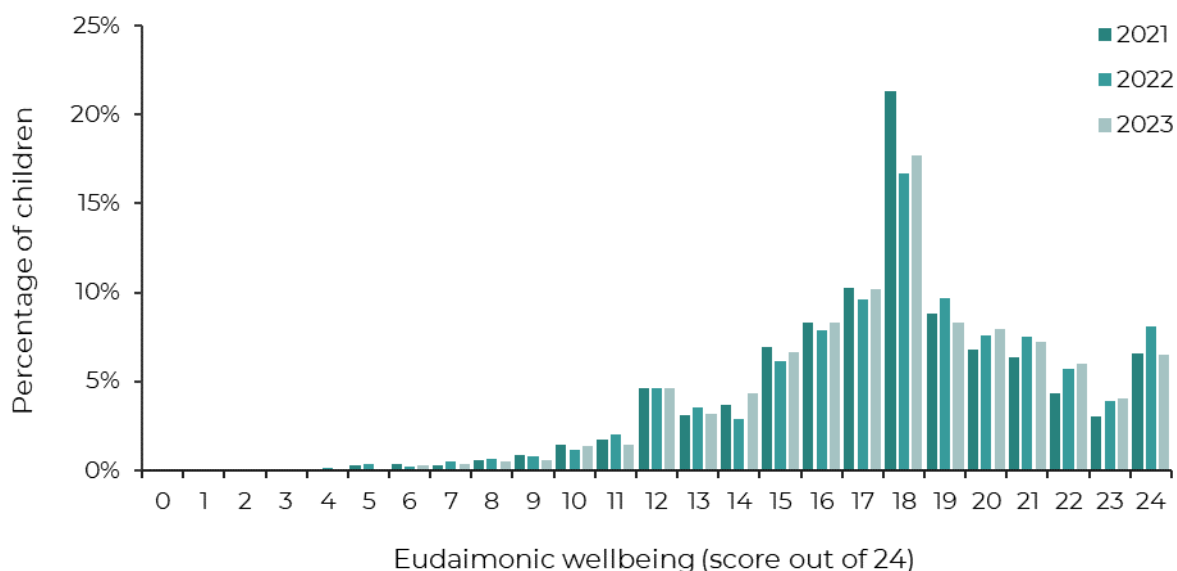
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Item 1: I like being the way I am						
2021	1.4%	4.4%	12.5%	55.0%	26.1%	0.6%
2022	1.9%	4.7%	12.8%	50.4%	29.9%	0.4%
2023	0.6%	5.4%	12.4%	52.8%	28.1%	0.8%
Item 2: I am good at managing my daily responsibilities						
2021	1.1%	9.0%	19.4%	48.1%	21.2%	1.3%
2022	1.7%	9.7%	20.4%	44.9%	21.9%	1.4%
2023	1.0%	12.7%	18.6%	46.3%	19.9%	1.6%
Item 3: People are generally pretty friendly towards me						
2021	0.5%	2.9%	11.3%	55.0%	29.7%	0.6%
2022	0.8%	4.0%	12.7%	50.3%	31.3%	0.9%
2023	0.5%	3.3%	12.4%	52.2%	30.9%	0.7%
Item 4: I have enough choice about how I spend my time						
2021	0.7%	5.0%	16.6%	55.0%	21.8%	0.9%
2022	0.3%	5.5%	15.2%	51.9%	26.5%	0.5%
2023	0.3%	5.9%	15.2%	53.2%	24.8%	0.6%
Item 5: I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment						
2021	1.4%	8.2%	20.4%	47.8%	21.6%	0.6%
2022	1.1%	6.0%	18.1%	44.4%	29.6%	0.9%
2023	0.8%	5.7%	16.4%	46.3%	29.5%	1.3%
Item 6: I feel positive about my future						
2021	1.4%	5.2%	20.8%	49.0%	21.3%	2.4%
2022	1.0%	4.2%	19.6%	46.3%	27.2%	1.8%
2023	0.8%	4.1%	21.7%	46.0%	25.1%	2.3%

Source: The Children's Society's household surveys; wave 20, April to June 2021, wave 21, May to June 2022, wave 22, May to June 2023, children aged 10 to 17, UK, weighted data (Total n = 6,025)

When responses to the six individual items are summed and converted into a single score, the scale yields a very high response rate. Overall, there were complete responses to all six statements for just under 96% of children and young people participating in each of the three survey waves examined.

The distributions of overall Eudaimonic wellbeing scores (Figure 1) are moderately negatively skewed and peak towards the top end of the scale, indicating that the majority of children and young people respond positively to the six questions. This is similar to other wellbeing scales used by The Children’s Society, such as the Life satisfaction scale.¹⁷

Figure 1: Distribution of Eudaimonic wellbeing scores among children and young people (aged 10 to 17)



Source: The Children’s Society’s household surveys; wave 20, April to June 2021, wave 21, May to June 2022, wave 22, May to June 2023, children aged 10 to 17, UK, weighted data. (Total n = 5,779)

¹⁷ [See The Good Childhood Report 2017.](#)

Construct Validity and psychometric properties

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using the first wave of data. EFA is a statistical technique which was used to explore whether the responses to the six items relate to one another and form a unidimensional scale (i.e., that they are measuring one underlying construct, in this case eudaimonic wellbeing).^{18 19} Analysis was also undertaken which assessed whether the data were suitable for factor analysis.

Key statistics:

- Suitability of the 2021 data was assessed using a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which indicated **data were suitable for factor analysis**.²⁰
- EFA for the six items was completed in SPSS using a Maximum Likelihood extraction method with direct oblimin rotation. **One factor** (total eigenvalue 3.219) explaining 53.7% of the total variance was extracted, which suggests **the six items measure a single construct**.
- Internal consistency analysis of the six items obtains Cronbach's Alpha of 0.83, which indicates **very high internal consistency of the scale**. Furthermore, Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) of 0.83 ($p < 0.01$; 95% CI = 0.81–0.84) suggests that the **scale was highly stable**.
- A second factor analysis was conducted using the same data and methodology but this time including eleven items (the five items from the life satisfaction scale and the six eudaimonic items).²¹ **This showed two factors were being measured, which aligned to each of the two scales**.²²

As part of the wider study, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is planned on the data from the other survey waves to assess the consistency of the model fit. Multi-Group Factor Analysis (MGCFAs) will be conducted to assess metric and scalar invariance in multi-group models for gender and age group, meaning that the measure could be used to compare means between these sub-groups.

¹⁸ [Knekta E, Runyon C, Eddy S 2019](#).

¹⁹ Bandalos 2018.

²⁰ KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.86 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = Approximate chi square 3620.867, df 15, $P = < 0.01$.

²¹ See The [Good Childhood Report 2017](#) for details of the validation of the Life Satisfaction scale.

²² Two factors were extracted (total eigenvalues of 5.375 and 1.078) explaining 58.6% of the total variance.

Conclusion

Initial exploratory analysis suggests that:

1. Children and young people aged 10 to 17 in the UK can answer questions on eudaimonic wellbeing;
2. The six items used by The Children's Society form a unidimensional scale that has high internal consistency and is highly stable;
3. The items measure something different to the life satisfaction scale.

The Children's Society plan to publish the full results of this analysis, formally validating the scale so that it can be used to measure the eudaimonic wellbeing of children in the UK.

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