

# The subjective well-being of adolescents in public care in Catalonia

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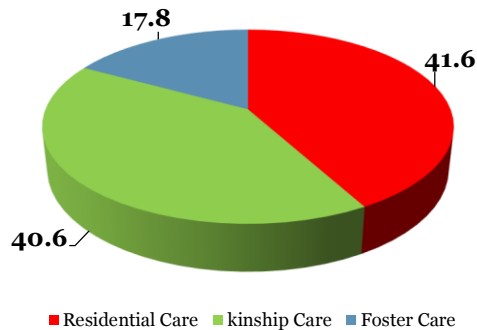
## Starting point and purpose

- Children's **subjective well-being** (SWB) constitutes an important component in **understanding their quality of life**. However, little is known about children in public care regarding their **perceptions and satisfaction with life**.
- The purpose of this study is to **explore the SWB between adolescents in residential care, kinship care and family foster care (no relatives) (1)**

**(1)** It is part of Joan Llosada's PhD dissertation *The subjective well-being of adolescents in public care in Catalonia*

## There are 7,040 children in public care in Catalonia (5.2%)

Distribution by type of placement



## Population and sample

- **The study used data from care population in Catalonia born between 1998 and 2000 (N=700) (response rate=58%)**
- **The final sample comprised 669 adolescents aged 12-14 years (N = 669):**
  - **397 adolescents in residential care (response rate=73%)**
  - **251 adolescents in kinship care (response rate=49%)**
  - **41 adolescents in foster care (response rate=37%)**

## The questionnaire

- The same questionnaire used in the **International Survey of Children's Well-Being (ISCWeB- Children's worlds)**. It was adapted to fit the characteristics of children in care

### *Dimensions of ISCWeB:*

- *Home*
- *Material things*
- *Interpersonal relations*
- *Local area satisfaction*
- *Health*
- *Time use*
- *School*
- *Personal*

### *Main Changes:*

- “family” was replaced for “residential care or family foster care”
- “parents” were replaced for “carers”
- 4 questions about their type of placement were added

## The questionnaire and Data analysis

- It includes a psychometric scale on SWB, the **Personal Well-Being Index-School Children (PWI-SC7)** (Cummins and Law 2005). It has been used as indicator of subjective well-being, and therefore, as dependent variable.

### *The 7 items included in PWI-SC used for this study are :*

- *Things you have*
- *Opportunities in life*
- *Your relations, in general*
- *Your health*
- *How secure you feel*
- *How you use your time*
- *Your school experience*

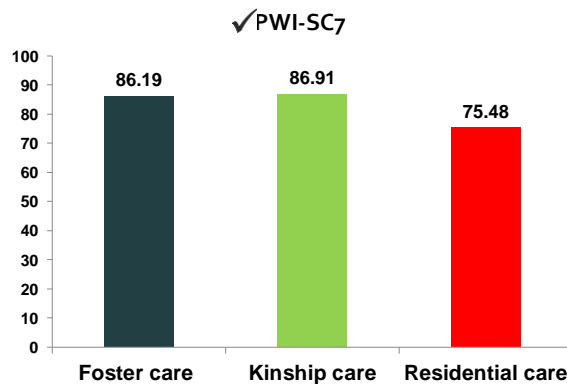
**Multiple regressions** have been used to explore which factors are related to children's SWB according to type of placement

## Methodology: Independent variables

- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Age
- ✓ Type of placement
- ✓ Happy with their type of placement
- ✓ Frequency of contact with mother and father
- ✓ Change of school in the last year
- ✓ Change of carer in the last year
- ✓ I like going to school
- ✓ Satisfaction with classmates
- ✓ Satisfaction with school marks
- ✓ Frequency of extracurricular activities
- ✓ Frequency of going out with friends
- ✓ Frequency of having used the computer

## SWB according to type of placement

The adolescents in **residential care** have a lower SWB than those in family foster care (kinship care and non-kinship).

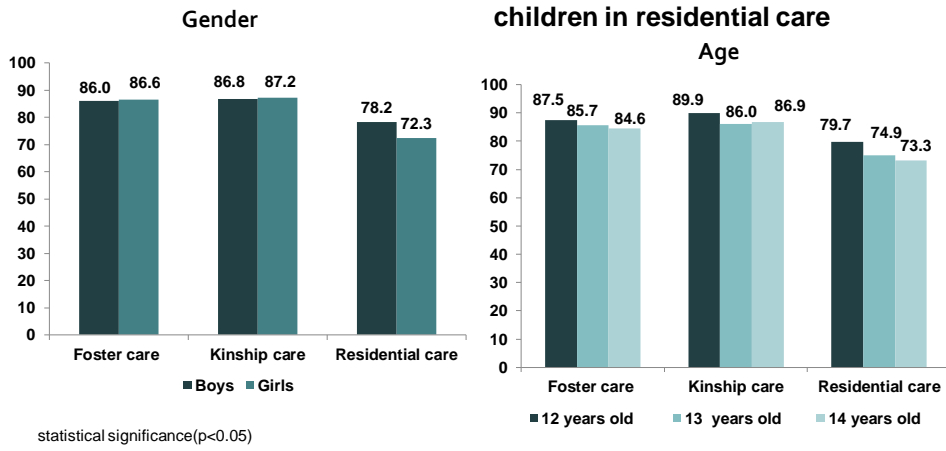


✓ statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

## SWB according to gender and age

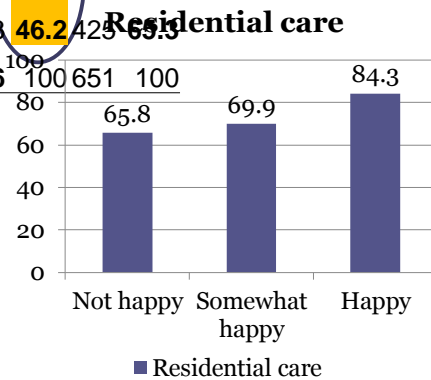
The **boys who live in residential care have a higher SWB than girls**

SWB of children in care displayed statistically significant differences according to **age only between children in residential care**



## SWB according to happiness with their placement

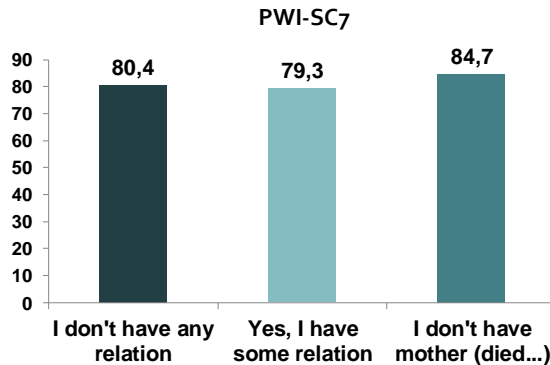
Happy with placement	Foster care		Kinship care		Residential care		Total	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not happy	1	3.2	2	0.9	94	23.7	97	14.9
Somewhat happy	1	3.2	9	4.0	119	30.1	129	19.8
Happy	29	93.6	213	95.1	183	46.2	425	65.3
Total	31	100	224	100	396	100	651	100



✓ statistical significance (p<0.05)

## SWB according to the relation with their mothers

Adolescents who do not know their mother or whose mother has died obtain a **higher mean score** on the PWI-SC7 scale than those who have a mother, whether they have contact with her or not.

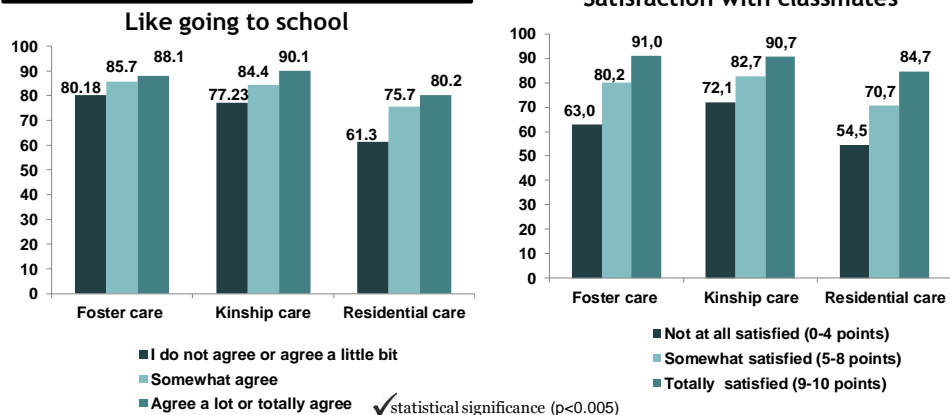


✓ statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

## SWB according to some school variables

Adolescents in care who agreed quite a lot or a lot that they liked going to school displayed significantly higher scores on their SWB than those who disagreed or disagreed a lot.

The greater the satisfaction with classmates, the higher the SWB scores observed.

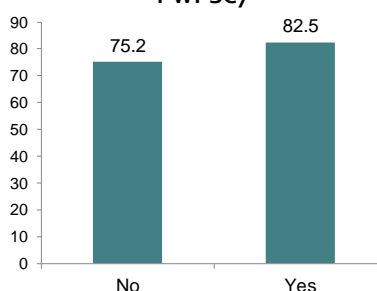


## SWB by changes of caregivers

**Regarding stability:** Those adolescents in care who had had the same carers in the previous year had a greater SWB than those who had changed

	Foster care		Kinship care		Residential care		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	3	7.3	14	6.1	187	48.2	204	31.0
Yes	38	92.7	215	93.9	201	51.8	454	69.0
Total	41	100.0	229	100.0	388	100.0	658	100.0

PWI-SC7



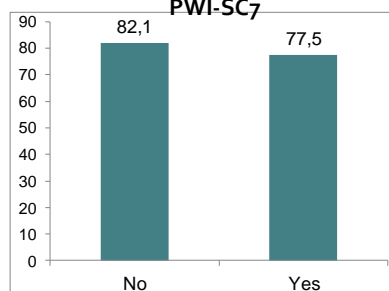
statistical significance (p<0.005)

## SWB by changes of school

Adolescents in care who had changed school in the previous year had a lower SWB compared to those who had stayed in the same school

	Foster care		Kinship care		Residential care		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
No	30	75.0	180	77.9	169	43.0	379	57.1
Yes	10	25.0	51	22.1	224	57.0	285	42.9
Total	40	100.0	231	100.0	393	100.0	664	100.0

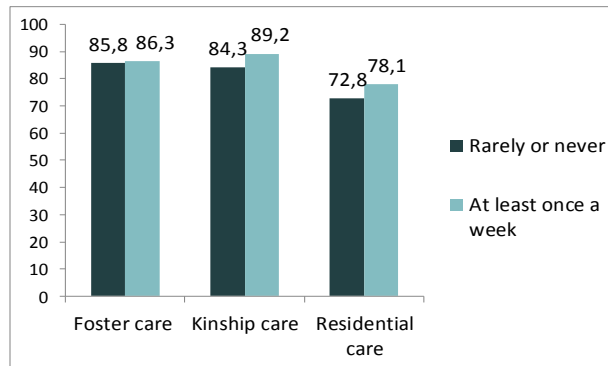
PWI-SC7



statistical significance (p<0.005)

## SWB according to the frequency of leisure time activities (music, sports, dancing, etc.)

Doing leisure time activities at least once a week increases SWB compared to doing them not often or never

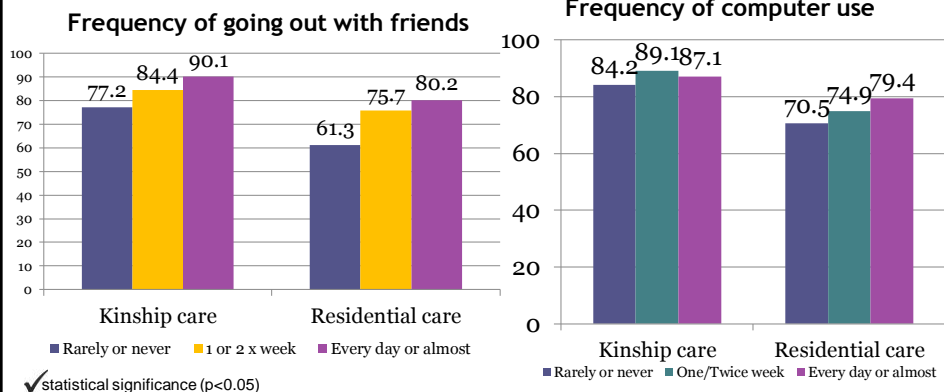


✓ statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ )

## SWB according to frequency of going out with friends and computer use

Among adolescents in care, going out with friends every day or one/twice a week increases SWB compared to going out not often or never

Adolescents in care who used the computer every day or almost had significantly higher SWB scores than those who used one few days a week or less than once a week



✓ statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ )



## Multiple Linear Regression (part 1)

Dependent variable: PWI-SC7

Stratifier variable: type of placement

VARIABLES	Aggregate sample	Foster care	Residential care
<b>Gender (Ref: Boys)</b>			
<i>Girls</i>	-1.675*	-0.632	-2.078*
<b>Age (Ref: 12 years old)</b>			
<i>13 years old</i>	-0.880	-0.977	-1.013
<i>14 years old</i>	-1.589	-0.621	-2.054
<i>15 years old</i>	-1.420	-1.366	-2.092
<b>Happy with type of placement (Ref: I do not happy)</b>			
<i>Somewhat happy</i>	4.193**	18.15*	3.606*
<i>Totally happy</i>	14.68***	30.00***	11.48***
<b>Like to going to school (Ref: I am not happy)</b>			
<i>Somewhat Happy</i>	4.106**	4.366*	3.693*
<i>Totally happy</i>	5.307***	6.741***	4.449**
<b>Observations</b>	606	244	362
<b>R-squared</b>	0.571	0.417	0.588

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Model adjusted for gender and age

## Multiple Linear Regression (part 2)

Dependent variable: PWI-SC7

Stratifier variable: type of placement

VARIABLES	Aggregate sample	Family care	Residential care
<b>Satisfaction with classmates</b> (continuously variable)	2.607***	1.753***	2.965***
<b>Satisfaction with your school marks</b> (continuously variable)	0.863***	0.652**	1.036***
<b>Frequency of going out with friends</b> (Ref: Rarely or never)			
Once or twice a week	1.172	-0.985	1.597
Everyday or almost everyday	3.845***	1.670	4.375***
<b>Frequency of use of the computer</b> (ref: Rarely or never)			
Once or twice a week	1.723	2.591	0.966
Everyday or almost everyday	3.890***	1.523	4.589***
<b>Constant</b>	38.29***	33.66***	36.11***
<b>Observations</b>	606	244	362
<b>R-squared</b>	0.571	0.417	0.588

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Model adjusted for gender and age

## Multiple Linear Regression 2 (part 1)

Dependent variable: PWI-SC7

\*In this model we have included *type of placement* as independent variable

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
<b>VARIABLES</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>	<b>PWISC7</b>
Type of placement (Ref: Family care)									
Residential care	-11.36***	-11.33***	-11.50***	-3.386***	-3.788***	-3.758***	-3.990***	-3.275***	-2.998***
Gender (Ref: Boys)									
Girls		-3.312***	-3.141***	-3.288***	-3.598***	-2.040**	-1.829**	-1.714*	-1.611*
Age (12 years old)									
13 years old			-4.200***	-3.792***	-2.953**	-1.639	-0.819	-0.890	-0.918
14 years old			-4.848***	-3.903***	-3.576***	-1.522	-1.195	-1.582	-1.623
15 years old			-6.263***	-6.460***	-4.426**	-1.877	-1.386	-1.459	-1.516
Happy with type of placement (I am not happy)									
Somewhat happy				4.850**	5.063**	3.956**	3.880**	3.979**	4.047**
Totally happy				19.23***	17.35***	13.57***	13.10***	12.90***	13.10***
Observations	669	669	669	651	643	637	628	611	606
R-squared	0.114	0.124	0.142	0.314	0.402	0.535	0.561	0.567	0.577

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Model adjusted for gender and age

## Multiple Linear Regression 2 (part 2)

Dependent variable: PWI-SC7

\*In this model we have included *type of placement* as independent variable

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
I like to go to school (Ref: I am not happy)									
Somewhat happy					8.400***	5.461***	4.643***	4.494***	4.313***
Totally happy					12.99***	7.255***	5.627***	5.640***	5.430***
Satisfaction with other children in your class (continuously variable)						2.783***	2.661***	2.644***	2.617***
Satisfaction with your school marks (continuously variable)							0.916***	0.900***	0.886***
Frequency of hanging out with friends (Ref: rarely or never)									
Once or twice a week								1.054	0.802
Everyday or almost everyday								3.971***	3.277***
Frequency of use the computer (Ref: rarely or never)									
Once or twice a week									1.840
Everyday or almost everyday									3.794***
Constant	98.20***	99.67***	103.3***	76.49***	68.26***	51.12***	48.06***	46.31***	44.06***
Observations	669	669	669	651	643	637	628	611	606
R-squared	0.114	0.124	0.142	0.314	0.402	0.535	0.561	0.567	0.577

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Model adjusted for gender and age

## Conclusions (1)

- The results show a **much lower subjective well-being among adolescents in residential care** than those family foster care. The means for those in family foster care are very close to that of adolescents in the general population.
- Age and gender among adolescents in residential care.
- We must be careful **not to attribute** all the responsibility for these results to the residential centres alone, because the characteristics of those in centre differ from those in foster care.
- Half of the adolescents **in residential care are not happy living** in a residential centre and this adversely affects their SWB. This is not a minor aspect, as it refers to where they live
- Being happy with the type of placement has a greater impact on SWB than type of placement. Therefore, **the placement is important but their perception of it is even more** so, which reminds us that we need to take the opinions and perceptions of children themselves more seriously.

## Conclusions (2)

- **Adolescents who do not know their mother or whose mother has died** display higher SWB scores than those who have a mother, whether they have contact with her or not.
- **Stability**, in terms of staying at the same school and retaining the same carer, increases the SWB of adolescents in care
- Adolescents in care who like going to school, feel safe at school, have good relationships with classmates, are in the year corresponding to their age or who get better marks all display significantly higher SWB scores, regardless of the type of placement. **Education acts as a highly compensatory factor.**
- Adolescents in care who **do leisure time activities** display higher SWB scores than those who do not.
- For adolescents in residential care: being able to going out with friends as well as using the computer regularly affects their SWB

## Practice and political implications

- These findings highlight the need to address the **participation** of children regarding any decision that affects their lives, the importance of **stability**, the key **role of the education**, the importance of **having friends** and of their **leisure time**.
- The need to clarify as far as **possible the role of biological parents**.
- There should be a **review of residential care**; continue to **promote family foster care** and pay great attention to the **positive results of kinship care**.

## References

- Llosada-Gistau, J., Montserrat, C. & Casas, F. (2015). **The subjective well-being of adolescents in residential care compared to that of the general population.** *Children and Youth Services Review*, 52, 150-157.
- Llosada-Gistau, J., Casas, F. & Montserrat, C. (forthcoming). **What matters in for the subjective well-being of children in care?**

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