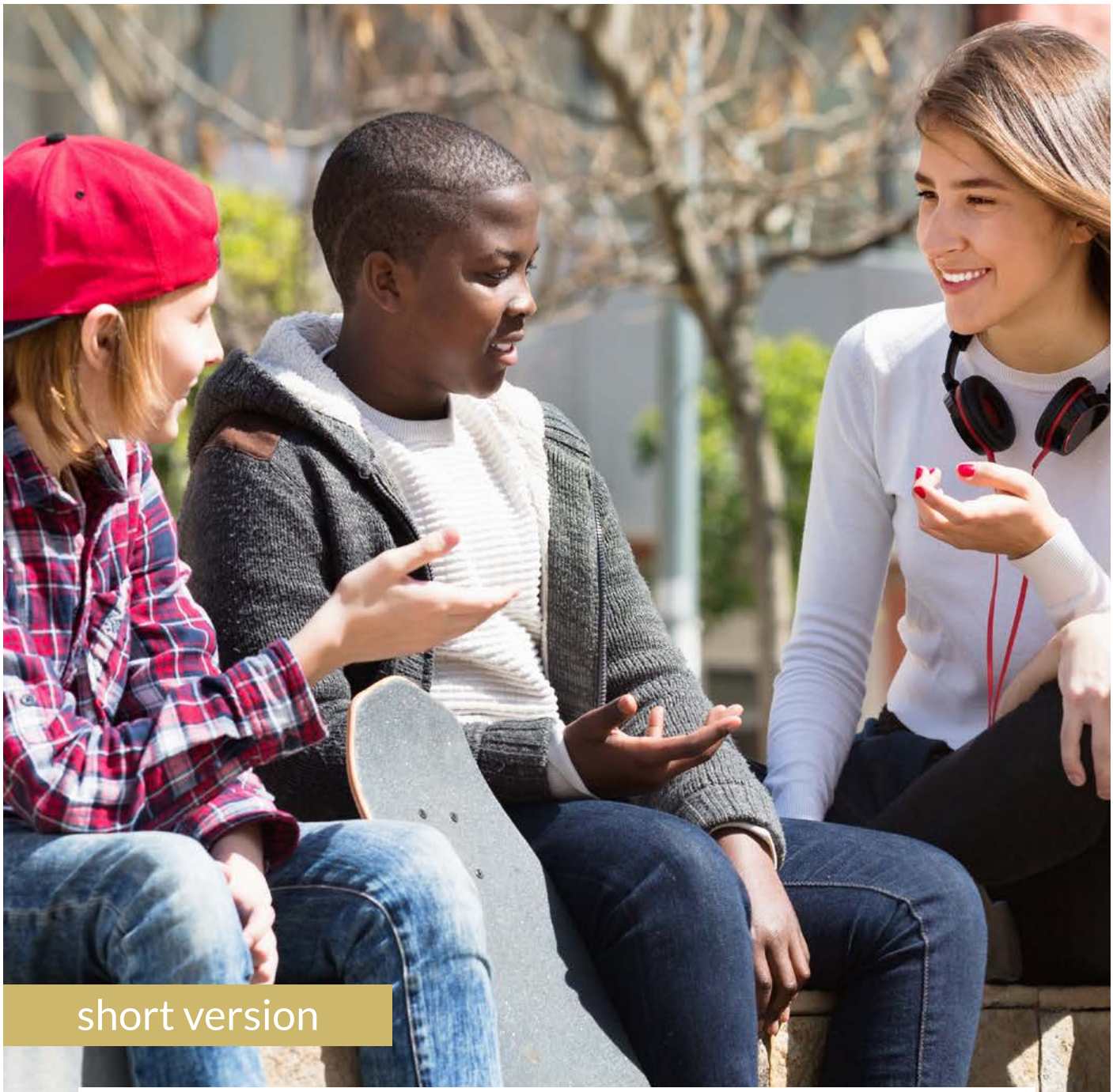

short version

Children's Worlds+

A study on the needs of children and adolescents in Germany

Sabine Andresen, Renate Möller and Johanna Wilmes
with the assistance of Dilan Cinar and Pia Nolting

GOETHE UNIVERSITÄT FRANKFURT AM MAIN

JACOBS FOUNDATION
Our Promise to Youth

BertelsmannStiftung

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Foreword

"Ask us!" That was the appeal made to policy leaders and society at large by the Bertelsmann Stiftung's YoungExpertTeam.[1] After all, children and adolescents are heard and included far too rarely when policies or programs are being created on their behalf. At the same time, they have needs and interests that are special and multifaceted; children and adolescents are not "miniature adults." They are, instead, experts on their own lives. They can speak knowledgably about what they think is indispensable for having a decent life and growing up well – and about the things they can do without.

Those are key findings from the international study *Children's Worlds*. This brochure summarizes the results of the survey that was conducted as part of the study's current German wave. Sabine Andresen and her team at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main – who are responsible for carrying out *Children's Worlds* in Germany – have expanded the study's conceptual design, in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Stiftung. On the one hand, 13- and 14-year-olds were surveyed in addition to younger age groups, and several questions were added to the questionnaire further exploring the needs of children and adolescents. On the other hand, 24 focus group discussions were organized with young people between the ages of 5 and 20. As a result of these enhancements, the study is being published in Germany as *Children's Worlds+*.

As the evaluation by Sabine Andresen and her team shows, children and adolescents are adept at describing what they need, which problems they have and the things that concern them. The findings also refute the often-expressed belief that young people give unrealistic answers when asked what their needs are. What becomes clear instead is that they are quite capable of assessing their requirements on a practical level. For example, of the almost 60 percent of 8-year-olds who do not have a mobile phone, approximately half say they neither want nor need one.

Moreover, the students interviewed offer realistic assessments of their family's financial situation: Those who worry most about family finances are in fact the ones who have the least. In addition, the concern these children and adolescents have about family finances correlates with feeling less safe and with experiencing teasing, exclusion and violence more often.

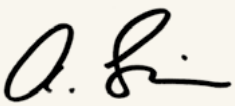
Most children and adolescents in German society say that, in many areas, they are well cared for and have people who look after them on an ongoing basis. At the same time, there are clear differences (by age or type of school, for example) and problems related to childhood and adolescence that can lead to stress, disappointment and being left out. This is where social challenges, such as poverty and lack of educational opportunities, become apparent in the everyday lives of young people.

1 The YoungExpertTeam of the Bertelsmann Stiftung project Families and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies is made up of 17 young people between the ages of 15 and 21 from North Rhine–Westphalia. The team has been advising the project since autumn 2017.

Precisely this knowledge of young people's worries, needs, interests and life situations is crucial, if effective social, family, educational and community policies are to be implemented for children and families. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is therefore calling for a new, comprehensive and representative survey to be conducted on the needs of children and adolescents in Germany. So far, the country still lacks a regular and systematic evidence-based assessment of this sort. Such a survey should serve as the foundation for preventing child poverty (e.g. through a new inclusive child benefit we have called for), for further developing the educational system and for providing on-site support to children and adolescents.

A "needs survey" would be methodologically challenging. It would have to experiment with and apply various methods, while taking into account the diversity inherent in the lives of children and adolescents. Qualitative research tools that include opportunities for open interactions (such as focus group discussions) are vital if the children and adolescents themselves are to address topics relevant to their situations. Moreover, the survey would have to be carried out at regular intervals if the changes are to be captured that young people experience as they develop and grow. This would also make it possible to verify whether policy responses have proven effective or need to be realigned. As befits participatory research, children and adolescents should be included early on, when the survey is being designed. This would be an appropriate response to the appeal (in its complete form) made by the YoungExpertTeam quoted above: "Also ask us about the things you should ask!"

Dr. Jörg Dräger
Member of the Executive Board
of the Bertelsmann Stiftung



Anette Stein
Director
Program Effective Investments in Education

1 Introduction

Needs of children and adolescents in the Children's Worlds+ study

The global study *Children's Worlds* is being carried out in many countries around the world. It uses representative questionnaire-based surveys to examine the subjective well-being of children between 8 and 12 years.[2] In the current wave of the German study, two key conceptual elements were extended: First, 13- and 14-year-olds were also included in the survey. Second, 24 qualitative focus group discussions were held with children, adolescents and young adults from under 6 to 20 years in age. We therefore call the German study "Children's Worlds+".

The expansion of the age groups and, in particular, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data are the result of the study's being embedded in the Bertelsmann Stiftung[3] project Families and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies[4]. The project addresses a number of concerns, including that the needs, rights and interests of children and adolescents are not adequately considered when efforts are made to combat child and youth poverty in Germany, or when social, family and educational policies are developed. It also responds to the fact that the opinions of young people are too rarely heard in general. By communicating their findings, the international researchers participating in Children's Worlds also want to listen to children within their respective countries.

In recent years, empirical researchers on the national and international levels have gained considerable experience working with child-related indicators and have intensively examined the concept of child well-being.[5] Children's Worlds constructively follows in the footsteps of these previous efforts. By focusing on the needs of adolescents in Germany, it is entering new territory. The Children's Worlds+ research team in Germany has a comprehensive and complex dataset at

2 The Zurich-based Jacobs Foundation supported the project phase which ran from 2013 to 2015. In the current phase from 2017 to 2019, the project's international management has been funded by the foundation, along with the related infrastructure, the maintenance of the dataset, and individual surveys, particularly those carried out in the Global South. Data were collected in Germany during the current phase in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The project is being led by an interdisciplinary team of international researchers: Sabine Andresen (Goethe University Frankfurt), Asher Ben-Arieh (Hebrew University and Haruv Institute Jerusalem), Jonathan Bradshaw (Universities of York and Durham), Ferran Casas (University of Girona), Bong Jo-Lee (Seoul National University), Gwyther Rees (University of York).

3 The Bertelsmann Stiftung is a private operating foundation based in Gütersloh, Germany. The foundation's work is committed to ensuring everyone can participate in society. https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/home/

4 https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/family-and-education-creating-child-centered-policies/

5 For example, the international journal *Child Indicators Research* (Springer) has been published since 2008, and a six-volume reference work is available, the *Handbook of Child Well-Being. Theories, Methods and Policies in Global Perspective* (Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Frønes, I., Korbin, J.E., eds. Dordrecht: Springer, 2014).

its disposal, consisting of almost 3,500 fully completed questionnaires and many hundred pages of transcripts from 24 focus group discussions.[6] The present publication brings together the findings from this information. In addition, it provides selected quantitative analyses, offers insight into key topics from the qualitative material and presents the various data's thematic commonalities.

The theoretical framework for Children's Worlds+ is described and explained in the following section in view of its position within the research on children, youth and child well-being. Building on that, the study's systematic and empirical expansion is then outlined, as is its embedding in the Bertelsmann Stiftung's project Families and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies. A key role here is played by the concept for ensuring children and adolescents have a socially inclusive standard of living that was published by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and an expert advisory council.[7]

Solutions are presented as three modules that respond to the concept's call to create child-centered policies. One module is the development of a regular survey of children and adolescents that focuses on their specific needs in order to ensure those needs are met. Taking this module as its point of departure, Children's Worlds+ attempts to shed light on the needs children and adolescents have, test possibilities for researching those needs and investigate the scope of a needs assessment in various fields of activity.

The third section briefly describes and explains the methodology and sample used in Children's Worlds+. The fourth section presents key findings from the quantitative and qualitative dataset across the four dimensions depicting the needs of children and adolescents, which were developed as part of the above-mentioned concept and are shown in the form of a sailboat in Figure 1.

All four dimensions are relevant for the growth and participation of young people and for the effective shaping of childhood and adolescence in German society. The boat rides on a wave which depicts "adults' attitudes," an expanded perspective that members of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's team of young experts helped bring about, thanks to their participation in several discussion and evaluation phases organized as part of Children's Worlds+.[8] Through the explicit reference to attitudes, the young experts wanted to clearly show that adolescents remain dependent on the goodwill of grown-ups: On the one hand, they are dependent on the adults in their immediate environment; on the other, they are dependent on adults at a remove from their personal situation, such as policy makers, who make decisions about them and their future.

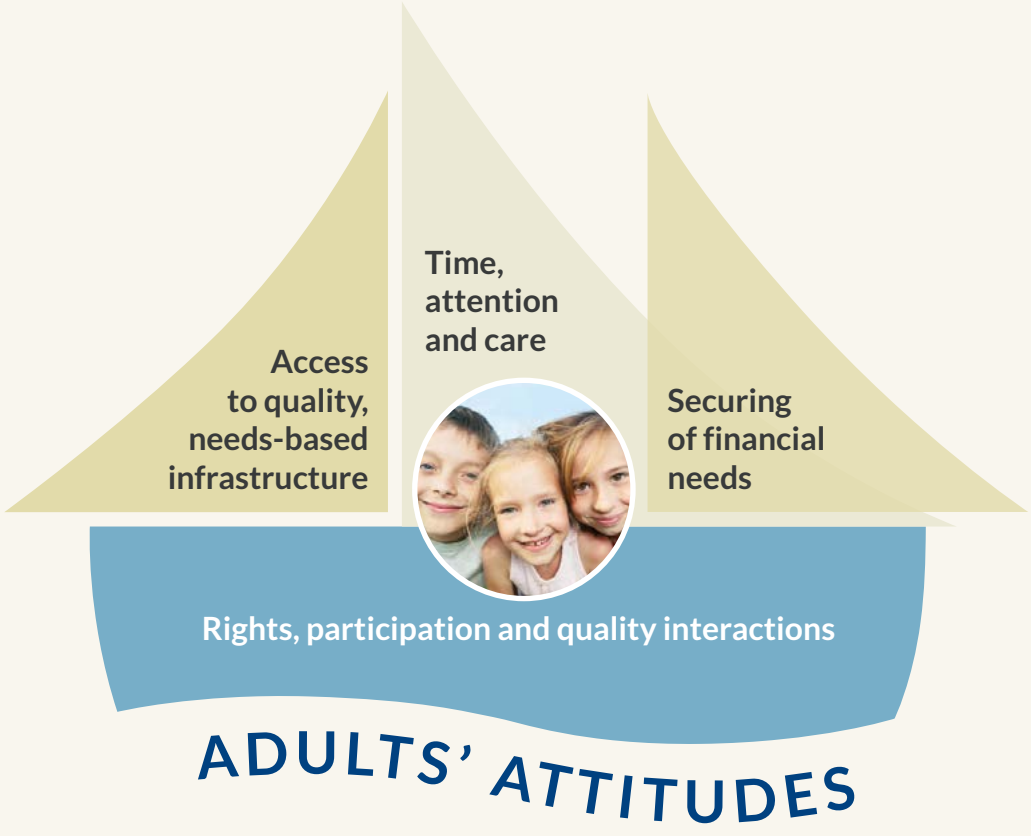
Children's Worlds+ provides insight into the lives and concerns of children and adolescents, and into some of their needs. At the same time, the study is not a comprehensive survey of those needs. Its findings provide a picture instead of what is working and which needs are being met, as well as where shortcomings exist and, as a result, additional effort is needed to ensure that children and adolescents can grow and participate as they should. Children's Worlds+ thus aims

6 Carried out in 2017 and 2018.

7 See www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/konzept-existenzsicherung-kurz

8 See www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fragt-uns

FIGURE 1 **Needs of children and adolescents in four dimensions**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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to stimulate a discussion among researchers, policy makers, educators and others about what are "normal" and "average" conditions for all children and adolescents in society. The results and analyses presented here provide an initial look at the possibilities for shaping how decisions are made and actions taken on behalf of the younger generation in Germany. Thus, individual findings on the four dimensions offer insight into what children and adolescents feel is important. Any one dimension alone is not sufficient for social inclusion; more telling are the various overlapping aspects that emerge from the findings.

We are thus committed to ensuring that researchers, policy makers and educational practitioners recognize the complexity of the needs, rights and interests of children and adolescents of different ages, and that they work to anchor the structures required for acknowledging, pursuing and realizing them. Finally, the concluding section offers reflections on surveying the needs of young people – on their behalf and with their participation. To that extent, we want to further define what is meant by "creating child-centered policies."

2 On the needs of children and adolescents

Conceptual differentiation and empirical approach

2.1 Thinking from the child's perspective: what children and adolescents need

Children and adolescents have many of the same needs that adults do. Yet the similarities should not hide the fact that some needs are specific to childhood and adolescence.[9] Whether and to what extent young people can realize their needs depends primarily on the opportunities made available to them by the adults in their lives, be it at home or in educational institutions, through policy-making or through the legal rights they are granted. What concerns most children and adolescents in their daily lives is having their requirements recognized and resources provided by parents and other family members, by educators, or by doctors in children's clinics or judges in family courts. Different people and groups – and their respective resources, abilities and attitudes – thus largely decide to what extent a child's or adolescent's needs will be met. In addition, laws, policy guidelines and structural conditions determine which needs are recognized and provided for during childhood and adolescence. Even adults close to the child – mother, father, teachers – rarely have any direct influence on this situation.

Children and young people themselves have even fewer possibilities for shaping how society reforms its decision-making and distribution processes. With that, they lack access to decisions about how rights and entitlements are formulated and guaranteed. Moreover, they have little say on how processes and procedures relating to needs are developed, established and applied. Those who thus want to assert the basic rights of children and adolescents and ensure that their various needs are met are confronted on all levels with fundamental questions about the position of the child or adolescent within the generational order.

One central aspect is therefore generating and making available knowledge about the needs of young people of different ages. Until now, this knowledge has been primarily based, in Germany at least, on statistical calculations and information provided by adults – during household surveys, for example – and rarely on statements made by children and young people themselves. Yet this ignores the potential offered by the life phases of childhood and adolescence and the expectations society has of children, adolescents and their parents. Thus, it is necessary

9 We do not further differentiate between the various needs and requirements. Need as an economic concept is understood as a concrete requirement. Needs must be materialized, i.e. they are directly associated with resources such as money or quantifiable amounts of time.

to clarify which needs are being met from the point of view of children and adolescents, where they feel shortcomings exist, and what they perceive their own needs to be as children, adolescents and young adults, relatively independent of parental, educational and societal standards. Their subjective perspective is what makes it possible to recognize the complexity of the needs that are required to ensure young people have a childhood or adolescence which offers the average number of participatory opportunities.

The study's basis in childhood theory informs its understanding of children and adolescents as individuals capable of making their own decisions and taking their own actions – individuals who are, however, dependent on help, care, information, upbringing, education and protection. They are allowed considerably less freedom to decide and act as they wish than other age groups. In addition to their lack of overall insight and influence, this makes them particularly vulnerable to and reliant on those groups of adults in positions of authority.

This challenging situation serves as the point of departure for the survey of children and adolescents presented here. The study is predicated on research on childhood and youth that assumes young people must be taken seriously and given opportunities to participate. To that extent, they are addressed as real-world experts on childhood and youth. The premise is not, however, that statements by children and adolescents must be ascribed a greater truth or authenticity than those made by others. What is important instead is ensuring that their right to be heard is recognized, even among researchers, and when academic findings are transferred to educational practice, policy-making and society at large.

As outlined above, this approach follows from the concept for ensuring children have a socially inclusive standard of living. The concept calls on policy makers to always consider the point of view of children and their particular life phase when measures for combatting child and family poverty are designed and implemented. This means that, first, all children and adolescents must be provided with the full range of opportunities to participate; second, strategies and measures for combatting child and youth poverty must be firmly established; and, third, more should be done to balance the interests of children and parents. If young people are to fulfill expectations pertaining to education and participation, policy makers in Germany must ensure that the country's children and adolescents enjoy a certain level of financial security, one that is not independent of the family's income. Access to quality infrastructure is also necessary.

The concept includes three modules designed to ensure a socially inclusive standard of living for all children and adolescents:

(1) A ***needs survey*** carried out for and with children and adolescents, which offers, on the one hand, the opportunity to gather information on young people's own experiences and knowledge and on their attitudes towards their needs and the realization of those needs, and, on the other, to make this information available to policy makers and practitioners.

(2) A ***new inclusive child benefit,*** which ensures the material needs of children and adolescents, once identified, are met.

(3) Needs-based, ***quality infrastructure*** (preschools, schools, etc.) for children, adolescents and their parents, and a local *support system* geared to the needs of children and adult family members that together provide access to quality educational offerings and ensure assistance and support are effective and can be received unbureaucratically.

The concept thus proposes a strategy for Germany that combats child and family poverty and its multifaceted impacts while taking into account the child's perspective and his or her potentials, needs and rights. This approach is also found in childhood and youth research and is being tested in the fields of children's rights, child well-being and inequality theory.

2.2 Conceptual implementation of the idea of a needs survey as part of Children's Worlds+

Carried out at regular intervals, the needs survey is a tool designed to help ensure over time that all young people have access to those things that constitute a "normal" childhood and adolescence in Germany. This means that the key needs children and adolescents have for their growth and development must be considered as part of the efforts to ensure them a minimum standard of living. Children's Worlds+ does not yet represent a needs survey of this type. Thanks to the self-assessment by young people, it does, however, offer initial insight into the needs of children and adolescents and the degree to which they are being provided for.

For Children's Worlds+, structuring the needs-based approach across the four dimensions described above was challenging but productive, since the survey now makes it possible to describe the dimensions more concretely and identify those areas where gaps exist. This, in turn, means those resources could be identified and calculated at a later point in time that would be required for funding the needs of young people and putting the relevant needs-based infrastructure in place. While the quantitative part of the survey generates findings about individual needs and their fulfillment, the qualitative part, with its open focus group discussions, can be used to examine previously unconsidered needs and their weighting by children and adolescents.

2.3 Concretization of the four dimensions as part of Children's Worlds+

The following further describes and depicts the four dimensions and how they are captured by the items and questions in the quantitative and qualitative surveys.

Dimension 1: rights, participation and quality interactions

The first dimension is represented by the hull of the sailboat and thus serves as a sort of foundation. The reasons for this can be found in the importance of individual rights for the everyday lives of children and adolescents, for the realization of their needs and for ensuring an "average" degree of participation in all areas of society.

Rights must be recognized, granted and realized. This dimension focuses on the rights of children and adolescents and the opportunities they have to participate in different social spaces. Participation is one of the rights laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These are usually grouped into the "three P's" – provision, protection and participation – and are part of the theoretical framework used for the international Children's Worlds survey. The rights of children and adolescents are thus present in various items in the questionnaire.

Moreover, a correlation exists between the subjective well-being of children and adolescents and the extent to which they see their rights realized. To that extent, the hypothesis has been advanced that when children's rights are recognized and when they are experienced – i.e. when they are applied in concrete, everyday situations – positive impacts can be seen on young people's emotions, attitudes and self-image; on the scope of their social decision-making and action-taking; and on the structures they have for exercising power. Actors in the area of child-related policy-making thus hope that, by granting and realizing rights, the feelings and experiences of powerlessness young people have can be reduced vis-à-vis older generations.

Existing analyses made on the basis of the first representative Children's World study (ISCWeB 2013/2014) offer a range of possibilities for approaching these assumptions statistically.[10] For example, Kutsar et al. (2019) note in a comparative analysis that the perceived realization of rights in the family, in school and in friendships is important for believing "I have a good life."[11] With that, their findings reflect those from studies of older children and adolescents which have shown that opportunities for genuine participation positively affect subjective well-being and satisfaction with one's own life (see e.g. González et al. 2015; Lloyd/Emerson 2017).

The rights of children and adolescents need to be recognized by adults in particular. Ultimately, they are accorded to young people within the cross-generational distribution of power by adults and by institutions created by adults. This also means that adults must be willing and able to realize these rights and fill them with life. This dimension thus addresses, on the one hand, adults' attitudes in general and in their specific roles as parents or teachers – evidenced, above all, in the way they interact with children and adolescents. On the other, it addresses the structures that ensure rights (or should ensure them), e.g. a child's right to be heard in family court during a custody dispute.

Both the more individual and the structural side of this dimension presuppose a willingness on the part of adults to critically weigh their own rights against those of children and adolescents and to share power. Studies such as Kutsar et al. (2019) show that children and adolescents have had comparatively little influence on whether their rights are recognized, granted and realized (see also Rees/Main 2015; Andresen/Wilmes 2017; World Vision 2018). Research on the rights of children and adolescents and, above all, on their opportunities to participate thus raises awareness of the asymmetric relationship across generations.

10 http://www.isciweb.org/?CategoryID=191. The website provides detailed information on how the dataset can be accessed and under which conditions.

11 Kutsar et al. (2019) examined the dataset for 8-year-olds from the first representative Children's Worlds study from 2013 for eight European countries: Germany, England, Estonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Spain and Romania (n=8,149).

Young people do not view this situation only critically; that, at least, is suggested by the high values for overall subjective well-being in the international Children's Worlds study (Rees/Main 2015; for Germany see e.g. World Vision 2018 and LBS Kinderbarometer 2016). At the same time, they do question the legitimacy of the power and decision-making structures in the prevailing generational order, a structural deficit confirmed by the findings from Children's World's+. The findings, moreover, further illustrate the ethical imperative of formulating the rights, participation and quality interactions of children and adolescents as needs that must be concretely realized. This has been made particularly clear by the "Fridays for Future" demonstrations carried out by young people worldwide, which have exposed the structural irresponsibility towards the younger generation and its needs, and by the calls for preventing young people from losing the foundation of their very lives.

In order to avoid a misunderstanding often encountered in the discussion of children's rights, it should be emphasized that the goal of the depiction and discussion of this dimension is not to diminish the importance of childrearing and education or the responsibility parents and other adults have for ensuring children grow and develop as they should, nor is it to pit parents' fundamental rights against those of children. It goes without saying that on the level of concrete, individual responsibilities, adults – be they mothers and fathers in families, teachers in schools or policy makers in society – have certain roles to play which include the task of making decisions for children and adolescents. These decisions should, however, honor the integrity of children and young people, whose rights, interests and needs must always be taken into account.

The educationalist Micha Brumlik (2017) has developed the concept phrase of "advocatory ethics" to describe this situation. This means that decisions are made for young people by the adults responsible for them as their representatives, but based on ethical considerations and in awareness of the unavoidable dependency that arises from love and care. The decisions made by adults and their actions as representatives should be guided by the children's consent, even in retrospect, when the children are grown. Advocatory ethics also means creating and structurally anchoring opportunities for participation and being heard within everyday life. Quality interactions – which can include childrearing – thus depend on the attitudes of those involved, on the responsibility exercised by the (adult) decision makers, and on structural framework conditions and legal, social and political requirements.

Rights, opportunities for participating and the quality interactions which the former require can be found – or are lacking – in those venues and locations where children and adolescents regularly spend time. The evaluation of the data therefore reflects the main everyday settings of family, school and neighborhood. It is in these settings and with the people present there that children and adolescents experience the different forms and qualities of participation; it is also where they discover how they are listened to and trusted, and how and whom they themselves can trust. They thus experience a range of interactions and relationships and their various qualities. This is where commonalities can be found above all with the third dimension of "Time, attention and care," as well as the other two dimensions.

Dimension 2: Access to quality, need-based infrastructure

In Germany as in other countries, the discussions concerning family, educational and social policy that have taken place in recent years have mostly targeted the issue of infrastructure, above all for younger children. This is the result, not least, of economic and employment objectives. The increasing participation in the job market of mothers, even of very young children, can be traced back to, on the one hand, the instability of pension programs, which is expected to grow given declining birth rates, and, on the other, changing roles within society. These developments are transforming family life and making it necessary to provide and care for children outside the family. Many countries are therefore focusing on gainful employment for mothers as a way of combatting child and family poverty, especially for mothers raising children alone (Daly 2010; OECD 2011). The labor market, policies for combatting poverty, and changing social roles are thus key catalysts for expanding child-care infrastructure for infants and young children and for offering more all-day programs geared towards preschoolers and school-age children.

Furthermore, the public attention given the OECD's studies comparing performance and competencies, such as PISA, has changed the discussion of the importance and impacts of early childhood education and care (ECEC). ECEC centers, which in Germany are part of the child and youth welfare system and not the educational system, are now expected to make a sound and systematic contribution to children's education. Although a presumably unintended side-effect, less attention is being paid to later stages of childhood as a result.

An additional strand of discourse and policy must also be mentioned: In Germany, the focus on education as a creator of human capital and the arguments in favor of expanding educational and child-care infrastructure go hand in hand with a fundamental skepticism towards parents. In discussions involving policy makers, educators and the public, various devaluations of parental competencies can be observed, as can a distrust of the family, especially as a domestic learning environment (Betz/Honig/Ostner 2017). This should be understood as a strategic tactic, since it allows the causes of child poverty to be ascribed to parental behavior and thus facilitates an ongoing obfuscation of structural causes (Andresen 2017).

Overall, the second dimension has therefore been developed more from the perspective of adults, especially parents, but also professionals and policy makers. It principally addresses access to offerings which are meant to match the relevant needs and requirements as closely as possible; above all, it raises the question of what "quality" infrastructure is. This dimension thus targets different systematic elements. One question that must be asked, for example, is who has which basic access to offerings and for whom should access be created: primarily for parents and their needs, primarily for their children, or for both? Another aspect that must be clarified is if these offerings and the entire local infrastructure is of sufficient quality and geared towards the needs of parents, children and adolescents, or all actors. Finally, what is also important is quality, needs-based access within the infrastructure itself, such as access to assistance in the event of a crisis.

The latter is the central focus of Children's Worlds+ in the context of the chosen conceptual approach. The surveyed children and adolescents are already in an

educational institution, live in a family[12] and experience the neighborhood in which their home is located. We thus pose the question here of how quality and needs-based justice should be judged from the perspective of children and adolescents, and which types of access they have, for example at school, if they require support. We therefore assume that children and adolescents also have a genuine interest in quality and needs-based justice in ECEC centers, schools, community groups, etc.

In this context, other studies and reports have also shown that mobility is a key factor in the life of young people. How they get to school and whether local public transport makes it possible for them to reach after-school activities safely and as quickly as possible can contribute to their well-being. Children and adolescents rarely articulate openly and of their own volition their ideas about the quality and needs-based justice of infrastructure and supporting resources; this, however, is largely due to their not being asked.

Children's Worlds+ and similar studies can thus contribute to the discussion of quality from the perspective of young people. Moreover, Children's Worlds+ offers the possibility of examining the topics of trust, safety and feelings of insecurity with regard to family, school and neighborhood, along with experiences of exclusion and violence. In Children's Worlds+, access to quality, needs-based infrastructure is thus treated via the fundamental issues of safety, trust and freedom from violence.

How safe children and adolescents feel in the above-mentioned spaces is thus understood as an indicator of a need that should be concretely realized. International well-being research has produced findings showing that the feeling of being safe has a major influence on well-being (Rees/Main 2015). Safety as an emotional category can also be seen as the basis for the self-determined mobility of children and adolescents and thus as fundamental for their access to infrastructure (ibid.). Mobility and experiences of bullying and exclusion were also salient topics in the focus group discussions, which means they require careful consideration in the needs analysis.

In its complexity, the dimension of quality, needs-based infrastructure demonstrates its existential connection to the particular vulnerability of children and adolescents. The latter often have little chance to decide or take action when it comes to their place of residence, the institutions where they spend time and the neighborhoods in which they live. They can hardly avoid interacting with the individuals and groups present there (Finkelhor 2008). This, in turn, can considerably diminish the feeling of being safe.

Other individual needs that young people have could of course also be ascribed to this dimension and it would be possible to gain meaningful insights into other quality-related issues. The topics here include the size of classrooms, the quality of classroom instruction, the quality of the equipment and resources available in youth centers, the centers' opening times, and the nutritional value and tastiness of meals served at schools. We did not explicitly include these items in the

12 The share of children and adolescents participating in this study who live in children's homes or similar institutions is very small.

Children's Worlds+ questionnaire and therefore cannot provide any information about them. However, they would undoubtedly be fruitful topics for further research.

Dimension 3: Time, attention, care

In Children's Worlds+, a "translation" of the third dimension "Time, attention and care" took place by considering the emotional needs of children and adolescents for love, attention and recognition in the family and in friendships. In the research on child well-being, numerous studies stress the importance of meaningful relationships in a child's immediate environment. What matters in this context from the children's point of view is, for example, striking a balance between autonomy and parental care (Andresen, Hurrelmann, Schneekloth 2014).

Time is examined in Children's Worlds+ in light of three different aspects: use of time, satisfaction with time spent together (families and friends), and the general availability of time. In this study we use "attention" and "care" synonymously; a conclusive differentiation of both terms is not possible based on the available data. Both point to the fact that people are social beings and thus dependent on others. Attention and care are therefore also dependent on time, regularity and reliability. Given sufficient time, relationships can develop that shape the entire process of growing up.

Attention and care are captured within Children's Worlds+ through the experiences a person has in the family or at school when people take care of, listen to and thus show an interest in him or her. Similar items are used in other studies and, in general, relationship quality is viewed in most national and international comparative research on child well-being as crucial to well-being. As a result of the qualitative focus group discussions, trust was identified as a significant factor from the point of view of children and adolescents, something that has received little systematic or empirical consideration in previous studies.

This dimension and its key categories are relevant for all age groups. Time, for example, is an important resource for children, adolescents and adults, and all age groups have needs relating to it, even if this commonality can be a source of conflict in everyday situations. Children might wish to spend more time with their mother and father, for example, while the latter might want or have to spend more time working or addressing professional concerns. Numerous clear differences in perception and assessment could thus presumably be found in this dimension were comparisons with adults to be made. For example, parents working fulltime jobs could view all-day child care and backup assistance during "off hours" – i.e. early in the morning and late at night – as resources that would meet their needs. Their four-year-old daughter, on the other hand, might wish for someone to come and get her after she's had her lunch and afternoon nap. For us, what is important is uncovering these possible differences and not considering such conflicts taboo.

Even if Children's Worlds+ does not collect data on adults' attitudes towards time, attention and care, the experiences and objectives of parents and teachers are nonetheless implicitly present. Children and adolescents, for example, value time spent with their family in light of the time adult family members are willing and able to commit. Going forward, it might prove instructive to identify

commonalities by comparing the experiences that children and adolescents have as "visitors" to the infrastructure, and the ways they understand those experiences, with those of parents and educators.

Structurally, children and younger adolescents in particular generally have less power and freedom to decide in favor of or against the care and supervision they receive throughout the day. Mothers and fathers, too, have limited freedom to decide about and act on this situation. They are often under pressure and need reliable all-day care for their children – since employers require them to be as flexible and mobile as possible, or due to early or late working hours or long commutes. Moreover, a shift can currently be observed in the public debate in Germany about what is considered normal. As part of this shift, families (parents and children) are expected to manage fulltime jobs and fulltime care while still spending high-quality time in and for the family. Yet the American scholar David Finkelhor (2008), who researches childhood and violence, sees this lack of control as a cause of childhood vulnerability, especially the lack of control by young people over their environment, the number of hours they spend in institutions and the people they encounter there (Andresen/Koch/König 2015). In general, this dimension requires a more precise definition and, in some cases, must be further differentiated than has been possible for Children's Worlds+.

Dimension 4: Securing financial needs

When it comes to ensuring a minimum standard of living, a crucial factor is the financial resources available to and the financial security of children, adolescents and their families. Every study on child well-being also examines the subject of material support. Growing up in poverty entails considerable disadvantages for children and adolescents. However, the findings on how this interacts with other aspects to influence well-being remain ambiguous (Bradshaw 2018). While many studies have demonstrated the impact of a lack resources and of poverty on well-being, this impact is in some cases less pronounced than that of other dimensions and indicators.

Bong Joo Lee (2017) aimed to explain which social and contextual factors particularly influence subjective well-being. The factors included leisure, environment, learning, money, relationships, freedom to choose, and self. Based on the first Children's Worlds survey, Lee determined that freedom to choose and self, in the sense of self-realization and self-determination, have a greater influence on subjective well-being that material resources. Yet Lee also emphasizes that there is always something else, which he calls "the unexplained." An in-depth exploration of the latter has not yet been possible based on representative surveys. This finding was one of the reasons that led us to integrate a qualitative survey into Children's Worlds+. In particular, the complex of poverty, lack of choice and limited personal resources can be more precisely captured using qualitative analyses.

Even if the findings vary on the intensity of the impact a lack of material resources has on subjective well-being, sufficient empirical reasons exist for providing children and adolescents with material freedom. For years, research on child poverty has clearly demonstrated the ramifications that experiences of poverty have for education, self-realization, belonging and safety (see e.g. for Germany Zander

2015; Andresen 2015; Hübenthal 2017). Researchers would do well to explore these findings in greater detail in the future, since material poverty's problematic effects have been documented to varying degrees in almost all areas of the lives of children and adolescents (Laubstein/Holz/Seddig 2016).

Developing a new inclusive child benefit as a state-funded financial benefit for children and adolescents in families with limited or no income is thus a key solution within the concept for ensuring children have a socially inclusive standard of living. How this benefit will be determined and, above all, how it will be realized in practice will depend on a number of factors, including which material goods and financial resources are indispensable for an "average" or "normal" childhood. The present study advances an initial, cautious approach in this regard.

The Children's Worlds+ questionnaire includes more than 20 concrete items on this dimension. Realizing the relevant needs has required families to spend money or have it available to them. The corresponding items address the topics of the space, furnishings and possibilities for improvements in the family home; the family's mobility (car) and activities; the existence of a place where the child or adolescent can spend time undisturbed; activities with friends; and personal possessions. The Children's Worlds+ questionnaire asks what children and adolescents have at their disposal across the listed items.

Additional concrete resources were considered in the focus group discussions in addition to those resources whose presence implies average opportunities for children and adolescents. Taken together, this, in a next step, provides insight into age-specific financial needs. Moreover, the focus groups yielded information as to how resources are distributed within families (Main 2018).

Finally, this dimension attempts to capture information on emotional factors and other aspects relevant to everyday life. One indicator stands out in this regard, namely the question of whether and how often the child or adolescent "worries" about the family's financial situation. We also used the item "worries about the family's financial resources" in the other dimensions to explain differences. This allows us to describe groups of children and adolescents more precisely and to depict correlations. By examining the item "How often do you worry about how much money your family has?" and its influence on the pressures resulting from experiences of violence or being excluded, feelings of insecurity, or opportunities for engaging in activities with friends, we are able to shed light on the complexity of participation in childhood and adolescence.

3 Methodology and sample used for Children's Worlds+

Reference has already been made to the potential offered by dovetailing different methodological approaches. In Children's World's+, an in-class, representative, questionnaire-based survey of 8- to 14-year-old students was combined with qualitative focus group discussions. In contrast to the international Children's Worlds study, 13- and 14-year-olds were thus also included. Both methodological approaches are oriented toward the study's conceptional framework, in particular toward methodological implementation of the four dimensions. The decision to organize focus groups with children and adolescents of different age groups and integrate them into the study was made while the survey was being carried out in classrooms and was not part of the initial planning. The goal of this expansion was to deepen and contextualize selected quantitative findings and to open the study – using methodologically sound means – to include the needs and interests articulated by children and adolescents themselves. Qualitative methods give participants a role in determining the topics examined. This step seemed to us to be both necessary and fruitful in light of the study's overall orientation and its embedding within the concept for ensuring children have a socially inclusive standard of living.

The following describes the methodological procedure used for both the questionnaire-based survey and the focus group discussions.

3.1 Methodology used for the survey based on the international Children's Worlds study

The international Children's Worlds research project is examining the well-being of children between 8 and 12 years. It is dedicated to investigating how young people perceive and assess their own life situation, their relationships and the social conditions they experience as they grow and develop. Quantitative data were collected in over 30 countries from mid-2018 to mid-2019 during the third wave of the survey.[13] Data were collected in Germany between June 2017 and February 2018.

13 The survey has been completed in 24 countries; 14 are still conducting the survey and others have shown an interest in doing so. An overview of the participating countries and researchers is available on the project website: www.isciweb.org.

The study is unique in the international discourse on child well-being in light of the diverse countries included, the wide range of topics covered and, in particular, the number of children and adolescents directly involved. Researchers thus have an immense wealth of data at their disposal for making multifaceted comparisons and for gaining vivid, specific insights into the lives of children from different regions of the world.

As mentioned above, in addition to examining the well-being of children and adolescents, the focus of Children's Worlds+ carried out in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Stiftung lies on young people's needs, on what is lacking in their lives and on the resources they have at their disposal. At the same time, the collected data are being used to identify the role participation plays in their lives, the opportunities they have to participate, and the degree to which their own opinions are heard by others. The goal is to draw on the findings to answer the question of what currently characterizes – for the age groups involved and, above all, from the point of view of the young people themselves – a "typical," "average" or "normal" childhood and adolescence that is not marked by experiences of deprivation but instead promotes social participation.

Survey tool

The standardized international questionnaires designed for children aged 8, 10, 12 and 14 include questions on the following topics: about yourself; your home and the people you live with; friends; school; your neighborhood; money and the things you possess; how you spend your time; life in Germany; your life in general.[14] This makes it possible, on the one hand, to depict the multidimensionality inherent to the concept of well-being. On the other, it allows insights to be gained into the people with whom children and adolescents live and grow, what characterizes their relationships to individuals and groups, and which experiences they have with adults and others their same age and in their friendships.

Diverse items concerning the respondents' surroundings shed light on the environments in which children and adolescents grow and are active. The topics of time and school, moreover, provide information on how they spend their time and how their lives are structured when they are in school, the place they spend a large portion of their day. Experiences of deprivation and their consequences are revealed by the data, as is the range of resources that most children have at their disposal. Questions about life in Germany provide, on a meta-level, information about the trust young people have in adult decision makers.

Designed for use in an international context, the questionnaires were expanded for the key topics of needs and participation by adding a total of 16 items in the following areas:

- Family (e.g. agreement with "My parents treat me fairly");
- Neighborhood ("Do you have a place where you can play safely outside?"; agreement with "My neighborhood is dirty");
- Friends ("How many children or adolescents are there that you get along with really well?");

14 Questionnaires for the 2013/2014 survey are available at www.isciweb.org.

- School (e.g. "How many days a week are you in school or a child-care center for lunch?");
- Exclusion and violence ("How often in the last month did someone say something nice to you?");
- Money (e.g. "When something breaks at home, how quickly is it repaired?" "How often can you do something with your friends that costs money?");
- along with items concerning young people's possessions (bicycle, scooter, inline skates, designer clothing, a pet).

In the various phases of the international and national project, focus groups on the questionnaire were conducted with children before the list of items to be included in the questionnaire was finalized.

Fieldwork and survey conditions

During the preparatory phase, the planned research was endorsed by the Ethics Committee of the Education Department at Goethe University in Frankfurt in keeping with the ethical code of conduct for practical academic research.

Fieldwork for the quantitative survey took place during the 2017/2018 school year in schools located in seven German states. Surveys were conducted in five states in western and two states in eastern Germany. All standard school types in Germany – primary and secondary – were included. Of the approximately 2,200 schools contacted by post, telephone, e-mail or in person, 30 primary schools and 28 secondary schools took part, including private schools. This corresponds to a response rate of approximately 3 percent.

The survey was conducted in plenum in classrooms for grades three to nine. Computer tablets were used allowing each student to answer the questions anonymously. In addition to the participating children and adolescents, one to two trained interviewers were present. Only those students participated who wanted to be included and whose parents or guardians had given prior approval. Roughly 6,000 parents were queried in order to achieve a sample size of approximately 3,500 students. In almost no cases did the children or adolescents say they were not interested in participating.

As a rule, a teacher gave non-participating students work to occupy them while the survey was taking place. Participating students were able to choose at any time whether or not they would answer the questions; they could also terminate the survey at any time or choose not to answer individual questions. Depending on the preferences expressed by the class, the interviewers decided whether all the questions would be read aloud and explained to the entire group, or whether the students would work through the questionnaire on their own and ask for assistance if they needed additional information. The latter was generally the case, except at primary schools.

Sample

Tables 1a and 1b show the breakdown of the sample by sociodemographic factors. The tables are based on data for 3,448 students.

TABLE 1A **Study sample by age and gender**

Percent

AGE	
8-year-olds	7.4
9-year-olds	14.3
10-year-olds	14.6
11-year-olds	17.3
12-year-olds	18.0
13-year-olds	17.7
14-year-olds	9.4
15-year-olds	1.4
GENDER	
Female	43.5
Male	41.1
Non-binary* or no response	15.4

*Children and adolescents in 7th grade or above had the option of identifying as non-binary.

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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A relatively balanced distribution can be seen among the groups of 9- to 13-year-olds. The group of 8-year-olds and the groups of 14- and 15-year-olds are proportionally smaller, which can be explained by the fact that school classes are not homogenous with regards to age. In terms of gender, if one disregards the 15 percent of respondents for whom no distinct gender assignment is available, then the remaining 85 percent exhibit a balanced gender distribution.

If one compares the composition of students in the sample by type of school with Germany's school students in general, clear deviations become evident. A weighting framework based on official statistics was therefore created to compensate for this distortion, so that the weighted sample reflects the distribution of students

TABLE 1B **Study sample by type of school**

Percent

SCHOOL TYPE, STUDENTS IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL[A]	DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY	DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS AT ALL SCHOOLS IN GERMANY[B]
Hauptschule	14.0	9.8
Realschule	12.6	20.5
Gymnasium (Grades 5–10)	49.4	36.3
Gesamtschule, Sekundarschule	24.0	33.4

[A] German secondary schools, which tend to group students by academic achievement, often do not have direct equivalents in non-German-speaking countries. Students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Therefore, to preserve accuracy, the statistics pertaining to these schools as depicted and discussed in the English translation of this study are being presented using the original German classifications.

[B] Source: German Federal Statistical Office; Hauptschule: not including evening schools; Realschule: not including evening schools; accessed at www.deutschlandinzahlen.de (Dec. 7, 2018); Heading: "Schüler in der Sekundarstufe 1 nach Schularten 2017"

Sources: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018; German Federal Statistical Office.

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among Germany's various school types in the 2017/2018 school year.[15] All calculations in the following sections were made using data weighted by type of school.

Tables 2 to 4 show the family settings those children and adolescents live in who participated in the survey.

TABLE 2 **Study sample by home environment**

Percent

HOME ENVIRONMENT	
Child's own family	97.8
Foster care	0.7
Children's home	0.7
Other	0.8

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018. | BertelsmannStiftung

Almost all children and adolescents surveyed say they live with their family. The share of respondents who say they live in foster care, children's homes or other settings is negligible. Table 3 shows the different types of family structures in which the children and adolescents live. Since children in primary schools were

TABLE 3 **Family structure: With whom do the surveyed children and adolescents live?**

Percent

WITH PARENT OR PARENTS	
With mother and father	79.5
With mother	13.0
With mother and mother's partner	4.9
With father	2.0
With father and father's partner	0.6
AND WITH GRANDPARENTS	
With father, mother and grandparents	9.9
With one parent and grandparents	1.9
With one parent, the parent's partner and grandparents	0.5
Does not live with grandparents	87.6
WITH SIBLINGS AND/OR OTHER CHILDREN	
With siblings or other children	72.5
Does not live with siblings or other children together	27.5

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018. | BertelsmannStiftung

15 Weighted data are used so that statements can be made about the entire sample. Weighting is necessary to obtain a data set representative of the different school types. The basis for the weighting is the description of students in lower secondary schools (Sekundarstufe 1) as found in the German Federal Statistical Office data set of September 27, 2018.

not asked in detail about their families, Table 3 only depicts the family structures for students in secondary schools. In addition, only those students are included who provided at least one response.

Table 3 sheds light on the different family structures in which the young people participating in the survey live. The study does not claim to be representative in terms of family structures. According to data from the German Federal Statistical Office (2018),[16] 70 percent of families with at least one child are two-parent households, 19 percent are single-parent households and 11 percent are households with one parent and the parent's partner. Our presentation is based on this structure. No official data are available on children and adolescents living with grandparents.

The grouping shown in Table 3 makes it possible to analyze the data based on comparisons of the different family types.

TABLE 4 **Languages spoken at home**

Percent

LANGUAGE USED EVERY DAY AT HOME	
German	44.2
German and another language	40.7
Primarily another language (or other languages)	15.1

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018. | BertelsmannStiftung

Information on whether other languages are spoken daily at home besides German (Table 4) provides insight into whether a child is of immigrant background. According to the 2017 Microcensus, 35.5 percent of children at non-vocational schools in Germany are of immigrant background.

Data analysis

The data analysis focuses on presenting distributions of the items relevant to the various questions. In this context, groups were compared by gender, age and school type. In addition to the influence of socio-demographic characteristics, variables pertaining to the children's financial situation were also used for comparative purposes. Analysis-of-variance procedures and the chi-squared test were used to verify contexts generated by different hypotheses.

Evaluation of the data took place in two phases and occurred parallel to the evaluation of the transcripts of the focus groups.

16 German Federal Statistical Office (2018): Alleinerziehende in Deutschland (Single parents in Germany) 2017. Supplementary material for the press conference on August 2, 2018. Wiesbaden, 2018.

3.2 Focus group discussions on the needs of children and adolescents

The questionnaire-based survey primarily examines the environments and experiences of children and adolescents in their breadth. The qualitative discussions open up other points of view. This material makes a more in-depth analysis possible of the ideas and positions of children and adolescents. As part of the qualitative part of the survey, discussions were held reflective of the groups who completed the questionnaire (8- to 14-year-olds); in addition, explorative discussions were held with preschoolers 5 years or older and with young adults aged 18 to 20 years.

Focus groups produce new insights for describing and analyzing the opinions, attitudes and interpretive patterns of children and adolescents. Analysis of the discussions facilitates the reconstruction of the knowledge implicit in a group. Thematic focal points can be set using interview guidelines. At the same time, an openness can be maintained which allows the participants to accentuate certain subject matter as they see fit. During the focus groups, the participants were asked to describe what is "normal" for young people growing up in Germany – without being given any directives on what that means – and to create a hierarchy for the corresponding needs. Moreover, they discussed opportunities for participating in their immediate environments and on a more general societal level.

Conducting the focus group discussions

The focus groups always began with the question of what the participants considered particularly important in life. Moreover, cards prepared ahead of time were presented listing goods or possible needs, such as time, which corresponded to the four dimensions. The goal was to start by ascertaining whether these items and needs were truly important to the children and adolescents or if they could do without them.

Following these initial efforts to approach the subject and generate clarity, the cards were arranged according to importance using a three-dimensional pyramid. This process, together with more in-depth questions, made it possible to create a hierarchy of individual needs and dimensions, along with their significance and weighting for different age groups and in different contexts.

Case vignettes were also used to explore to what extent children and adolescents can participate in decision-making processes in both their immediate environments and more generally, as well as which people and groups dominate these processes and which position the young people ascribe to themselves. The following case vignette is an example which addresses the topic of taking responsibility for decisions, among others:

> *Luka's mother has been offered a new job. She would earn more than she does now and would be able to do a lot more. But she would need almost two hours to get to work. Luka's parents cannot decide if Luka's mother should take the job and if the family should move. They ask Luka to decide what will happen. What do you think about that? How does Luka probably feel?*

To conclude the discussion, the group was asked how they would use €10, €100, €1,000 and €1,000,000 if they received those amounts. This not only sheds light on how money is viewed by different age groups, it also reveals the desires that individual children and adolescents have for their current and future lives.

Fieldwork and survey conditions

Contact to the groups of children and adolescents was established through leading individuals and organizations in the field and other key individuals or through recommendations made in a non-school context. Attention was paid to ensuring both rural and (major) urban environments in various regions throughout Germany were included. Ultimately, 24 groups participated in the discussions, including groups from various institutions, (socio-)pedagogical associations, facilities providing after-school child care, ECEC centers, after-school church groups, youth centers, and recreational and professional organizations. Furthermore, individual children who wanted to take part because their friends were participating were also included. A total of 107 people joined in the discussions.

For the most part, the focus groups were held in the relevant institution or facility. In some cases, they occurred in the children's homes. In all cases, however, they took place in a separate room that allowed for a calm atmosphere away from the happenings in the institution or family. The composition of the individual groups reflected the participants' preferences, with the groups ranging in size from at least two people to a maximum of eight. Attention was paid to ensuring the groups included participants of the same age to the greatest degree possible.

As with the quantitative survey, the focus group discussions were based on guidelines for ethical research. Once the head of the institution agreed the discussions could take place, the parents were asked for their consent, as were the children and adolescents themselves. They had the option at any time of leaving the discussion or being only a passive participant, which some chose to do. The discussions were recorded and some sequences were subsequently transcribed. In addition, brief questionnaires were incorporated for collecting demographic data and information on participants' cultural backgrounds.

Evaluation

To evaluate the data, a form of qualitative content analysis was chosen that allowed for a systemization of the many experiences occurring in the focus group discussions and the resulting "data." The methodology for both the analysis and evaluation was based on this content-structuring approach (Kuckartz 2016: 97ff). The material was processed using MAXQDA.

The qualitative content analysis allowed for a preliminary sorting of the material into categories that derived from the theoretical framework and the targeted research topics. For the evaluation, the four dimensions were used as heuristics for coding the transcripts, as were the categories "opportunities for participation" (case vignettes) and "financial resources / money."[17] After the coding and the

17 Oriented to the guidelines for the focus group discussion.

in-depth analysis of selected transcript passages, we identified the key topics, which were those topics mentioned most often and by almost all age groups and which could be found in multiple categories.

One key topic from the focus groups that runs through all dimensions is school – excepting for children not yet in school. A total of seven key topics were identified: trust; autonomy and participation; basic needs; belonging; friendships; fear of exclusion; and family relationships. Furthermore, relevant sub-topics and codes pertaining to the individual dimensions were also analyzed and are referenced in the findings presented below.

Preparing the analyses for the current publication

As described above, the qualitative content analysis allowed us to sort the extensive material in accordance with the predefined categories and differentiate it through the assigning of codes. During this process, a strong focus was maintained on the dimensions in order to promote continuity with the analysis of the quantitative data set, among other reasons. The findings documented and discussed in the next section bring together the data and results, both quantitative and qualitative. The key topics were assigned to the relevant dimensions, thereby introducing them into the overall discussion.

4 Children's Worlds+

Needs of children and adolescents in Germany

The following section uses selected findings from the quantitative and qualitative data to describe the extent to which individual needs of children and adolescents in Germany are realized and which relevant differences can be observed, for example relative to age or type of school. The questionnaire's content and individual items were structured and evaluated according to the four dimensions, as were the qualitative focus group discussions.

4.1 Rights, participation and quality interactions

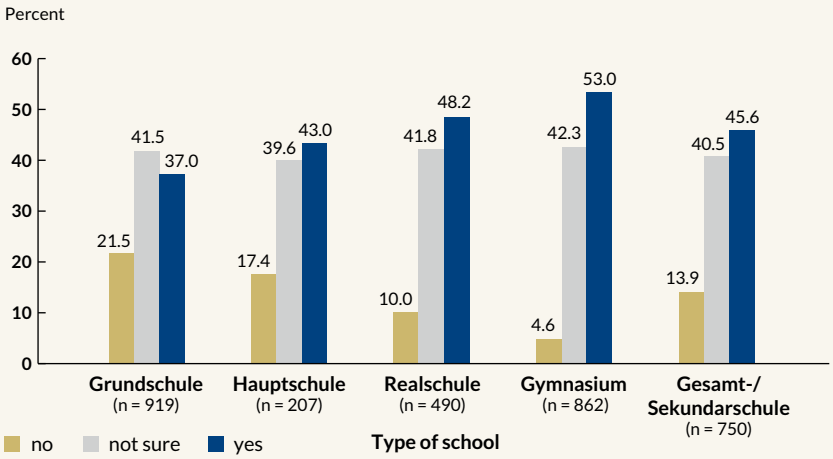
The dimension "Rights, participation and quality interactions" targets issues relating to the recognition, establishment and implementation of rights and participatory opportunities in all settings where children and adolescents spend time. The recognition of rights and their implementation can be seen as a prerequisite for quality interactions, especially with adults, from the point of view of the younger generation.

Rights

The findings from Children's Worlds+ show that the knowledge available to children and adolescents about their rights depends on their age. Among 8-year-olds, 33.3 percent said they do not know what their rights are. The group of respondents replying in the same way continually diminishes in size until it reaches 4.3 percent for 14-year-olds. In addition to the age-related effect, knowledge of their rights varies among children and adolescents depending on the type of school they attend, especially secondary schools.[18] Among those attending Hauptschulen, 17.4 percent say they are not familiar with their rights, compared to 13.9 percent at Gesamtschulen and Sekundarschulen, 10 percent at Realschulen and 4.6 percent at Gymnasien. Moreover, across all types of schools some 40 percent of children and adolescents say they are not sure if they know what their rights are.

18 German secondary schools, which tend to group students by academic achievement, often do not have direct equivalents in non-German-speaking countries. Students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Therefore, to preserve accuracy, the statistics pertaining to these schools as depicted and discussed in the English translation of this study are being presented using the original German classifications.

FIGURE 2 **"Do you know which rights children and adolescents have?" – by type of school[1]**



[1] German secondary schools, which tend to group students by academic achievement, often do not have direct equivalents in non-German-speaking countries. Students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Therefore, to preserve accuracy, the statistics pertaining to these schools as depicted and discussed in the English translation of this study are being presented using the original German classifications.

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018. | BertelsmannStiftung

One interesting finding is that many children and adolescents have a general understanding of children's rights, although most are unfamiliar with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Only 14.2 percent of 8-year-olds know of the convention; among 14-year-olds the number is 28.7 percent. Those are sobering figures considering the convention has now existed for 30 years. One positive aspect, however, is that the convention's key focal points – protection, education, development and participation – were always mentioned in the focus group discussions. It can thus be assumed that a collective knowledge of children's rights exists, even if it sometimes seems nebulous.

When children and adolescents spoke about their rights in the focus groups, one aspect that came up is protection and defense. That is, they believe rights are necessary to prevent violence and war, as well as discrimination against young people. They also see rights as empowering, since they provide access to participation, education and resources. Both aspects – protection against serious harm and empowerment to participate fully – address the topic of personal needs, ideas of what constitutes an "average" childhood and adolescence, and the requirements such a childhood or adolescence entails.

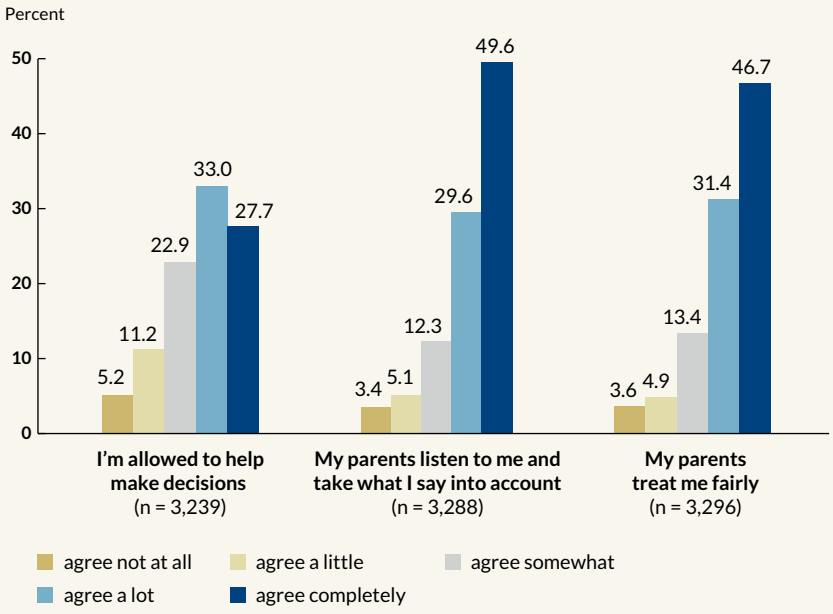
Overall, the findings about the knowledge of rights as classified by age group and, above all, school type reveal a pressing need for action. The high percentage of young people who do not understand or are uncertain about their rights leads to the question of how this group could attain a secure knowledge of those rights, i.e. in which context this goal could be achieved and who could help achieve it. Moreover, the question arises of who, in addition to educators in schools, could provide appropriate information on the subject on an ongoing basis. Many of Germany's states have already adopted educational directives for schools which include the objective of communicating to children and adolescents what their

rights are. Ultimately, however, we know too little of how information about these rights is imparted in the classroom and whether the rights are actually lived on a daily basis in schools. This leads to the question of how the topic can be integrated into the classroom experience and everyday school activities, and which needs children and adolescents themselves have in terms of information and knowledge about their rights. Another aspect that requires clarification is which individuals or institutions could conceivably be responsible for explaining to all children and adolescents in Germany which rights they have. A decisive factor here would be ensuring that all educational professionals are in a position to provide accurate and complete information on children's rights. To what extent that is currently the case cannot be determined based on the comparison of different school types.

Participation and quality interactions

If one considers the findings pertaining to participation and quality interactions, then children and adolescents give their parents good marks in general. The group of respondents that does not at all agree with the three items related to shared and autonomous decision-making is relatively small: 5.2 percent for the statement "I'm allowed to help make decisions," 3.4 percent for "My parents listen to me and take what I say into account" and 3.6 percent for "My parents treat me fairly." At the same time, more information is required about this group and ways must be found to reach these parents and help create a different atmosphere within these families.

FIGURE 3 **Autonomous decision-making and inclusion in family decisions**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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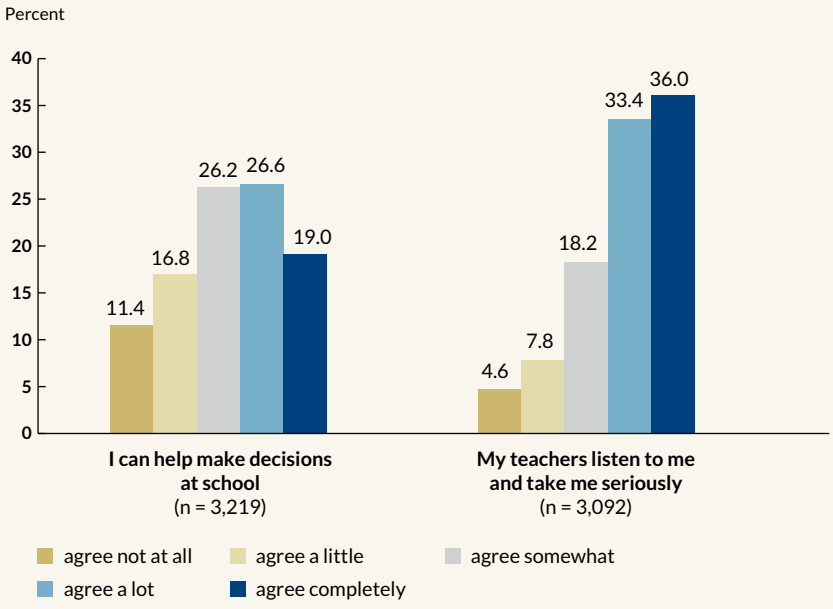
Overall, however, the vast majority of children and adolescents feel their parents are accessible and that they themselves are listened to in the family. In the focus

group discussions, the participants also considered their parents' approaches to childrearing. The discussions made clear that parents who allow their children to do whatever they want are not seen in only a positive light. At the same time, however, the participants expressed bewilderment over prohibitions they feel are unwarranted. The children and adolescents do not want to have complete control, but are willing to allow their parents to make decisions too. Decisions about school, conversely, were often seen as a parental matter; this is an area in which young people seem to see few opportunities for sharing in or taking sole responsibility for the decision-making.

School is of course also a place in which students have experiences pertaining to rights, participation and quality interactions (along with interactions of a less positive nature). The group that strongly disagrees with the statement "I can participate in decision-making at school" is relatively high at 11.4 percent, which matches findings from the international Children's Worlds study. Overall, girls feel they have more opportunities to participate than boys do. The older they get, moreover, the fewer possibilities adolescents feel they have for contributing. Clear differences also exist when school types are compared. When it comes to participating in decision-making, the highest levels of agreement can be found among students at primary schools, which is in keeping with the age-related trend. At the secondary level, 17.9 percent of students at Hauptschulen completely agree with the statement "I can participate in decision-making at school," compared to 12.7 percent of students attending a Gymnasium. In light of both the results of the quantitative survey and the opinions expressed by the children and adolescents we queried in the focus groups, the topic of participation at school deserves greater discussion and possibilities should be explored for allowing young people to get involved, since children and adolescents have articulated a clear need for greater opportunities to contribute when at school.

FIGURE 4 **Inclusion in decision making and being taken seriously at school**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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Overall, 69.4 of all respondents agree that their teachers listen to them and take what they have to say into account. At the same time, however, the rate of agreement with this item – which is geared towards assessing quality interactions – declines as children grow. Agreement rates for this item range from 51.7 percent to 46.5 percent for 8- to 10-year-olds, a positive result. The reason for this could well be that they spend more time interacting intensively with their teachers and that classroom teachers play a critical role at the elementary level. In contrast, only 23.4 percent of 14-year-olds agree completely with this item. When school types are compared, it is once again the students attending a Gymnasium who evince the lowest level of complete agreement that their teachers listen to them and take what they say into account, at 25.1 percent.

Educators are seen by children and adolescents principally as potential and actual discussion partners. Schools play a very important role in the area of rights, participation and quality interactions – both in terms of the potential offered by teachers individually and school as an institution, and in terms of the shortcomings revealed by our data. Discussion is therefore needed of how educators can be assisted and encouraged to be available for students, despite the considerable time pressure and performance expectations they are subject to. This, in turn, raises the question of how structural measures can be implemented to further support educators in carrying out their duties and promoting quality interactions together with students.

From the point of view of young people, very much depends on adults' attitudes when it comes to the dimension "Rights, participation and quality interactions." They have repeatedly had demeaning experiences, leading them to consider prevailing power relationships as unequal. This can also be seen in their assessments of how rights are recognized in the social context. The dimension "Rights, participation and quality interactions" thus addresses power issues across generations, a topic that needs to be addressed openly. One aspect became particularly prevalent here during the focus groups, namely experiences of being demeaned due to age. In particular, adolescents spoke of being stigmatized during puberty, in the sense of not being taken seriously given the developmental phase they are going through.

In conclusion, the following quote from a focus group discussion concisely expresses the feeling of not being seen as worthy of respect, a feeling that becomes more prevalent as children grow:

18-year-old participant in a focus group

People say to teenagers: get involved! And when we do get involved, they say: You haven't got a clue, what do you think you're doing?! … OK, so why even bother?

Source: transcript of the qualitative survey Children's Worlds+.

4.2 Access to quality, needs-based infrastructure

Issues relating to safety, exclusion and violence are treated in Children's Worlds+ under the dimension "Access to quality, needs-based infrastructure." These issues offer essential information about infrastructure, its quality and its appropriateness for the needs at hand. After all, students who do not feel safe and who are excluded require support so that the burdensome situation can be corrected as soon as possible and any cycle of negative events quickly interrupted. To assess the quality of the infrastructure, it is also necessary to examine the conditions and resources that build trust, offer safety and prevent exclusion and violence where they are present. Participants spoke about these topics at length during the focus groups, even though they were not explicitly broached by the researchers. We had the impression that participants took the opportunity to express their thoughts on these troubling topics while in a safe space.

Safety

Findings from national and international research on child well-being attest to the importance of safety for children and adolescents. The questionnaire used for Children's Worlds+ therefore asks the participating children and adolescents if they feel safe in three key environments: at home, at school and in the neighborhood. Two findings stand out: First, home is the place young people have the greatest sense of safety, with 91.4 percent of children and adolescents saying that is where they feel very or completely safe. Second, only minor differences are evident between schools and neighborhoods. Of those queried, 76.4 percent say they feel very or completely safe at school; 76 percent say this is true of their neighborhood. Home is thus the place that is the safest (in relative terms) for the children and adolescents queried in the survey. At the same time, 8.6 percent of the respondents say that home is not a safe place. Of the 3,062 respondents (who answered all questions), 8.6 percent is a sizeable number for whom the domestic environment apparently does not offer a feeling of safety and support. Research on violence and child welfare has shown that it is very difficult for at-risk children to free themselves from a violent family environment without assistance.

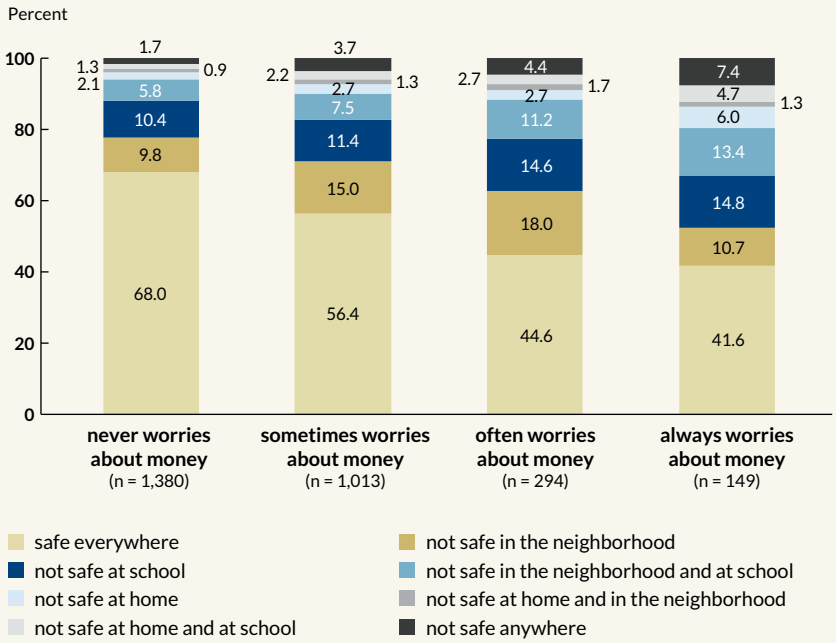
Further, 60.1 percent of the queried children and adolescents feel safe in all three environments (home, school, neighborhood). For them, safety is an important resource in their everyday lives, something an analysis of the qualitative materials clearly shows. In addition to the importance of being able to trust others, especially adults, the participants in the discussions spoke about other needs, such as a sense of belonging and recognition. The opinions expressed by the children and adolescents are thus based on fundamental ideas of people in general and their desire for a safe environment. Safety also plays a role in other questions relating to children's proper growth and development.

Of the queried students, 3.0 percent do not feel safe anywhere – not at home, at school or in their neighborhood. These children and adolescents in particular need support, and the question arises of how they can be assisted. Including the group saying they do not feel safe anywhere, a total of 13.3 percent do not feel safe in at least two places. One group stands out here, namely young people who do not feel safe at school or in their neighborhood (7.2%). Potential responses thus seem feasible that target the relevant social environments, above all when schools are

located in the neighborhoods in question. When it comes to feeling safe, clear differences also exist among the various school types: In primary schools and at Gymnasien, 19.1 percent and 18.2 percent of respondents, respectively, say that they (generally) do not feel safe; at Gesamtschulen the figure is 32.9 percent and at Hauptschulen 33.4 percent.

If one investigates the question of who the children and adolescents are that do not feel safe, it becomes clear that the feeling of being safe correlates strongly with the family's financial resources. Among students who say they always worry about their family's finances, 41.6 percent feel safe everywhere, but 7.4 percent do not feel safe anywhere. Compared to the other three groups, those are the lowest and the highest values, respectively. Among those who always worry about finances, 6.0 percent do not feel safe at home, also the highest percentage. This analysis clearly reveals the degree to which other concerns can be brought to light through the item "Worries about the family's financial situation" and how the feeling of being safe diminishes when financial deprivation is present, or even if it is "only" feared.

FIGURE 5 **The places in which respondents do not feel safe – grouped by "How often do you worry about how much money your family has?"**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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Experiences of exclusion and violence

Experiences of exclusion and violence are also important for collecting data on and assessing child well-being. In Children's Worlds+, experiences of exclusion and violence caused by other students were captured using the following three questions:

- How many times in the last month were you intentionally hit by other students?
- How many times in the last month were you teased by other students?
- How many times in the last month were you excluded by other students?

These items are geared towards experiences that took place within the previous month at school; they can, however, also have happened on the way to school, during interactions outside of school or in social media. Students were asked about physical assaults whose intensity cannot be ascertained. The phrase "intentionally hit" attempts, however, to preclude smaller, incidental blows. Those blows experienced as an intentional attack are a form of physical violence which are one form of bullying. This also applies to experiences of exclusion or being teased by others. The children and adolescents were asked about the frequency of such encounters – never, once, two or three times, more than three times – in the previous month.

The items mentioned above do not permit any conclusions to be drawn about whether targeted attacks by a person or group have taken place over a longer period of time, something that by definition belongs in the category of bullying. Children's Worlds+ is not a study of bullying. Our evaluation is, however, based on a broad definition of violence in schools, which includes social exclusion by fellow students, experiences of discrimination and physical violence. We assume that participants in Children's Worlds+ have also been or still are affected by bullying, in the sense of targeted, recurring attacks by fellow students characterized by strong group dynamics. To that end, data from Children's Worlds+ allow for a preliminary assessment of the problem, although they cannot substitute for a targeted investigation of bullying in schools and other settings including social media.

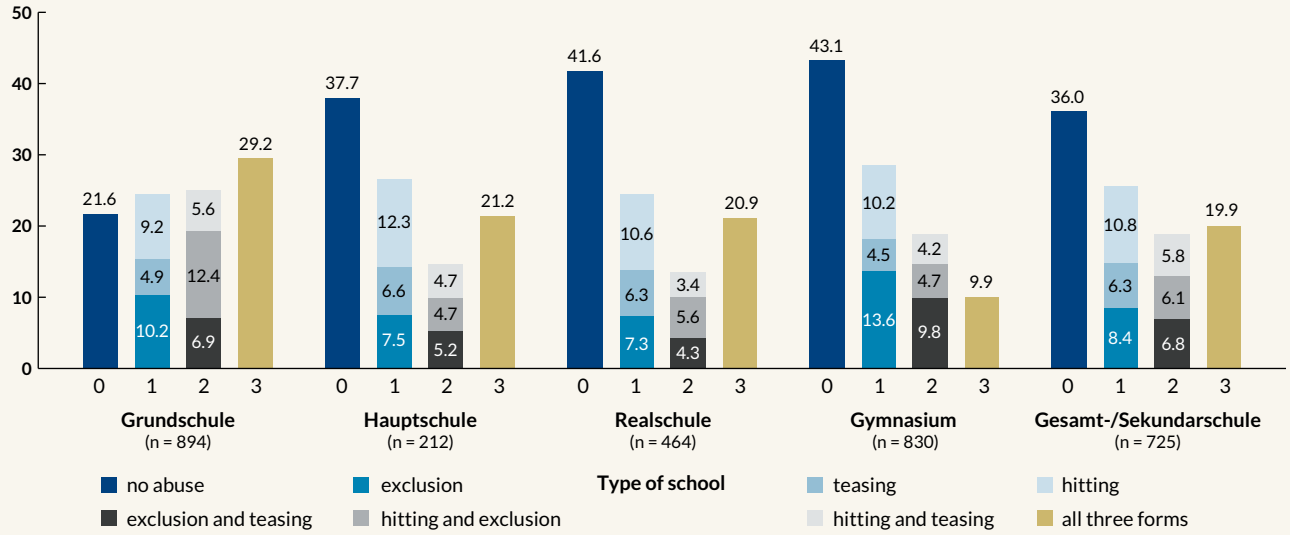
The answers to the questionnaire revealed the following: When differentiated by type of school, between 43.1 percent (Gymnasium) and 21.6 percent (primary school) of the participating children and adolescents experienced no abuse in the previous month. Noteworthy here is the high level of exclusion and violence in primary schools, which is markedly greater than in all other types of school. Almost 30 percent of students at primary schools say that they were hit, teased and excluded within the past month. Some 20 percent of students attending a Hauptschule, Realschule, Gesamtschule or Sekundarschule report having experienced all three forms of abuse within the past month. Among students attending a Gymnasium, the figure is 10 percent.

The high response rate among primary students is somewhat baffling since 52 percent of those students completely agree with the statement "I feel safe at school." The strong feeling of being safe despite the higher level of exclusion and violence could potentially be traced back to the more physically oriented interactions, as opposed to discursive encounters, younger students tend to engage in. The attacks among primary students are presumably less serious than among older students. Thus, teasing and hitting might not be as threatening to 8 or 9-year-olds as they are to 13 or 14-year-olds.

Overall, however, the proportion of students is high that have been abused not only in one way, but both physically and psychologically: At 54.1 percent, students at primary schools have experienced at least two forms of abuse particularly often,

FIGURE 6 **Experiences of exclusion and violence at school. Share of young people who have experienced no, one, two or all three types of abuse at least once – by type of school[1]**

Percent, p < 0.001 / Cramer V = 0.137



[1] German secondary schools, which tend to group students by academic achievement, often do not have direct equivalents in non-German-speaking countries. Students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Therefore, to preserve accuracy, the statistics pertaining to these schools as depicted and discussed in the English translation of this study are being presented using the original German classifications.

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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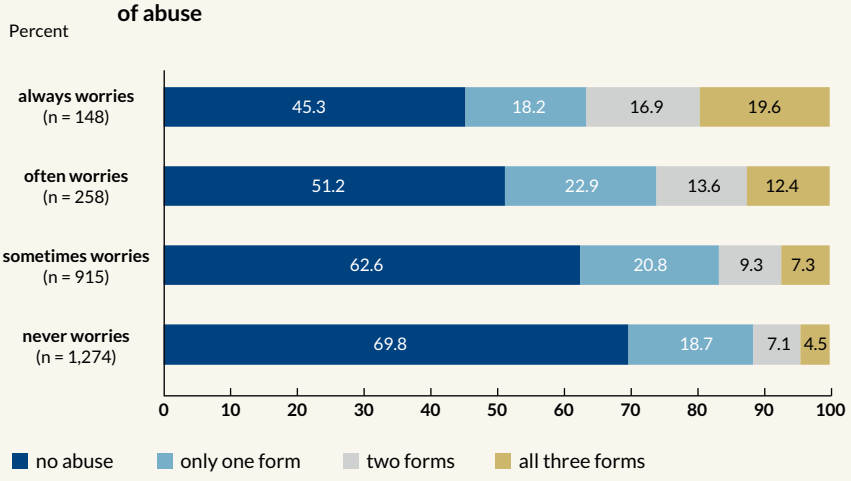
followed by 38.6 percent of respondents attending a Gesamtschule or Sekundarschule. Physical and psychological violence are more or less equally common at Hauptschulen and Realschulen, experienced by 35.8 and 34.2 percent of students there, respectively. Here, too, students attending a Gymnasium are least likely to be affected by at least two forms of abuse, at 28.6 percent. At all types of schools, except for Hauptschulen, a significant connection can be seen between experiences of exclusion and violence at school and the feeling of being safe at school described above.

In terms of the three forms of bullying, relatively more boys say they experience physical attacks and relatively more girls say they feel excluded. No difference can be seen for the responses related to teasing. Boys are clearly overrepresented in the group of children who have experienced all three forms of attack.

Worries about the family's financial situation also have a significant influence in terms of children experiencing exclusion or violence at school. Of those children who never worry about their family's financial situation, 69.8 percent said they had experienced no type of attack in the previous month, 18.7 percent said they experienced one form, 7.1 percent two forms and 4.5 percent all three forms. This contrasts with the experiences of children and adolescents who constantly worry about their family's financial situation. Among this group, only 45.3 percent said that they experienced no form of abuse in the previous month, a difference of 24.6 percentage points. Conversely, 18.2 percent experienced one type of abuse, 16.9 percent two and 19.6 percent all three types. This finding must be taken very

seriously, since it suggests that one group of children and adolescents is burdened by multiple challenges. These young people need targeted assistance and support.

FIGURE 7 **Impact of worries about family's financial situation on the frequency of abuse**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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The consequences of bullying are considerable for those subjected to it: Their life satisfaction declines markedly and the responses documented by existing research range from behavioral disturbances, physical illness, impaired learning in school to self-harm and even suicide. These consequences were broached in the focus groups as well, along with the helplessness felt by the children and adolescents subjected to bullying. The following quote illustrates how difficult it is for students to speak about their experiences.

Ten-year-old on how teachers assess situations (10/7)

And if a kid insults you, because, since the second grade/ since then I've always been bullied, been insulted, laughed at by them. No one helped me. The teacher used to yell at me because I flipped out. I got in trouble. They were the angels, they never did a thing. And I am, when I see those kids/ And the worst part was, one of them was my best friend. Then he started to bully me. And today his excuse is: I thought it was all in fun.

Source: transcript of the qualitative survey Children's Worlds+.

As in the above case, a key aspect in other sequences from the focus group discussions is the desire expressed by participants that teachers properly assess the situations in question and that they respond as effectively and appropriately as possible. Conflicts among students – including physical altercations, above all between younger children – are often part of everyday school life and the participants must learn to deal with them and with their own aggression. The quality of an institution, however, can be measured by the extent to which it does not permit such conflicts to escalate and takes measures early on to address both the exclusion of individual students and intentional abuse.

Decision makers in policy, practice and civil society need to be made aware of the findings presented in this section. Given that in-school education is compulsory in Germany, it must be ensured that all students are able to experience school in particular as a safe place. Action is urgently needed here, something clearly articulated by the children and adolescents in the study. Just as clear is the importance of including young people themselves when efforts are made to identify their concerns.

Children and adolescents who require it must be given quick access to effective assistance and support if feelings of not being safe are to be overcome and experiences of exclusion and violence ended. According to the participants in the focus groups, trust is the lynchpin here. The participants explicitly articulated the desire for having trusting relationships with adults who are able and willing to support them and, if necessary, prevent exclusion and violence. To make such relationships possible, we must better understand how children and adolescents develop trust, which aspects are important for them and how relationships based on trust are compromised.

In addition, trusting relationships can only arise in a school or class in which the rules governing social interactions are transparent and enforced, allowing conflicts and concerns to be openly discussed and solutions found. After all, it makes a difference whether classmates only watch when someone is excluded, teased or hit, or if they get involved and thus interrupt the cycle of negative events. Institutions and especially the adults in charge there are responsible for creating a positive atmosphere in both the classroom and the school in general. This requires having the necessary background and skills, as well as the appropriate institutional resources and framework conditions.

The burden of addressing this crucial topic cannot, however, be placed on schools alone, something the findings also show. Society as a whole is responsible for ensuring safety, a sense of belonging and an absence of violence at schools, at other educational institutions, in the neighborhood and in the entire community. In sum, we need more in-depth research on the issues that make up this dimension.

In addition to the key issues treated here – safety, trust and an absence of violence – other needs that young people have pertaining to "Access to quality, needs-based infrastructure" must be examined and additional insights gained into what makes for appropriate infrastructure. This includes questions about the quality of ECEC centers, schools and child-care programs, the number of children in each class, the suitability of the spaces available in youth centers and the resources they are supplied with, as well as the opening times of such centers. The Children's Worlds+ survey did not contain questions explicitly addressing these topics and we cannot provide answers as a result. Additional research is needed here that takes into account the views of children and adolescents.

4.3 Time, attention and care

The three categories in the dimension "Time, attention and care" are fundamental to human existence. "Attention" and "care" are used synonymously in this study, since a clear distinction between the two terms is not possible based on the available data. They allude to the fact that humans are social beings and thus dependent on others. Attention and care are contingent on time, regularity and reliability.

The topic of belonging arose in the focus group discussions pertaining to this dimension. Many sequences were concerned with family, friends and the importance of friendship. The children and young people situated themselves within certain groups and connected their need for time, attention and care to what they see as the general human need to belong. In addition, they spoke of their need to allow themselves a certain amount of freedom, for time for themselves, which they want to spend alone or undisturbed by others. The following statements made by 8-year-old participants express it well:

8-year-olds on time and self-confidence (8/3)

K1: *So having time for yourself is good. Because if you only spend time with your parents, you lose confidence in yourself.*

K3: *Yeah, now and then you need a break from your parents.*

Source: transcript of the qualitative survey Children's Worlds+.

To that extent, childhood and adolescence include both the need to belong and the need for autonomy, so that a certain idea of normality is implied here. Yet the focus groups showed that young people clearly differentiate between time they can structure as they wish and time they must unwillingly spend at home alone. Being alone because parents are busy working or commuting, for example, is seen as a burden – a striking finding.

Time

To gain insight into how children and adolescents use their time, they were asked how often they engage in certain activities. Doing homework and preparing for school are the key tasks among those activities generally considered duties young people must fulfill. Yet the number of respondents who carry out these tasks more than three times a week declines from 68.5 percent for 10-year-olds to 51.8 percent for 14-year-olds. In addition to duties related to school, some young people have other everyday responsibilities, such as helping with the housework and caring for younger siblings or other family members. Among 12 to 14-year-olds, between 12 and 15 percent help with the housework once a week, some 36 percent help two to three times a week and roughly 45 percent help more than three times a week. In terms of caring for siblings or other family members, 66.1 percent of 10-year-olds do so at least once a week; among 14-year-olds the figure is 45.1 percent.

In terms of leisure time, activities involving social media take the top spot. Among 10-year-olds, playing outside and spending time with the family are even more popular, and 11-year-olds spend time with the family more often than they use

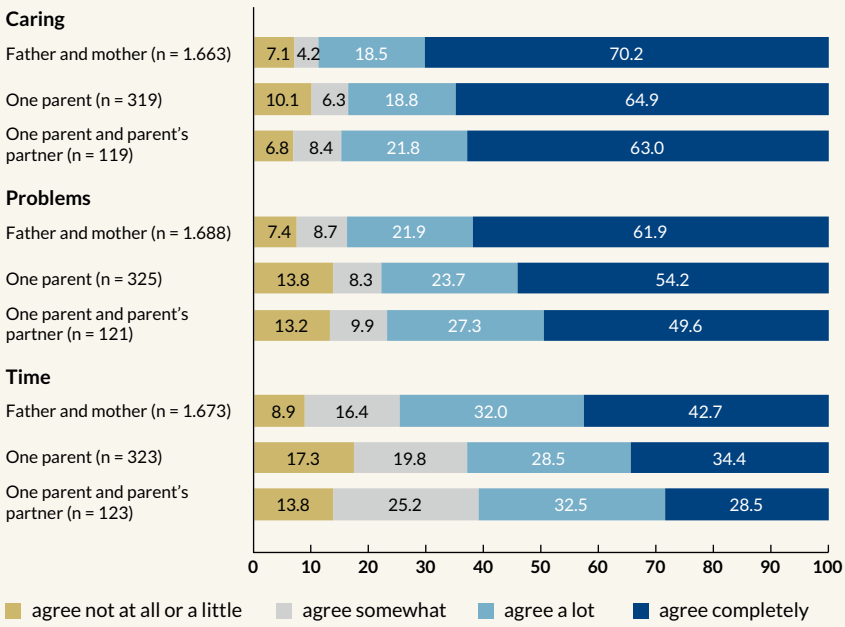
social media. Overall, however, the findings show that engaging with social media becomes more important to young people the older they get. Family time is the second most important leisure activity, although the number of respondents who spend time with the family more than three times a week continually falls as they age, from 72.5 percent (10-year-olds) to 47.8 percent (14-year-olds).

"Playing or being outside" takes third place among leisure activities. Sports are also among the most popular free-time activities. The share of respondents who never do sports is a maximum of 6 percent among 11, 13 and 14-year-olds. Age also plays a role in terms of how often young people do sports. While 58.9 percent of 10-year-olds are physically active more than three times a week, the figure is only 46.6 percent for 14-year-olds. Conversely, as children grow, free time and "doing nothing" become more important. Overall, the findings show that children and adolescents engage in a range of activities that reflect how leisure time is spent in society at large.

Attention and care

The results of the questionnaire show that the vast majority of children and adolescents have someone in their family who looks after them and who helps them when they have a problem, and that their parents spend sufficient time with them. Yet for all of these items there is a subset of respondents who do not agree. For example, 14 percent of 13-year-olds do not or only partially agree with the statement "My parents spend enough time with me." What is also evident is that in almost all age groups, some 10 percent view this subject critically – only for 11-year-olds is the figure a mere 6.8 percent. Age also plays a role for the item "Someone in my family

FIGURE 8 **Attention and care in the family – by type of family**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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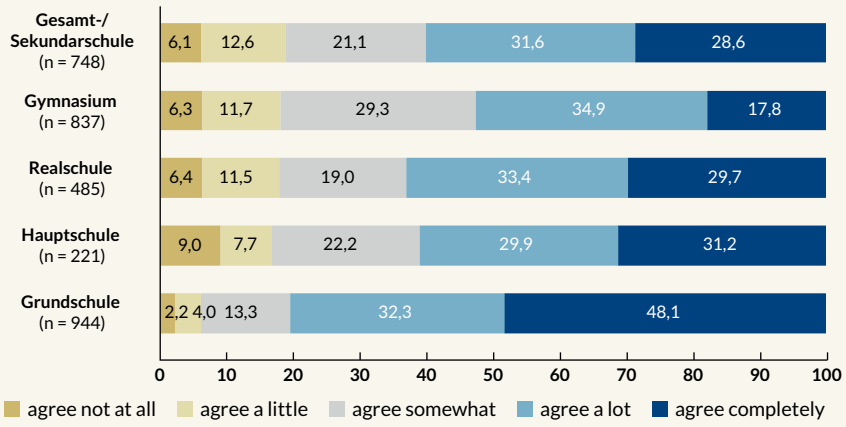
helps me when I have a problem": While 4.2 percent of 8-year-olds do not or only partially agree with this statement, the figure for 14-year-olds is 11.4 percent.

Examining the findings by different types of families shows that time pressure and structural constraints play an important role in everyday family life when it comes to the attention and care available to young people: Children in one-parent households express less agreement with the statements pertaining to attention and care than children in two-parent households, a reflection of the greater burdens single-parent families face in terms of time and structural challenges. Overall, however, the children and adolescents in all types of families positively assess their parents' engagement. Mothers and fathers, even if they do not live together, seem to put considerable effort into showing their children the right amounts of attention and care. One key aspect that merits a closer look, however, is the group reporting shortcomings in parental care. Further, the question needs to be posed as to why, as they grow, more and more young people feel there is no one in their family to look after them.

Children's Worlds+ also examined the issue of whether students feel their teachers care for them and help them when problems arise. This, in turn, captured information on attention and care at school. Here, too, the findings show that the older the respondents are, the more likely they are to doubt their teachers are concerned about them. Among 8-year-olds, 52.9 percent completely agree with this item, among 14-year-olds the figure is 16.7 percent. A look at the responses by type of school provides more differentiated findings: Many more students at primary schools feel that their teachers are concerned about them and help with problems, with 80.4 percent agreeing very much or completely with this item. At secondary schools, there is much less agreement with this statement, with the share of students attending a Gymnasium who agree being the smallest, at 52.7 percent.

FIGURE 9 **My teachers are concerned about me and help me when I have a problem" – by type of school[1]**



* German secondary schools, which tend to group students by academic achievement, often do not have direct equivalents in non-German-speaking countries. Students who complete their schooling at a Hauptschule or Realschule can continue with vocational training, while those who obtain a diploma from a Gymnasium are entitled to study at university. All options are available to students who complete their schooling at a Gesamtschule. Therefore, to preserve accuracy, the statistics pertaining to these schools as depicted and discussed in the English translation of this study are being presented using the original German classifications.

Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018. | BertelsmannStiftung

Friends play a very significant role for children and adolescents when it comes to the topic of attention and care. Regardless of age group, type of school or type of family, by agreeing with the statement "My friends help me when I have problems," young people tend to give their friends high marks. Moreover, looking holistically at the living environments of children and adolescents and posing the question of where they get help when problems occur, the following picture emerges: Agreement rates are highest for the family (85%), followed by friends (78.4%). At school, the results are almost identical for teachers (64.7%) and classmates (66%). One interesting finding is that 53.3 percent of the respondents get help within their neighborhood, showing that people in their immediate surroundings can be an important resource for children and adolescents. At the same time, however, this holistic perspective reveals that the agreement rates diminish across all potential helpers as children grow. Teachers clearly lose significance over time as potential helpers, as do classmates; friends prove to be the most stable group in this area.

These findings clearly show that whether or not children can find someone to help them when they have problems is not something that should be left to chance. The results reveal that children and adolescents are very much predisposed to accept the support provided by parents, teachers, neighbors and peers. Yet growing up also has an impact, something that is also evident throughout the findings: The older the respondents are, the smaller the group becomes of those who are very confident they can find help if they need it.

These findings allow needs to be identified that should be anchored structurally: First, children and young people must be able to turn to someone when they have a problem, and this person should have the time and competence to speak with them. Second, getting older does not mean young people can or want to do without appropriate attention and care. As they grow, young people are less satisfied with the time they spend with their parents and are less inclined to feel they can get support from those around them – a situation that needs to be taken seriously. It could also attest to an accumulating succession of disappointing experiences.

4.4 Securing financial needs

Children and adolescents know from a young age the importance of money. The analysis unmistakably shows what all respondents are aware of: Money is indispensable and often in short supply. Money is the key to realizing many needs and a means for shaping both the immediate and more distant future. Money provides the freedom to do as one likes, and having money at one's disposal is clearly one of the needs children and adolescents have. "Without money nothing is possible" is a statement heard in various forms in the different age groups. While analyzing the focus group discussions, we also became aware that broaching the topic of money and its availability was always associated to some degree with feelings of shame. Yet it is possible and important to give young people the opportunity to talk about money, spending and savings so they can articulate their needs or their experiences of deprivation – something they do thoughtfully and precisely.

The focus group discussions contained many "lists" of essential needs that must be met in order to have a sufficiently decent life. Individual needs were not called

into question, but were collectively understood to be indispensable for everyone. The participants considered the following to be essential: sufficient food, clothing (without further specification), a roof over one's head, parents, friends, trust and the feeling of belonging. This shows that children and adolescents not only consider basic needs in light of issues pertaining to material security, but also as they relate to social and emotional needs and rights.

The children and adolescents also discussed in a very differentiated manner what people need to survive and the things they can do without if they have to. Yet they also acknowledged the role force of habit can play and the powerful attractiveness of certain goods, and they compared themselves with others in this respect. This becomes clear in a discussion about a laptop:

14-year-olds on things people need (14/4)

J1: *But I would say people used to survive without a tablet or laptop.*

J2: *Right. Exactly. And that's why, if I didn't have one, I definitely think I wouldn't need one.*

J1: *I think it's because everyone has one that people then feel like they have to do the same, or they want to do the same, so they aren't left out.*

Source: transcript of the qualitative survey Children's Worlds+.

As a rule, young people do not need a laptop to survive. Yet it is an object that, first, defines who belongs and, second, creates access to information and communication. Both are practically indispensable in today's society. This sequence thus illustrates the knowledge young people have about how difficult it is to avoid social comparisons and that definitions of basic needs are embedded in the corresponding social context.

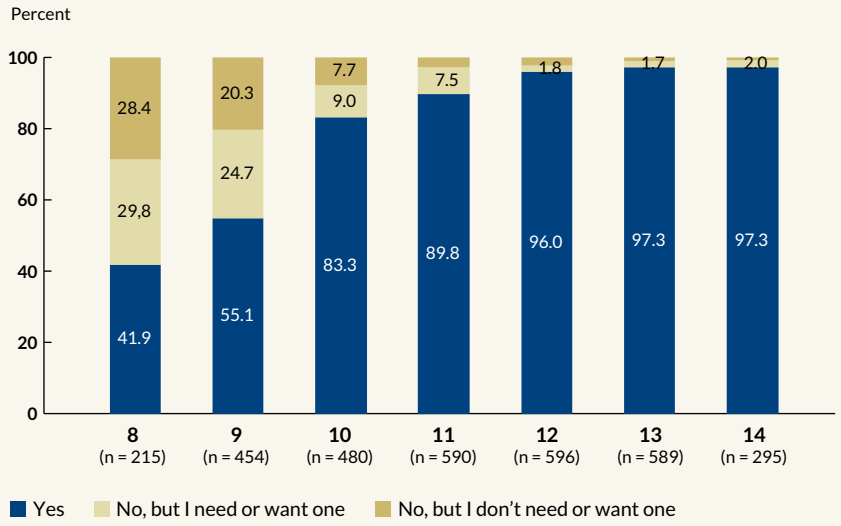
Basic needs and possessions

The first iteration of Children's Worlds+ ascertained that basic existential needs are covered for almost all students participating in the survey. Children and young people seem very well supplied with "personal" possessions as well. Most parents clearly try to give their offspring the things considered part of an "average" or "normal" childhood, even if the family's financial resources are limited.

The responses given by the children and adolescents about their basic needs can therefore be seen as very positive. Yet the comparison by type of school, which was also included in the first iteration, shows that the share of students who go on vacation with their parents and who have their own room is disproportionally large among those who attend a Gymnasium; the figures for students attending a Hauptschule, Realschule, Sekundarschule or Gesamtschule are all lower. These two goods demonstrate the impact that deprivation can have, given their significance for educational opportunities. The lack of equal opportunities for accessing educational institutions becomes especially evident here, including in the context of young people's everyday lives. This finding should serve as the springboard for more in-depth research and for comparisons with other studies.

When looking at children's personal possessions, mobile phones (including smartphones) are somewhat less common compared to other goods. The lower figures here can be traced back to younger children: Although there is no change for all other goods when the data are examined by type of school or by age group, there is a significant increase in the presence of mobile phones as children grow. The share of children with mobile phones among students younger than 10 years is markedly below average. It is interesting to note that 28.4 percent of the 8-year-olds and 20.3 percent of the 9-year-olds report that they do not have a mobile phone, nor do they want or need one, something that continues to apply to 7.7 percent of 10-year-olds. Other children without mobiles, however, are of the opinion that they need a mobile or smartphone. This illustrates that even younger children think and make decisions about their needs in highly varied ways. To that end, asking children, adolescents and young adults about their needs does not result in a utopian wish list. A mobile phone provides access to communication and social media, a key leisure activity, which makes the desire to have one completely understandable. As a result, it should be taken seriously, even if it contradicts parents' ideas of childrearing.

FIGURE 10 **Preferred and actual ownership of mobile phones, by age**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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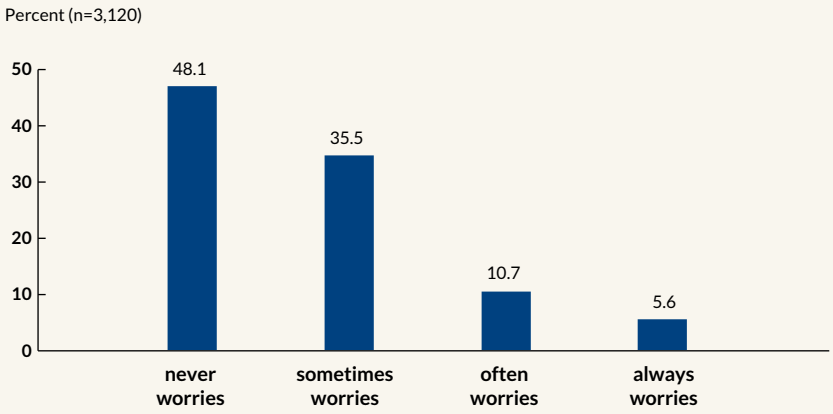
Worries about the family's financial situation, deprivation and exclusion

Despite this respectable provision of care, over 50 percent of children and adolescents always (5.6%), often (10.7%) or sometimes (35.5%) worry about their family's financial situation, a striking finding also included in the first iteration of Children's Worlds+. This shows that children and adolescents are aware of their parent's financial worries and the resulting limitations on what is possible within the family. The findings also show that girls worry more about family finances than boys do.

FIGURE 11 **"How often do you worry about how much money your family has?"**



Source: The authors, based on Children's Worlds+ 2018.

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As described above, young people's worries about their family's financial situation is reflected in the fulfillment of other needs. In terms of material belongings, one finding is that the share of adolescents who never worry about family finances increases as they own more of the 10 possessions participants were asked about in the survey, namely from 29.5 percent for those who own six to 55 percent for those who own all 10, i.e. 25.5 percentage points. Correspondingly, the share of those who always worry declines from 18.9 to 3.4 percent.

Children and adolescents who are concerned about the money their family has at its disposal also belong to the group who feel less safe and who more often experience exclusion and violence. Of the young people who always worry about family finances, 8.7 percent do not feel safe at home, at school or in their neighborhood, 16.2 percent do not feel safe at school or in their neighborhood, and 5.8 percent do not feel safe at home. These figures are considerably higher than those for young people who never need to worry about their family's financial situation (2.2%, 6.4%, 3%). The situation is similar for exclusion and violence: The group of respondents that always worries about family finances ranks first in terms of experiences of exclusion, with 29.3 percent of these young people reporting more than three instances of abuse in the previous month. Of this group, moreover, 20.5 percent reported more than three experiences of teasing and 23.8 percent said they experienced physical violence more than three times in the past month.

Finally, children and adolescents who worry about their family's financial situation are also much more limited in undertaking those activities with friends that require money. Of the children and adolescents who are always concerned about financial matters, 12.7 percent are never able to participate in an activity if it is not free, and 33.3 percent can only do so occasionally. This is only true for 1.5 percent and 11.6 percent of those who never worry about their family's financial situation. In sum, these findings clearly indicate the considerable degree to which young people's social participation and experiences of exclusion and violence reflect their family's financial resources.

The latter findings in particular impressively underscore the far-reaching impact a secure financial situation has on young people as they grow, and on the opportunities they have to participate. Preventing child and youth poverty and ensuring children and adolescents need not worry about family finances must thus be seen as a particularly urgent social challenge. Policy makers and other actors must get involved here, since young people have numerous needs, some of which differ from those of adults, yet children and adolescents are not in a position to free themselves from poverty or overcome their worries on their own.

5 Conclusion

"Also ask us about the things you should ask!"

For many years, specialists researching childhood and adolescence have been calling for the rights of young people to be recognized and implemented. They have been empirically investigating the disadvantages and vulnerabilities young people experience due to an unequal distribution of power and resources across the generations; in addition, they have been working to formulate the theoretical underpinnings for systematically taking the rights, interests and needs of young people into account. These efforts include demonstrating that childhood and, to a lesser extent, adolescence is fundamentally characterized by dependence (on adults): Children and, in some cases, adolescents are reliant on care provided by others, especially parents, on an ongoing basis. A related question here is the extent to which the need that children and adolescents have for autonomy is seen and recognized, something that also applies to young people's efforts to understand and take responsibility for themselves and their environment.

Children's Worlds+ does not view as mutually exclusive the needs children and adolescents have for care and their need for self-determination. Both are valid, something repeatedly made clear by the young people who participated in the survey. Nor is it about pitting the younger generation against the older, the rights of one against the other. Yet this examination of needs raises the question of individual rights; so, too, does the prospect of realizing these needs in the future, which will require fiscal expenditures. This connection between needs and individual rights was apparent to the participants in the focus groups. As is also true for adults, individual rights for young people become manifest in a range of structures and in infrastructure.

The study shows that:

- Children and adolescents are quite capable of providing information about their needs, concerns and lives.
- They can provide a realistic assessment of their life situation and identify needs inherent to an average childhood and adolescence.
- They can describe concerns and problems that adults are not aware of. In addition, when considering their needs, they focus on different aspects that they themselves find important.
- Children's Worlds+ has made it possible to identify appropriate methodologies and conceptual approaches for carrying out a needs survey.

The findings presented in this publication describe a wide range of experiences, together with the striking "patterns" of how children and adolescents assess their own lives. One such pattern is that agreement with "positive" indicators decreases the older the participants are. For example, as young people grow, they are less likely to feel that they are taken seriously and heard – at home, at school or in their neighborhood. Reactions that attempt to dismiss this trend by alluding to the often-cited rebelliousness of young people during puberty fall into the trap of trying to explain everything by affixing it with the label "puberty." This attitude has long prevented criticism from being heard that is expressed by the younger generation about their powerlessness, the lack of respect they are accorded, and the ongoing failure to recognize and realize of their rights; it has also delayed the sharing of power necessitated by this situation. "They don't take me seriously because I'm going through puberty" is one such statement made during a discussion with 14-year-olds. Even if this stage of growth and development can sometimes be a tense time for everyone involved, it does not justify a lack of respect for adolescents. Even young people going through puberty have a right to be seen and have their opinions heard.

Another pattern, as seen in the German context, is that a young person's access to knowledge of his or her rights depends on the type of school he or she attends. Being a student at a Gymnasium evidently increases the chance that a young person will have heard about the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and will know what his or her rights are. Whether this results from classroom instruction or other factors is not something that can be ascertained from the available data. This finding does, however, confirm that higher levels of education increase access to individual rights, including for children and adolescents, even if this means they are merely aware of those rights.

The study clearly indicates that even if they have been sufficiently provided with the relevant necessities and belongings, many children and adolescents still worry about their family's financial situation. Other analyses show that this group is burdened by additional challenges, such as feelings of not being safe, experiences of exclusion and violence, and lack of social participation. This, for us, is also an indication of hidden poverty.

Starting point for regularly surveying needs

Children's Worlds+ is not a needs survey and cannot substitute for one. A needs survey carried out at regular intervals and targeting different age groups would offer the chance to collect information on specific needs and gain a more precise understanding of what young people think the possibilities inherent to an average childhood and adolescence are, and what they feel children and adolescents require to develop and grow as they should.

The concept for ensuring children have a socially inclusive standard of living calls for not seeing children and adolescents exclusively as part of their family and "community of need," but as individuals entitled to assistance who have more and different needs than adults. A key aspect here is the realization that a new attitude towards children and adolescents is necessary, as is fair, consistent access to opportunities for social participation. Adults alone cannot identify certain needs that young people have, in particular those that must be met for a childhood or

adolescence to offer the "average" opportunities. Further, more is required than merely identifying one set of needs and applying it unaltered over time; it must be fluid and revised at regular intervals.

Participating in research on childhood and adolescence

Against this background, the overall concept for a socially inclusive standard of living for young people envisages including children and adolescents consistently and in all areas. Researchers examining childhood and adolescence can make an important contribution here. Their work cannot replace a regular needs survey, since the latter would not be subject to scientific criteria alone. Yet research can provide more insight into needs while indicating possibilities for developing a needs survey. "Also ask us about the things you should ask!" was one of the suggestions for researchers made by the team of young experts assembled by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, during a discussion of young people's needs. This enjoinder is a call for participatory research and greater awareness of the issue of participation in the research process (von Unger 2014). Participatory research is currently embedded in issues relating to the transfer of academic findings to society and professional practice. Moreover, individuals and groups, that want to be recognized for their specific expertise and not simply as a source of information, are demanding wide-ranging participation.

Including people in research primarily as a source of information, thereby recognizing their expert knowledge, is considered a weaker form of participation. At the same time, there are very few research projects that include non-academics as equal partners in all phases of the project. Standards have yet to be set for participatory research, and no transparent method exists for understanding the processes or the potential and limitations of participation when it comes to applying and communicating research.

What should be made of the appeal issued by the team of young experts for inclusion in future research on issues pertaining to childhood and adolescence? Being recognized as experts and queried as the equals of adults within research processes is a relatively new development (Andresen/Hurrelmann 2010). While adults have been queried by social scientists right from the start, there have been considerable reservations about statements made by children and adolescents (in courts of law, for example) as to their credibility and reliability. Children's explanations or data provided by adolescents in questionnaires have been viewed as less valid, and the quality of the research questioned as a result. Researchers have always placed greater trust in adults' competencies.

Children and adolescents do not question the competence of adults, even if they did critically consider the status of adults during the focus group discussions. This pertains, for example, to the issue of whether the greater number of experiences adults have had should automatically grant them a favored position. Excerpted from a discussion involving young adults, the following reflections address this topic:

> *"Adult" does not automatically mean that someone is mature enough to understand what is going on or to understand and be tolerant of me. Being adult is simply an age of life and doesn't really mean anything per se. Maybe about the experiences that a person has had, since the older you are the more experience you have in some areas or with certain things. But I don't view it as necessarily so. Others can if they want to. (GD 18)*
>
> Source: transcript of the qualitative survey Children's Worlds+.

Following from this, it becomes clear that the quality of research increases when the theoretical constructs, the definitions and the concrete phrasing used in the various instruments, such as questionnaires or guidelines for interviews, are discussed with children and adolescents with a range of social backgrounds, and revised if necessary. One part of the Children's Worlds study that takes place before the survey is carried out is the discussion with children in each country of the questions and the scales used for responses. The results are then integrated into the questionnaire. On this level, it is also important to reflect on the adaptation of findings for children and adolescents themselves.

Disseminating information about the findings to the group of participants and adapting it for children and adolescents is a step that is also geared toward the next academic and policy level. How can young people be involved in interpreting the data and communicating results to policy makers? These questions were also posed by the team of young experts on behalf of many others.

In terms of the concept for ensuring children have a socially inclusive standard of living and the concept's "needs assessment" module, the statement "Also ask us about the things you should ask" is the perfect motto for systematically planning a regular needs survey of and for children and adolescents.

Link between qualitative and quantitative research

Surveys based on questionnaires offer the possibility of making representative statements about the needs that children and young people have. Often-tested questions and scales are used so that statistical comparisons can be made afterwards. The questionnaire's structure, its dimensions and the individual questions are based on theoretical constructs which are not usually reviewed beforehand by children and adolescents. It is entirely possible that respondents thus end up thinking about unintended topics and everyday experiences.

For example, research on child well-being often asks about the amount of freedom that children are allowed. This and other open expressions which people might associate with any number of topics are a particular challenge when they also have a relationship aspect. Parents, who face the task of raising children, view the topic of childrearing-related freedoms differently than do children, who, as shown by previous research, tend to associate it with playing outside (Andresen/Gerarts 2014). A discussion of how things are understood is therefore important, even if different interests are presumably at stake for the participants. Researchers want to improve their instruments so that the children surveyed are better understood.

In view of these challenges, researchers investigating childhood and adolescence have more or less come to agree that the widest range of methods should be deployed. This includes those methods that allow children and adolescents to contribute their own points of view, terminology, ideas and experiences. Although guiding questions were used during the Children's Worlds+ focus group discussions, the participating children and adolescents could speak relatively freely about their needs and the issues that concerned them.

What are the next steps – systematic, methodological and substantive – that could conceivably follow from Children's Worlds+?

- Since it is anchored in childhood and youth theory and focuses on rights, the study's framework lends itself to developing a survey that targets the experiences, perspectives and needs articulated by young people.
- Children's Worlds+ could also be used as the foundation for a further refining of the concept of "needs" and its individual dimensions, and of notions of what constitutes an "average" childhood.
- It can help clarify a questionnaire's potential and its limits for providing insight into the attitudes found among different age groups and how the dimensions can be further operationalized in questionnaire-based surveys.
- The study also offers insight into the barriers that arise when needs are to be articulated. It provides clarity on which elements open the space for a flow of ideas during the focus group discussions and which are less effective.
- It provides a greater understanding of how quantitative and qualitative methods interact and reinforce each other.
- Individual findings have made it possible to create an initial age-specific heuristic for the needs that are present during childhood and adolescence.
- In view of the discussions that took place in the past few months and building on the insights produced by the interactions with the team of young experts, a number of ideas have been generated for how a needs survey could be designed to include a participatory process.

To that extent, our final recommendation is not only to consult with children and adolescents about what and how we should ask young people as we carry out research and report on social issues, but also to take the next step and involve them in interpreting the data and communicating the resulting insights within society.

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