



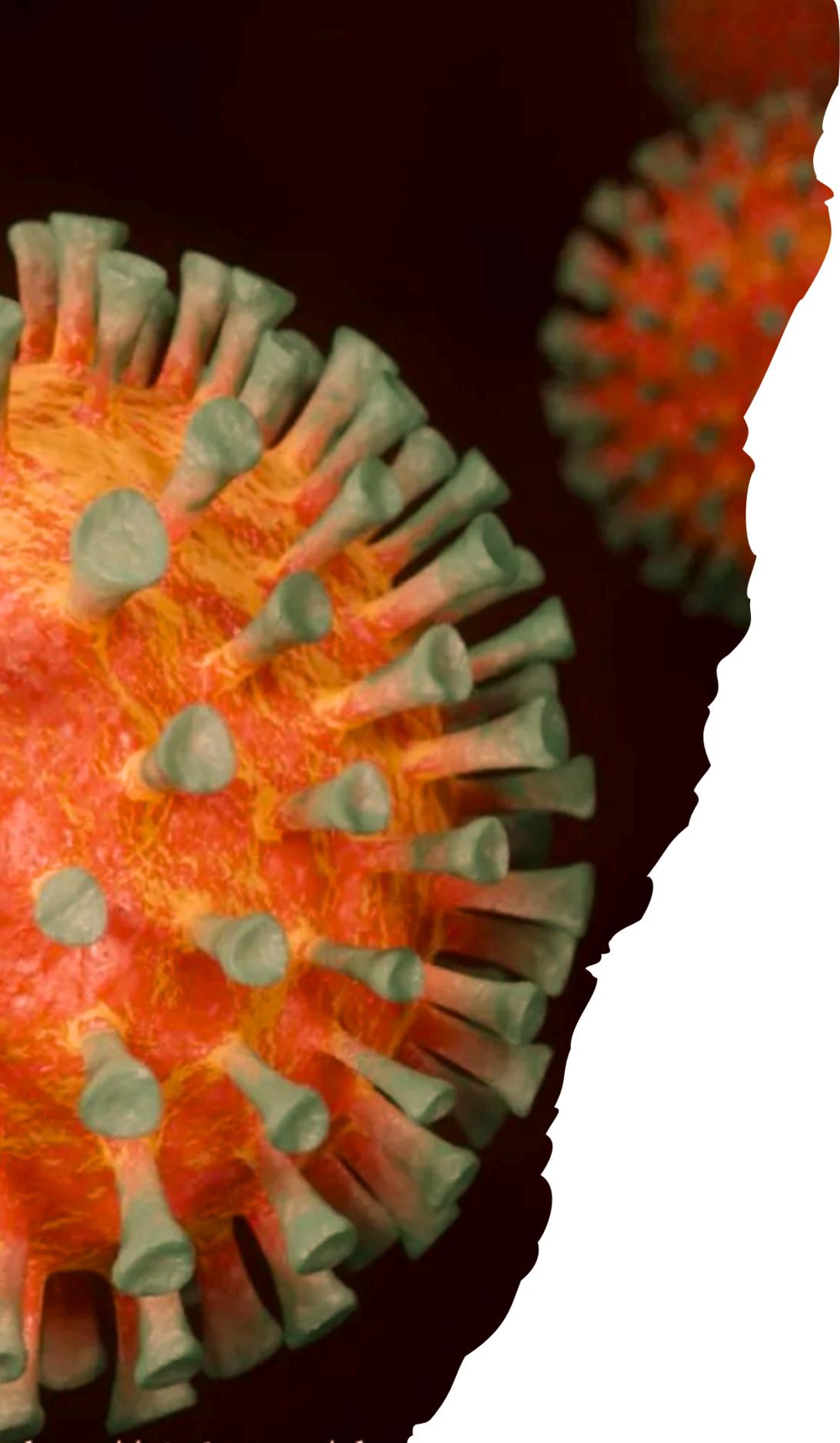
## Children's Worlds COVID-19 Project

# The well-being of children and adolescents during the lockdown and the pandemic in Catalonia

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This document presents conclusions from the Catalan survey, part of the CHILDREN'S WORLDS international project (<https://isciweb.org/>), which collected the opinions of children and adolescents about their well-being during the coronavirus pandemic



## Who took part?

A total of 702 children and adolescents participated in the survey, coming from schools and summer camps in Girona, Salt, Quart, Calonge, Vilablareix, Vilajuïga, and Llançà (Catalonia, Spain). Most participants were between 10 and 12 years old, with ages ranging from 9 to 14. The gender distribution was quite balanced: 48.3% boys, 49.3% girls, and 2.3% did not identify as either boys or girls.

## How was the survey conducted?

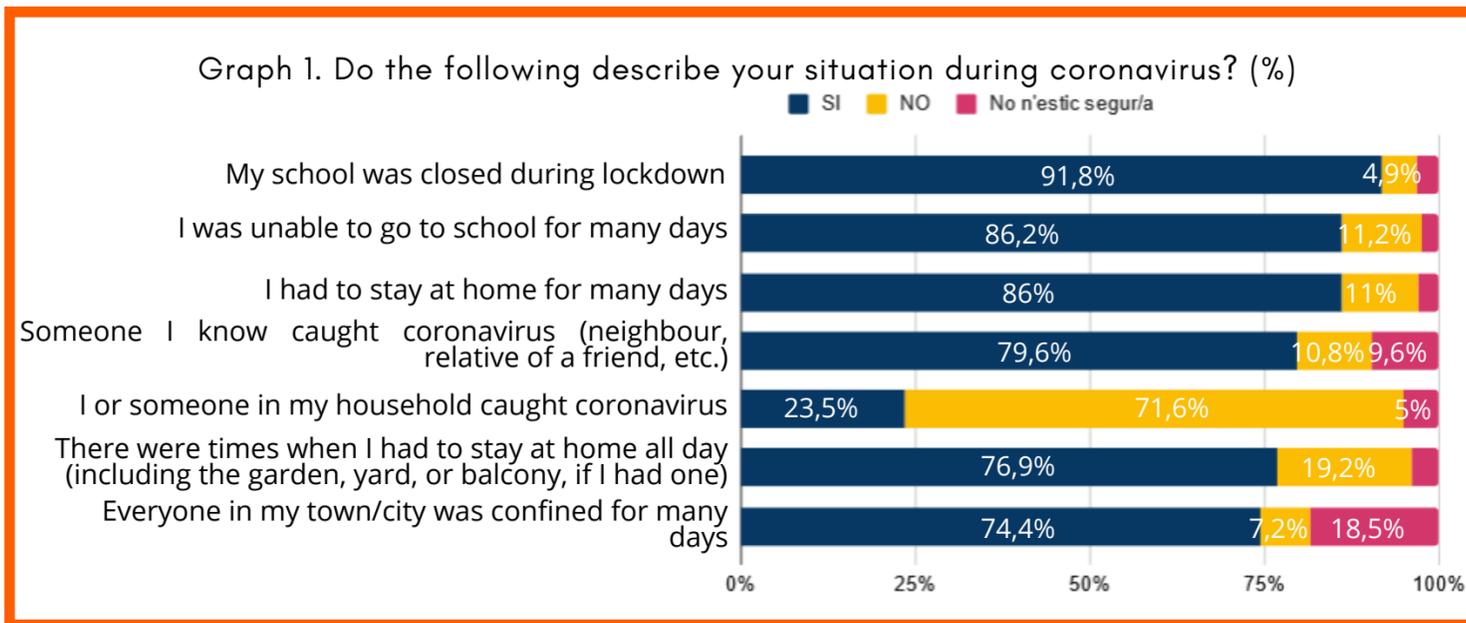
Between May and August 2021, the survey was conducted in seven primary schools, two secondary schools, one combined primary and secondary school, and four summer camps.

The questionnaire was administered online. In schools where classroom access was allowed, a researcher was present to assist and answer questions. In schools without access, the survey was conducted remotely using Google Meet for project presentation and Q&A sessions. At summer camps, the questionnaire was distributed in paper format and administered face-to-face.

Generally, students found the questions easy to understand. Many also noted that the survey was thought-provoking and helped them reflect on important personal issues.

# 1/ Situation during the pandemic

A large majority of children and adolescents surveyed reported that their school was closed during the COVID-19 lockdown (91.8%), that they could not attend school for many days (86.2%), and that they had to stay home for an extended period (86%). Additionally, 79.6% said someone they knew (a neighbor, a friend's relative, etc.) had been infected with coronavirus, though only 23.5% reported that they or someone in their household had been infected (see Graph 1). Finally, 47% indicated that they had to be very careful at home because someone in their household was considered at high risk of severe illness if infected.



**LEGEND:** YES / NO / NOT SURE



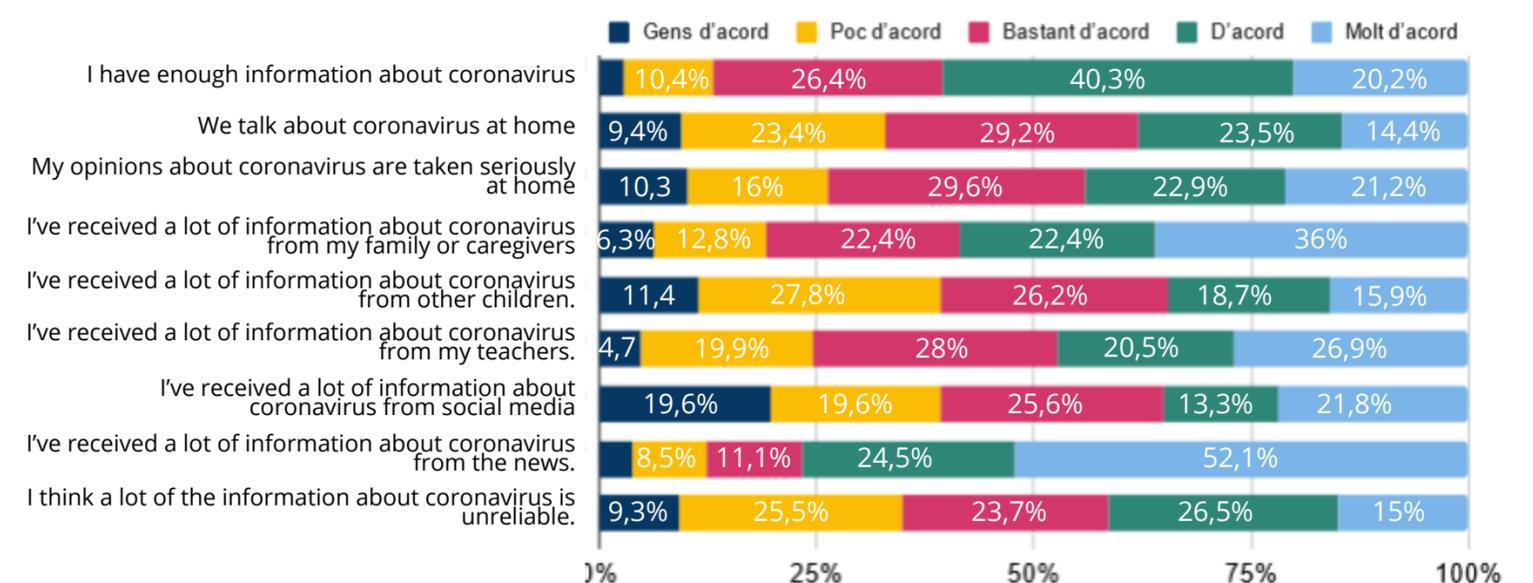


## 2/ Information about coronavirus

Approximately 60.5% of those surveyed felt they had enough information about coronavirus (sum of "agree" and "strongly agree"). However, 32.8% did not agree, or only slightly agreed, that this issue was frequently discussed at home. The majority reported that they received most of their information from the news (76.6%), followed by relatives or caregivers (58.4%). Teachers were the third main source (47.4%), while social networks were less commonly used for this purpose (35.1%).

Regarding the reliability of the information, 41.5% of respondents (agree and strongly agree) believed that much of the information about coronavirus was unreliable. Additionally, a quarter of those surveyed (26.3%) felt that their opinion on coronavirus was not listened to at home (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%)



**LEGEND:** Not at all / A little / A fair amount / Agree / Strongly agree

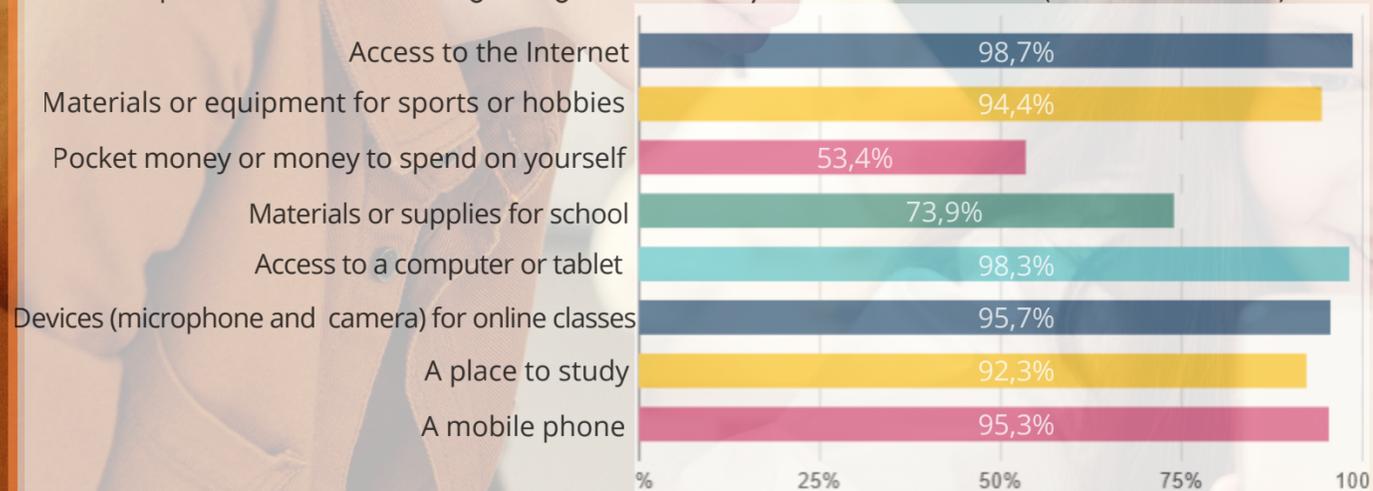
### 3/ Family conditions

Some questions were about the people the participants lived with: 77.2% stated that they lived with their family in one home, while 18.1% lived with their family in more than one home. The majority of children and adolescents reported that their material or food needs were met during the lockdown. However, it is important to note that some children experienced the pandemic under more challenging conditions, such as the 26.1% who did not have access to school materials or the 1.3% who lacked access to the Internet (see Graph 3).

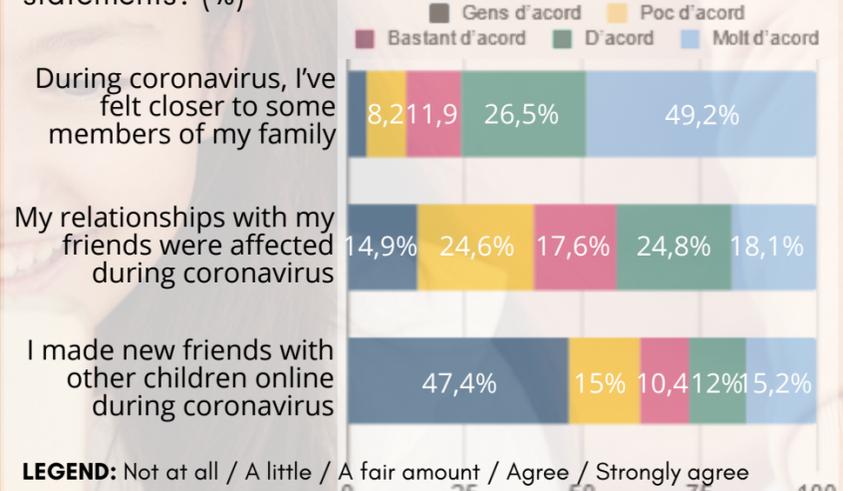
### 4/ Relationships with peers

Almost half of the respondents (42.9% agreed and strongly agreed) reported that their relationships with friends were negatively affected (see Graph 4). The most common means of communication used to stay in touch with friends were video calls (77.5%) and phone calls (57.7%) (see Graph 5). Despite the restrictions, nearly a quarter (21.4%) met in person, while a small percentage (3.4%) reported not maintaining contact with their friends, which could suggest instances of social isolation.

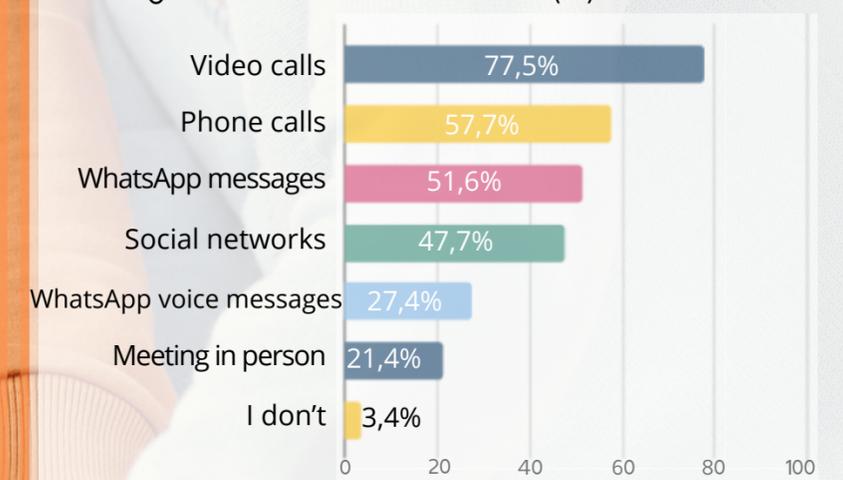
Graph 3. Of the following things, which do you have at home? (% YES answers)



Graph 4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (%)



Graph 5. How do you keep in touch with your friends during the coronavirus lockdown? (%)

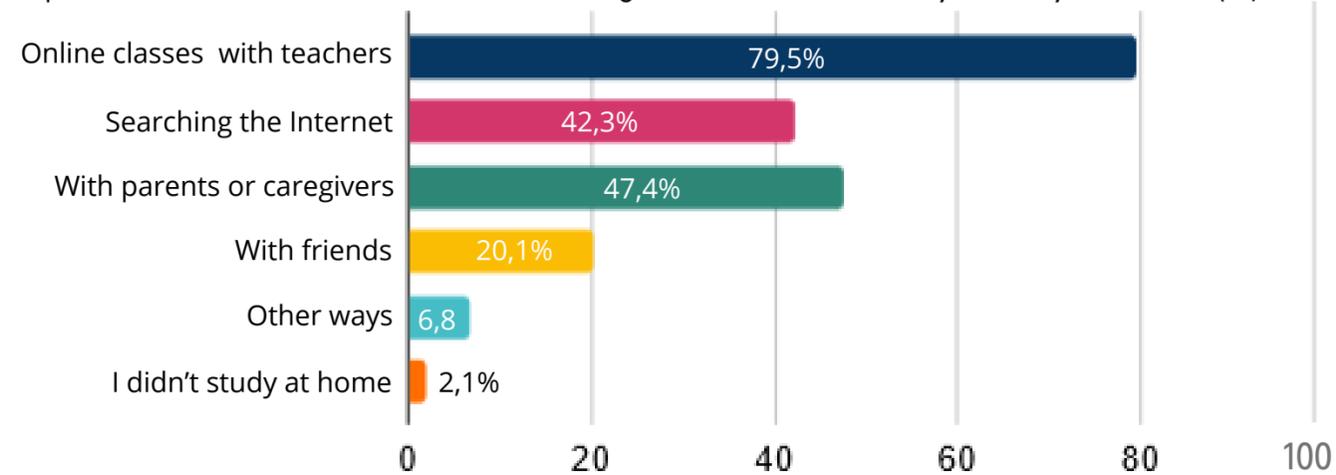


# 5/ School life

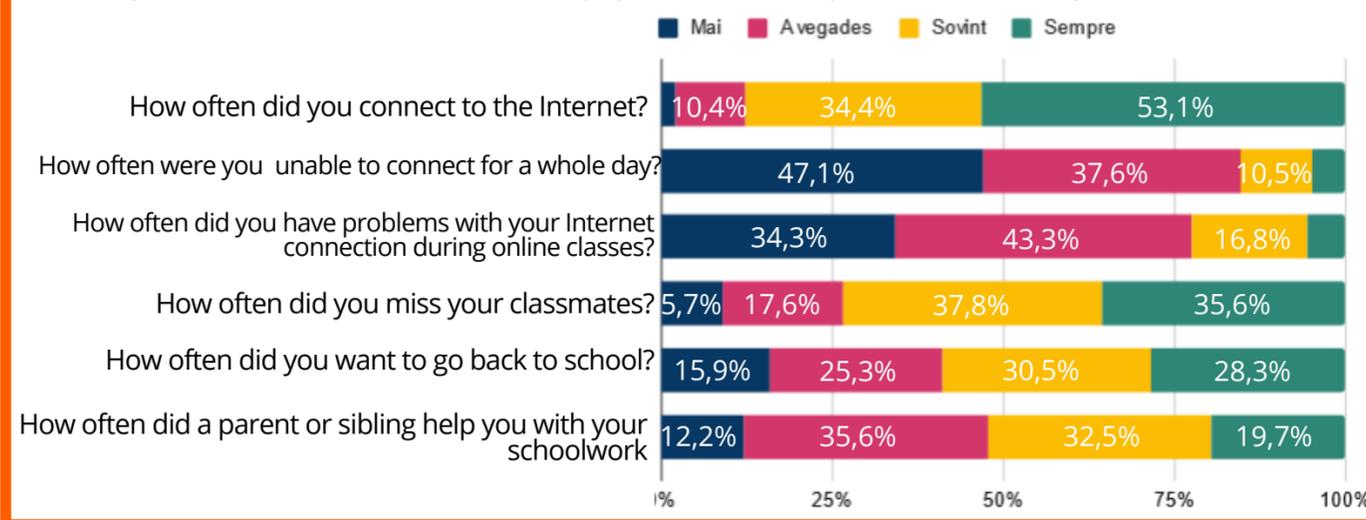
Many of the children were able to follow online classes while schools were closed. The people who supported their learning (see Graph 6) were primarily teachers (79.5%) and mothers/parents/caregivers (47.4%). Overall, 67.9% agreed or strongly agreed that they managed to continue learning from home. However, nearly a quarter of the respondents reported having frequent or constant problems accessing the Internet (22.5%), and 15.3% said they often or always struggled to stay connected for entire days. Additionally, 73.4% said they often or always missed their classmates, and 58.8% reported missing their previous school environment (see Graph 7).



Graph 6. When the schools were closed during coronavirus, how did you study at home? (%)



Graph 7. Please answer the following questions. During the coronavirus pandemic... (%)



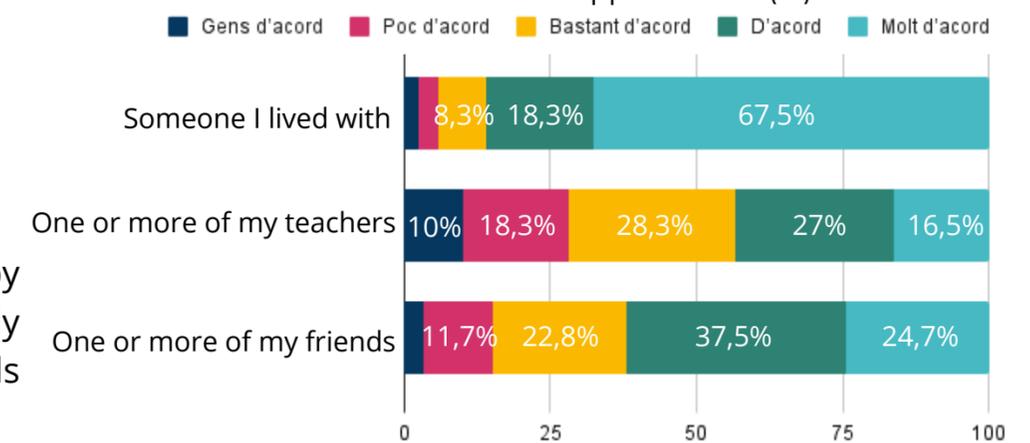
**LEGEND:** Never / Sometimes / Often / Always

# 6/ Social support

Some children reported that they did not feel supported by the people they lived with (5.9% did not agree at all or only agreed a little), by their teachers (28.3%), or by their friends (15%) during the coronavirus pandemic (see Graph 8).



Graph 8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? During the coronavirus pandemic, I felt that received support from... (%)

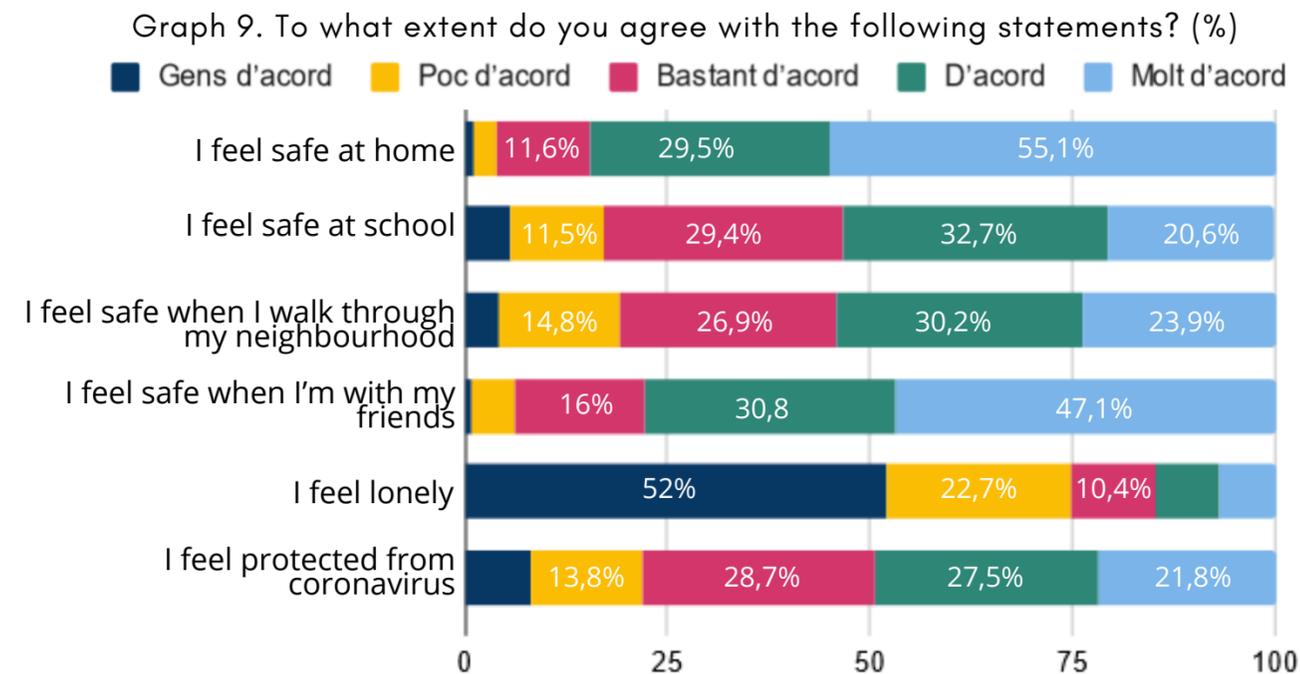


**LEGEND:** Not at all / A little / A fair amount / Agree / Strongly agree

# 7/ Perception of safety



Many participants reported feeling safe, particularly at home (84.6% strongly agreed or agreed) and in their friendships (77.9%). Fears related to the coronavirus varied greatly, from those who were never afraid to those who experienced significant fear during the pandemic. About half (49.3% agreed or strongly agreed) felt protected. The statement “I feel lonely” had the lowest percentage of agreement, but loneliness was still a serious issue for some children in the sample, with 14.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Graph 9).

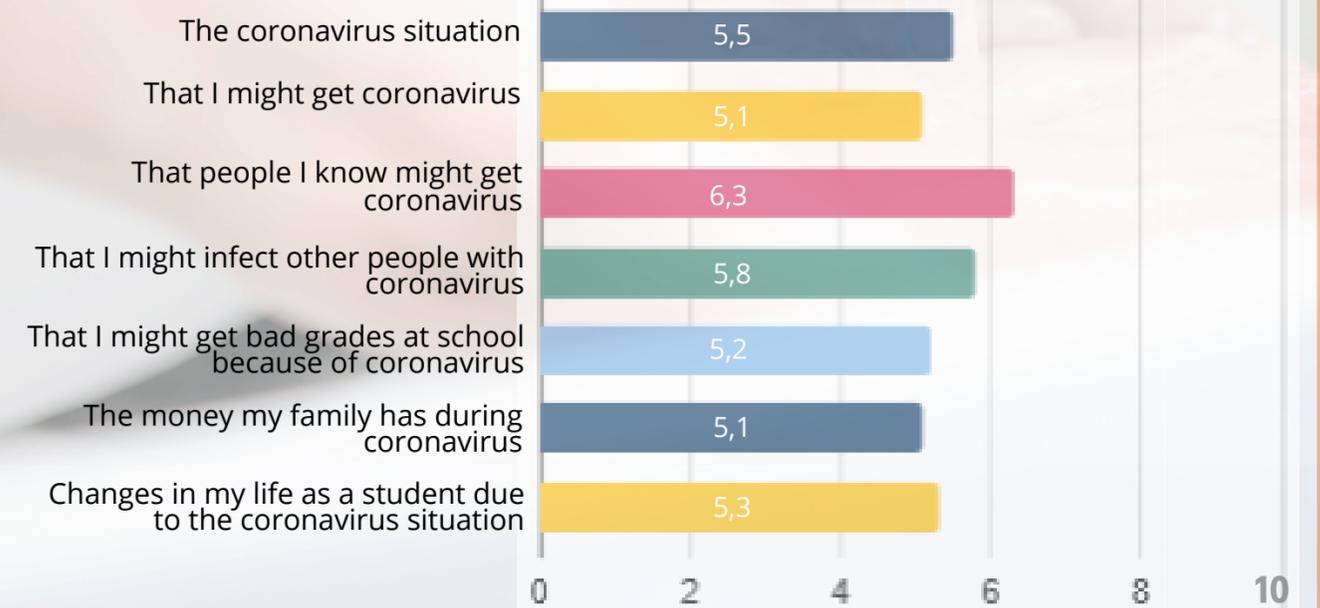


**LEGEND:** Not at all / A little / A fair amount / Agree / Strongly agree

# 8/ Fears and concerns

Overall, on a scale from 0 (“Not at all worried”) to 10 (“Totally worried”), the children did not seem overly concerned about the coronavirus situation, including getting infected, infecting others, the impact of COVID-19 on their school life or grades, or their family’s financial situation. However, they expressed more concern about people they knew becoming infected (see Graph 10).

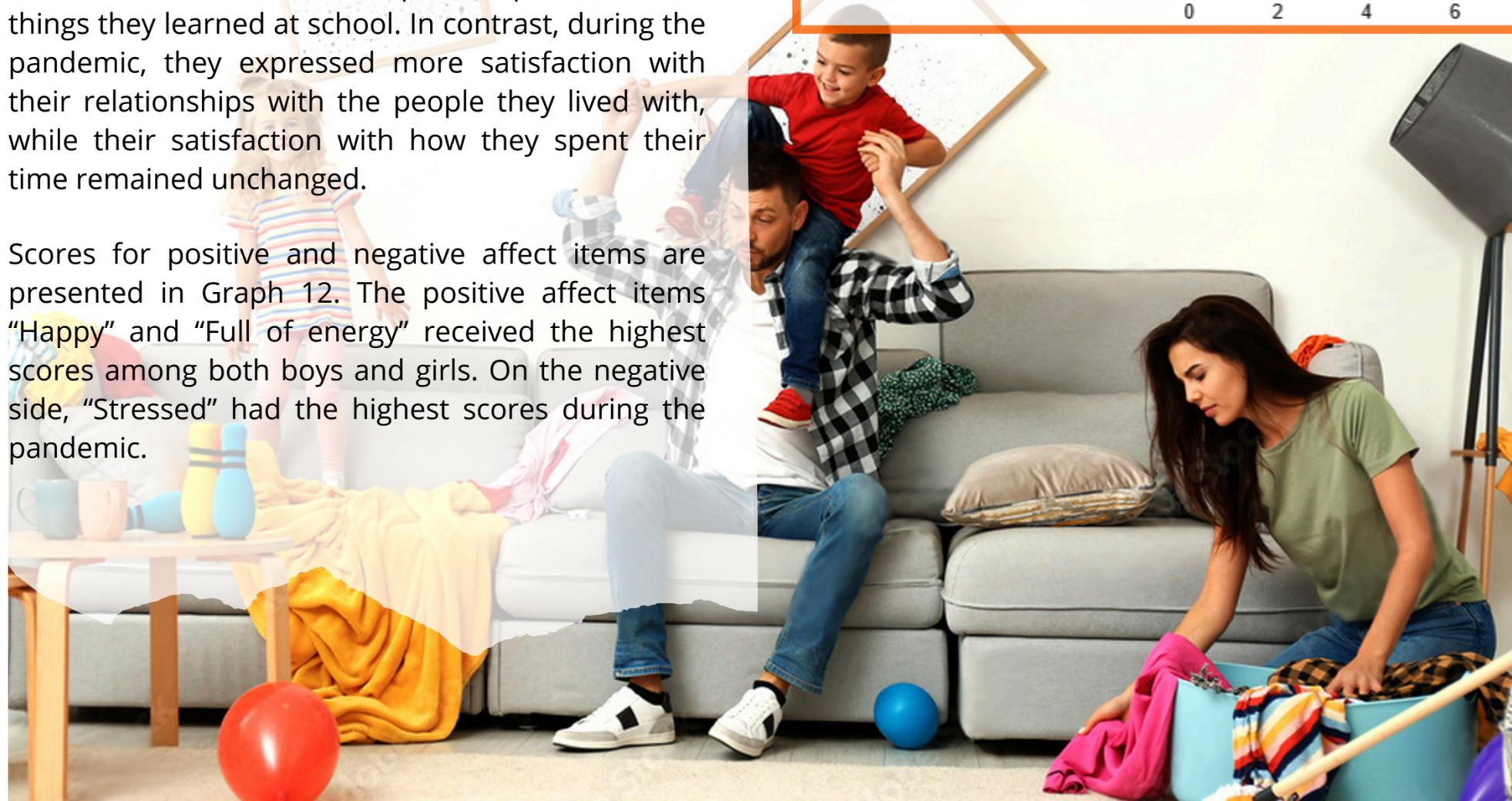
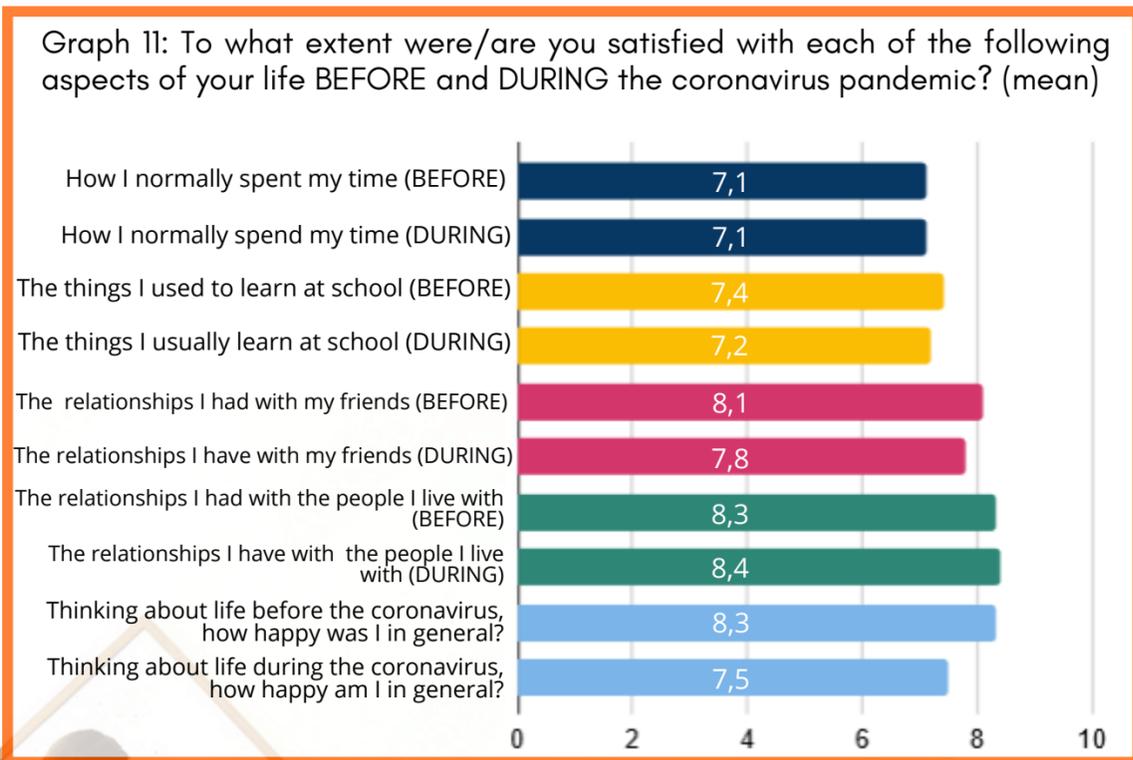
Graph 10. In the last month, how worried have you been about each of these things in your life? (mean)



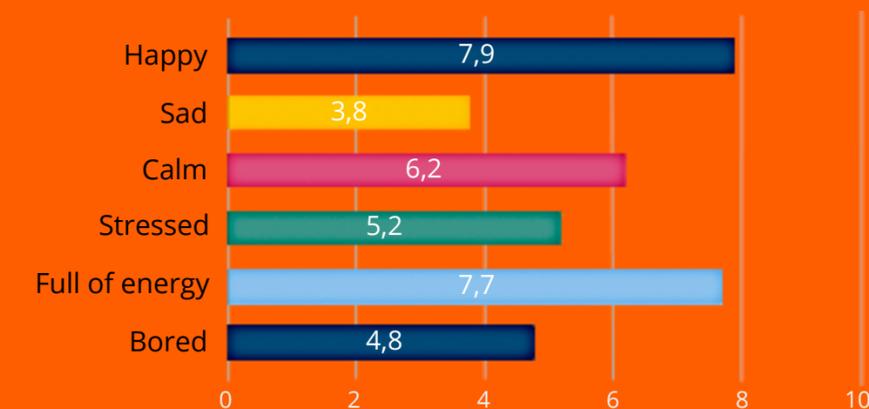
# 9/ Satisfaction and happiness before and during the pandemic

When comparing general life satisfaction before and during the pandemic (Graph 11), it is clear that children and adolescents reported greater satisfaction before the pandemic. The same pattern is seen with their relationships with peers and the things they learned at school. In contrast, during the pandemic, they expressed more satisfaction with their relationships with the people they lived with, while their satisfaction with how they spent their time remained unchanged.

Scores for positive and negative affect items are presented in Graph 12. The positive affect items "Happy" and "Full of energy" received the highest scores among both boys and girls. On the negative side, "Stressed" had the highest scores during the pandemic.



Graph 12. Below is a list of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please read each word and select the option that best describes how you have felt over the past two weeks. (mean)



# Conclusions

- Children felt happier with their lives and more satisfied with the relationships they had with their friends and what they learned at school before the pandemic than during the coronavirus lockdown. Notably, 14.9% (agree and strongly agree) of the children reported feeling lonely during the lockdown.
- The main source of information for children regarding coronavirus was the news, and 41.5% of them considered much of this information unreliable.
- Overall, children reported a high perception of safety in various contexts of their lives, including family, school, neighborhood, and friends.
- Although 1.3% of participants did not have access to the Internet and 4.8% reported they were never able to access it for a whole day, many children and adolescents were still able to follow online classes while schools were closed, with teachers and parents/caregivers supporting their learning. However, some children and adolescents perceived limited support from those closest to them.
- A quarter of children and adolescents (26.3%) felt their coronavirus opinions were not taken seriously at home, reflecting that some felt unheard or disregarded in their households.
- Although video calls, phone calls, and social networks (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram) helped children and adolescents stay in touch with friends, many reported missing their peers and wanting to return to school.
- While these results cannot be strictly extrapolated due to the characteristics of the sample, the data suggest that the majority of children and adolescents in Catalonia experienced a significant decrease in overall life satisfaction during the coronavirus pandemic, affecting many areas of their lives.

## What have we learnt?

Gathering the opinions of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic shows how important it is to identify those specific factors that helped them cope with the health crisis. There is a need to dig deeper into what they can tell us about how they adopted a positive attitude to deal with the pandemic, doing activities they liked, doing things with the family and keeping in touch with friends.



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