

Children & Youth Well-being in Korea

Summary

2025



Ministry of Data and Statistics
Statistics Research Institute

CONTENTS

- 01** Age Coverage for This Report 3
- 02** Well-being Measurement Framework 4
- 03** Summary of Key Indicators 7
- 04** ‘Children and Youth Well-being’ Indicators 16

01

Age Coverage for This Report

Children and youth are defined as people aged between 0 and 18, including students in secondary schools. However, as the framework consists of the indicators from existing statistics, our age criteria do not always correspond with age coverage in some indicators. For these indicators, the age coverage either does not fully cover the 0–18 age group or extend beyond this range.



02

Well-being Measurement Framework

In the course of developing the framework for the Children and Youth Well-being, we have adopted a comprehensive approach combining theory-driven, data-driven, and children's voice-driven approaches.

① Theory-driven approach

Theory-driven approach reviewed and adapted theoretical works, previous research, and cases about production of well-being indicators for children and youth in other countries or international organizations to our development of the framework and indicators

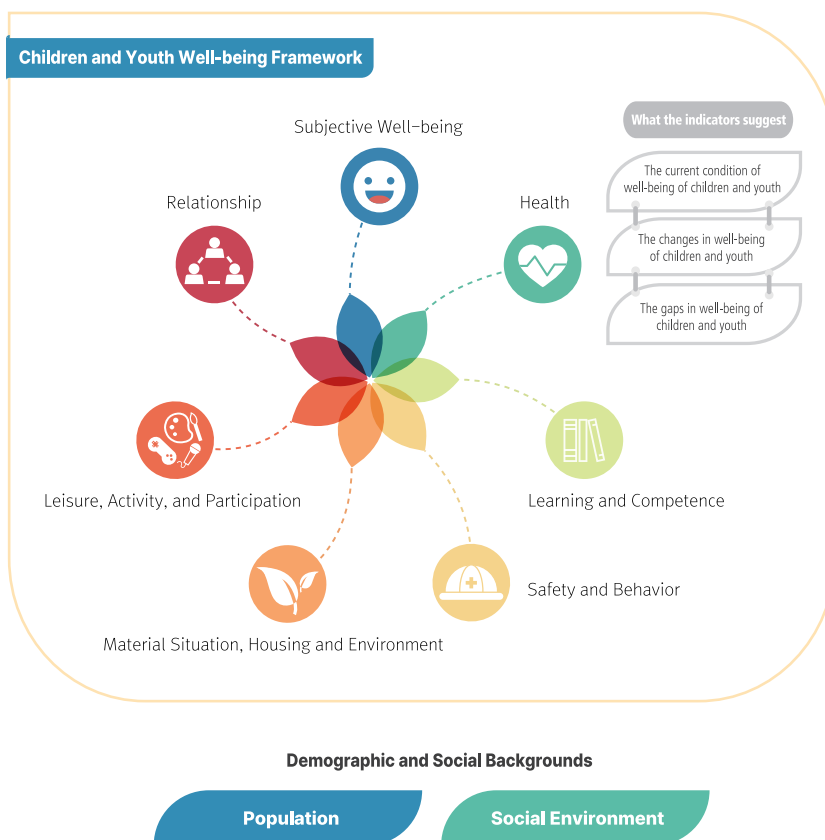
② Data-driven approach

Data-driven approach compiled indicators developed with the theory-driven approach with nationally approved statistics, and identified indicators requiring further development

③ Children's voice-driven approach

Children's voice-driven approach conducted Focus Group Interviews(FGI) with children to identify what they think is most important in their lives and how they define a happy life, which have been reflected in the indicators framework

Based on this comprehensive approach, the framework of the Children and Youth Well-being consists of the 'Demographic and Social Backgrounds' section and the 'Well-being of Children and Youth' section, each respectively representing an underlying macro-sociological environment and microscopic living conditions



and their qualities. Furthermore, with consideration of time series changes, we have examined the characteristics of children in different ages as well as the longitudinal changes of indicator outcomes.

The 'Children and Youth Well-being' section is divided into sub-areas as shown below:

- **Material Situation, Housing and Environment** indicates whether a child benefits from material goods and is guaranteed to have proper housing within a safe community
- **Health** indicates whether a child receives safe and preventive medical services from birth through their development and is growing up healthy

- **Learning and Competence** indicates whether a child receives good education and is properly developing their capacities to build democratic citizenship
- **Leisure, Activity, and Participation** indicates whether a child enjoys leisure and breaks enough and participates in activities at his or her free will
- **Safety and Behavior** indicates whether a child grows in a safe environment free from danger, violence, or risky behavior
- **Relationship** indicates whether a child forms positive relationships with other people in his or her daily life including in a family, a school, neighborhood, etc.
- **Subjective Well-being** indicates whether a child is satisfied with his or her daily life and perceives his or her life to be meaningful

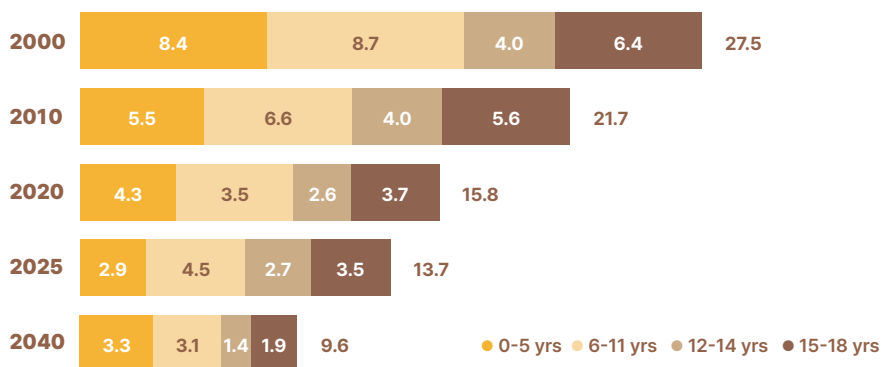


03

Summary of Key Indicators

The population aged 0 to 18 accounts for 13.7% of the total population, and it represents a significant and consistent decline from 27.5% in 2000. Children with an immigrant background represented 6.3% of the total child population in 2025, consistently increasing from 3.0% in 2017. From an educational perspective, decrease in the number of students per class and increase in the rate of public childcare centers suggest an overall improvement in Korea's educational environment. However, the participation rate of children with disabilities in inclusive education has stagnated with no significant change since 2010.

figure1. The population of children & youth aged 0–18 (%)



Material conditions and housing environments are constantly improving, some regional gaps exist in access to amenities

Despite the overall improvement of children's well-being in terms of material conditions and housing, the well-being of children in low-income households and those living in rural areas is relatively low. Since 2011, the relative poverty rate of households with children has been consistently falling, which is lower than that of all households. The child

deprivation index, measured according to UNICEF standards, improved to 17.6% in 2023. Concern about household financial hardship, which reflects children's perception of their material situation, has eased slightly since 2018. Despite a slight recent increase in the number of dwellings without basic facilities, the overall improving trend has been consistent since 2017. Access to amenities within a neighborhood, representing local environments surrounding children, has been gradually improving. However, the regional gaps persist, as the access in rural areas is lower than in urban and suburban areas. PM2.5 level, which affects children's outdoor activities, has remained stable since reduction observed during COVID-19 pandemic.

figure 2. Dwelling without basic facilities (%)

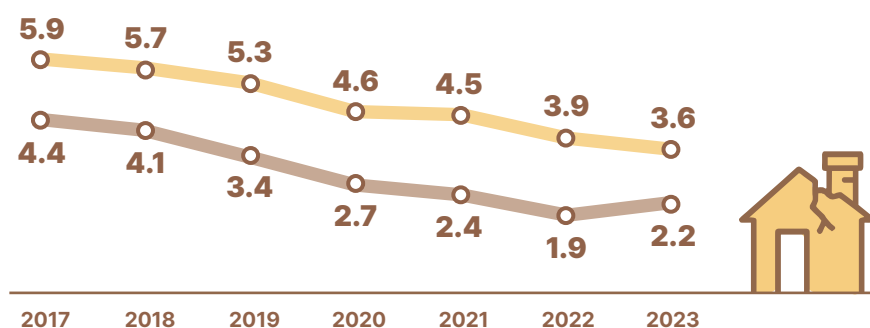
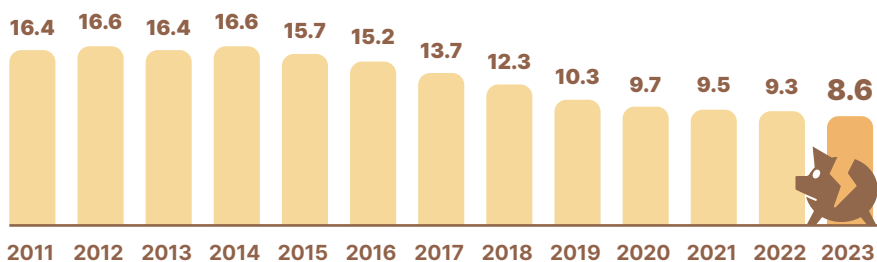
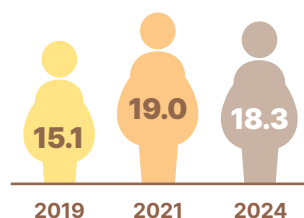


figure 3. Relative poverty rate (%)

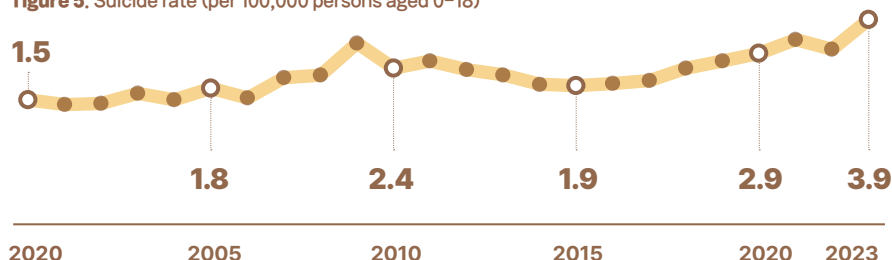
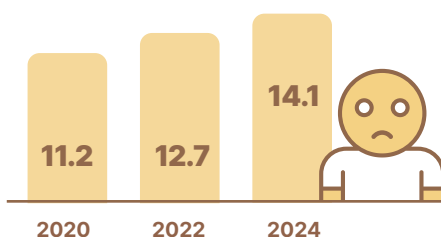


Physical health remains stable after improvement, but mental health such as stress, anxiety, and suicide deteriorates

While physical health has improved with support of abundant information regarding nutrition and child development, mental health status continues to deteriorate. From a physical health perspective, the

figure 4. Obesity rate (%)

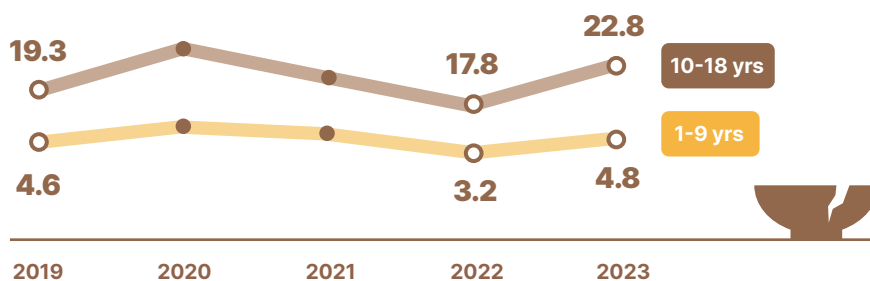
rate of infants born with low birth weight, an indicator of infancy health status, has seen stagnation between 7.7% and 7.8% since 2022, following a period of steady increase. Obesity rate, a representative indicator of children's physical health, has gradually decreased after the deterioration during COVID-19. The hours of sleep, affecting children's health and development, have shown no significant change, staying between 6.2 and 6.4 hours. Meanwhile, female students sleep less than male students. Self-reported health, which declined during COVID-19, is recently recovering. Overall, indicators representing children's mental health are deteriorating. Stress self-recognition and prevalence of GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder) are consistently rising. Furthermore, suicide rate has increased since 2016, with a sharp rise in the rate for children aged 12 to 14 between 2021 and 2023.

figure 5. Suicide rate (per 100,000 persons aged 0-18)**figure 6.** Prevalence of GAD (%)

Regarding health behaviors, vaccination rate declines as age increases, while the vaccination rate for children aged 6 has recently improved. For undernutrition, while no significant change has been found for children aged 1 to 9, the rate for children aged 10 to 18 has steadily risen to 22.8% in 2023. The level of regular physical activities is growing

overall, with particularly notable growth for male and middle school students.

figure 7. Undernutrition (%)



Study time decreased over the past decade, yet participation rate in private education increased

Total study time has decreased across all school levels over the past decade. However, when this time is divided into in-school and out-of-school study, the latter has shown a gradual increase. For high school students, out-of-school study time has risen by approximately one hour compared with ten years ago. During the same period, participation rate in private education has steadily grown, with an interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 80.0% in 2024. The subjective academic achievement perceived by middle and high school students has slightly decreased in recent years. At the same time, school life satisfaction has also seen a gradual decline since 2014. Both are lower in rural areas than in urban and suburban areas, and increase with higher household income levels. For school dropout rate, it is negligible for elementary and middle school students, with less than 1%, while it rises to 2.0% in 2023 for high school students.

figure 8. Subjective academic achievement (1 to 5)

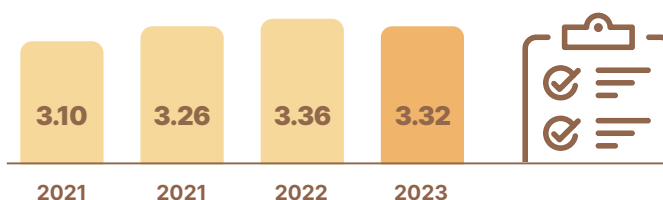
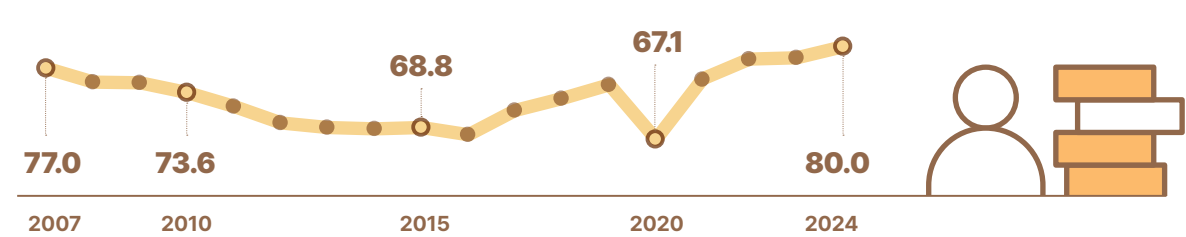


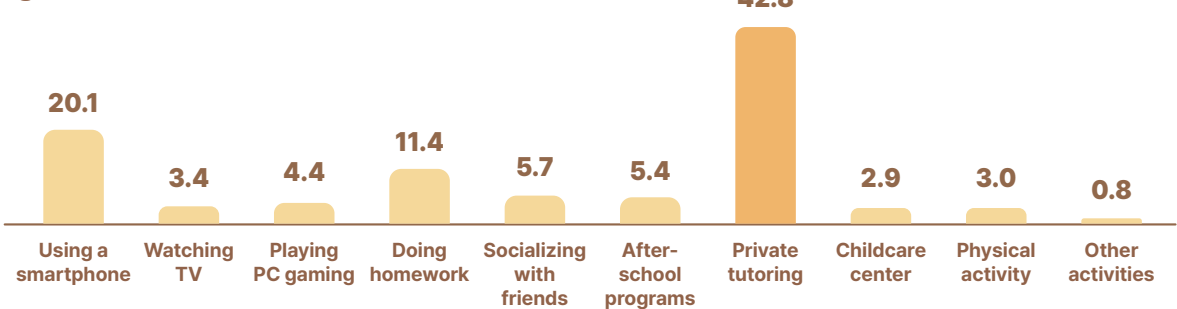
figure 9. Participation rate in private education (%)



After-school activities are mainly dedicated to private tutoring and smartphone use, while club participation is diminishing

In Leisure, Activity, and Participation sub-dimension, the indicators are divided into Leisure and Activity and Participation in Society, Economy, and Politics. Regarding after-school activities, ‘private tutoring’ constitutes the largest portion at 42.8%, followed by ‘smartphone use’ at 20.1%. However, it varies across age groups. Specifically, the 12-to-17 age group is more likely to engage in ‘smartphone use’ and ‘PC gaming,’ whereas children aged 9 to 11 are more likely to engage in ‘homework,’ ‘socializing with friends,’ and ‘after-school programs’. For primary locations for after-school activities, lower elementary school students tend to spend time at fine arts or sports institutions, whereas upper elementary school students are more likely to spend time at academic institutions. For middle school students, 50% or more typically engage in private education institutions between 5:00 and 7:00 pm. Afterwards, 61% of them report spending time at home. Among teenagers, 50.3% were satisfied with their leisure activities in 2023, showing a consistent increase since 2011.

figure 10. After-school activities in 2023 (%)

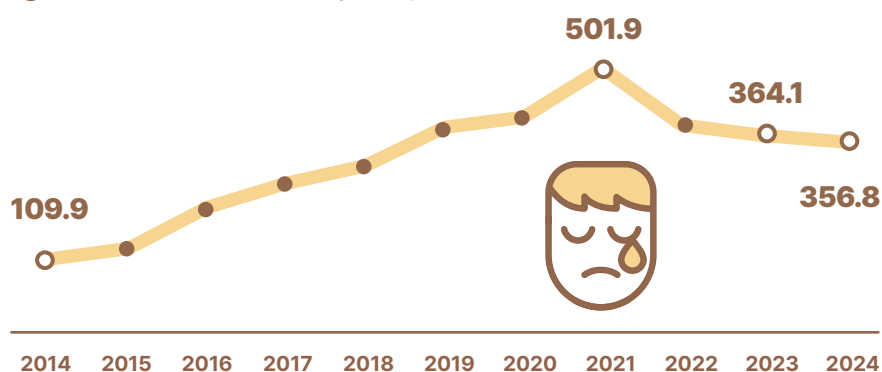


Children's interest in social issues has remained stable with a slight upward trend. On the other hand, the club participation rate, an indicator of active social participation, has consistently decreased since 2017.

Child abuse rate decreased, but peer victimization rate increased

In general, children's safety environment is improving while children are increasingly exposed to online threats. With changes in social perception on child abuse and subsequent policy responses, the rate of cases confirmed as child abuse surged consistently over time, before shifting to a steady decline in recent years. The rate of children neglected after school without supervision has decreased compared with 5 years ago. Meanwhile, peer victimization rate is on the rise, with online peer victimization among children accelerating in recent years.

figure 11. Child abuse rate (cases per 100,000 children)



Violent crime victimization and runaway from home experience increased in middle school students

Both violent crime victimization rate and youth crime rate have been on a steady decline since 2012, before starting a gradual rise in 2021. By school level, the victimization is most pronounced among middle school students, while property offenses mainly contribute to the rise in youth crime.

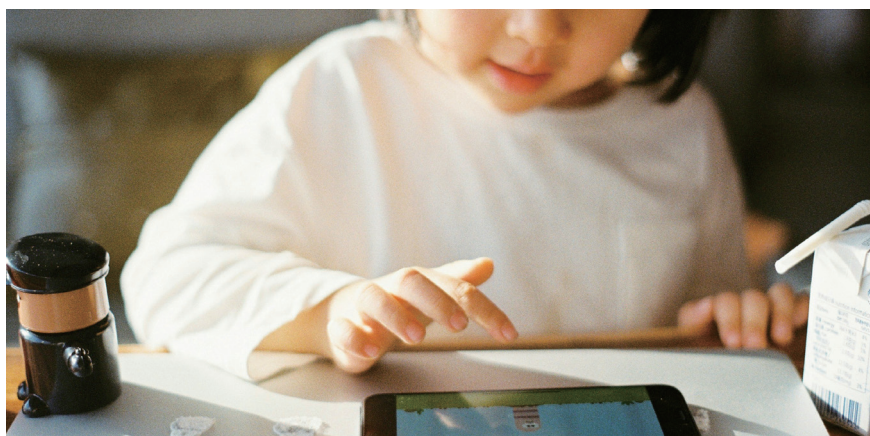
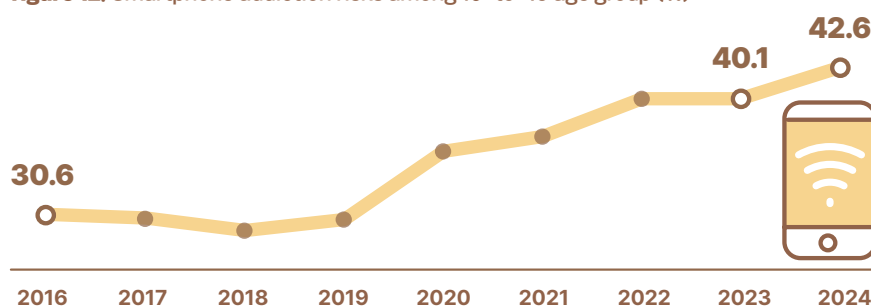
In 2024, smoking and drinking rates have consistently decreased to 4.5%

and 9.7% respectively. The rate of runaway from home experience has consistently decreased from 5.1% in 2013, but the trend reversed in 2024, rising to 3.0%. Particularly, this growth is apparent among middle school students. Furthermore, male students showed a higher runaway rate by 1–2%p until 2018, then this gender gap has narrowed to less than 1%p.

Smartphone addiction risks are consistently rising for elementary school students

Due to changes in digital environments, smartphone addiction risks have been continuously rising, and the COVID–19 pandemic further accelerated this growth. Following an increase during the pandemic, the risks for preschool children have weakened whereas those for children aged 10 to 19 have continued to rise. In particular, this rise is most pronounced among elementary school students.

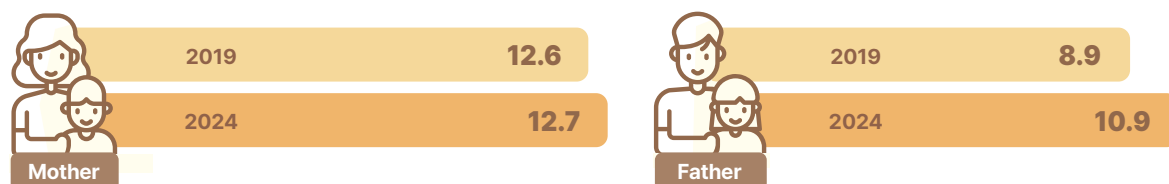
figure 12. Smartphone addiction risks among 10–to–19 age group (%)



Family time has declined, while time spent with father is increasing

Family time, which rose during the COVID-19 pandemic, has since declined. There is a disparity between fathers and mothers in the amount of time preschool children spend with their parents. Excluding the COVID-19 pandemic, paternal time has been rising on both weekdays and weekends, whereas maternal time on weekdays has shown a decline. While the frequency of having dinner with family among children aged 9 to 18 has risen compared with 2017, it remains below the level observed in 2020, the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding peer relationships, the proportion of children aged 3 to 8 who play with friends at least once per week was 84.8% in 2023, a slight increase compared with 2018. In contrast, the proportion of the 13-to-18 age group reporting the availability of emotional support when needed was 83.7% in 2023, representing a slight decline from 84.2% in 2021.

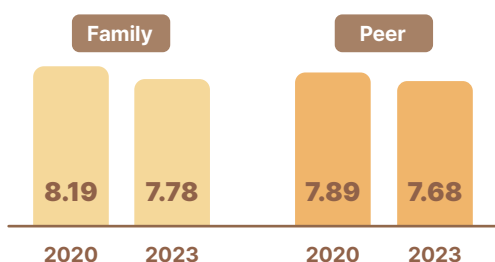
figure 13. Hours spent with parents on weekends (hours)



Both satisfaction levels with family and peer relationships slightly decreased from 2020

The subjective satisfaction levels regarding relationships have all fallen—the satisfaction with family relationship dropped from 8.19 out of 10

figure 14. Satisfaction with relationships (0 to 10)

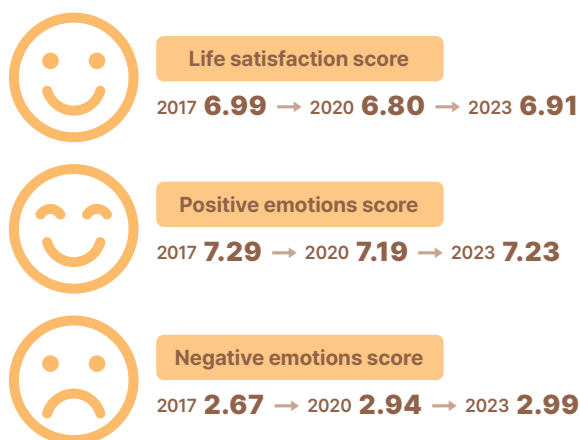


in 2020 to 7.78 in 2023, while the satisfaction with peer relationship declined from 7.89 out of 10 in 2020 to 7.68 in 2023. The proportion of children who perceive that their opinions are respected in family decision-making has consistently increased. However, this perception is relatively lower among children with low academic performance.

Both life satisfaction and positive emotions improved, whereas negative emotions deteriorated

No significant change has been observed in children's subjective well-being. Following a slight decline in 2020, both life satisfaction and positive emotions (as indicated by the degree of happiness felt the previous day) rebounded in 2023. The level of negative emotions, the degree of worry and depression, has shown a continuous increase from 2.67 in 2017 to 2.94 in 2020 and further to 2.99 in 2023. The perceived eudaimonia was 6.89 out of 10 in 2023, following a pattern similar to that of life satisfaction and positive emotions.

figure 15. Subjective Well-being (0 to 10)



04

‘Children and Youth Well-being’ Indicators

This study devises a framework consisting of 62 indicators under 8 sub-dimensions. The table below shows these indicators grouped by sectors, definition and target age ranges.

Demographic and Social Background

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Demographic Background	Child population	The proportion of projected population of ages 0-18 to the projected total population	0-18
	Children with an immigrant background	The proportion of projected population of ages 0-18 from immigrant backgrounds to the projected total 0-18 population	0-18
	Children mortality rate	The number of deaths per 100,000 children in ages 0-18	0-18
	Children with both parents employed	The proportion of households with both working parents among married-couple households with a child under 18	0-17
	Children living with single parent	The proportion of households with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed parent among those with children aged 18 or under	0-18
Social Environment	Preschool enrollment rate	The proportion of children aged 0-5 who are enrolled in a preschool or a kindergarten	0-5
	Rate of public childcare centers	The proportion of the number of public or national childcare institutions among the total number of childcare institutions	0-5
	Number of students per class	The number of students per class by school level	kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school students
	Disabled children participating in inclusive education	The ratio of children entitled to have special education who receive education in a general class at general schools	
	Children covered by the National Basic Livelihood Security Program	The proportion of children aged 0-18 who receive a payment from the National Basic Livelihood Program under Article 25 of the ‘National Basic Living Security Act’	0-18
	Children requiring protection	The number of yearly newly listed children in a child protection system per 100,000 children of ages 0-17	0-17
	Children in custody of foster homes or institutions	The number of children in custody of a child welfare institution, foster home, or group home per 100,000 children aged 0-19	0-19

Material Situation, Housing and Environment

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Poverty and Deprivation	Child deprivation index	The proportion of children deprived of necessities that are directly required for children	0-17
	Concern about household economic difficulty	The degree of children's concern about the economic difficulties of their families	9-17
	Relative poverty rate	The proportion of children living below a relative poverty line	0-18
Housing	Access to amenities within a neighborhood	The proportion of children living in a neighborhood with access to different types of amenities for their uses	0-17
	Dwelling without basic facilities	The proportion of children living in a dwelling where failed to meet minimum housing requirements	0-18
	PM2.5 level	The level of fine dust (PM2.5 concentration) in the air	-

Health

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Mental Health	Stress self-recognition	The proportion of children experiencing stress in their daily lives	Middle and high school students
	Suicide rate	The number of deaths by suicide among children in the same age group	0-18
Physical Health	Infants born with low birth weight	The proportion of infants who were underweight at birth to the total number of live births	0
	Obesity rate	The proportion of children diagnosed as obese according to Body Mass Index	Elementary, middle and high school students
	Self-reported health	The proportion of children considering their own health to be in good condition	Middle and high school students
	Hours of sleep	An average daily sleep hours on weekdays for children	Middle and high school students
Health Behaviors	Vaccination Rate	The proportion of children who completed all mandatory vaccinations	1-6
	Undernutrition	The proportion of children not receiving sufficient energy and/or nutrition	1-18
	Level of regular physical activities	The proportion of children who regularly engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity	Middle and high school students

Learning and Competence

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Learning	Study Time	Hours spent in studying per day	Age 10 to high school ages
	Participation rate in private education	The proportion of children participating in private education at personal costs	Elementary, middle and high school students
	Subjective academic achievement	The level of academic achievement subjectively perceived by children	13-18
	School life satisfaction	The proportion of children satisfied with overall school life	9-18
	School dropout rate	The proportion of students who have dropped out of school	Elementary, middle and high school students
Competence	Infant language development	The level of overall language development in infants	0-5

Leisure, Activity, and Participation

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Leisure and Activity	Time spent in leisure activities on weekdays	Average daily leisure hours on weekdays	Grade 4 in elementary through grade 3 in high school
	After-school activities	The proportion of after-school activities which children usually engage in	9-17
	Leisure satisfaction	The proportion of children subjectively satisfied with their leisure activities	13-19
Participation in Society, Economy, and Politics	Club participation	The proportion of children participating in social clubs or groups activities	9-18
	Interests in social issues	The degree of children's interests in social issues	13-18
	Recognition about respect of their own basic rights	The proportion of children who perceive that their rights as respected by others	Grade 4 in elementary through grade 3 in high school

Safety and Behavior

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Safety	Child abuse rate	The proportion of children who have experienced abuse in the same age group	0-17
	After-school unsupervised child	The proportion of children who are neglected without a guardian after school	0-12
	Peer victimization rate	The proportion of children who have experienced bullying by peers	Grade 4 in elementary through grade 3 in high school
	Rate of road fatalities	The rate of deaths from traffic accidents among children in the same age group	0-20
	Violent crime victimization rate	The rate of victimization by violent crimes (felony, assault) among children in the same age group	0-20
Behavior	Smoking rate	The proportion of children who smoke	Middle and high school students
	Drinking rate	The proportion of children who drink alcohol	Middle and high school students
	Youth crime rate	The proportion of children who have been indicted for a crime among the same age group	14-18
	Runaway from home experience	The proportion of children who have run away from home	Grade 4 in elementary through grade 3 in high school
	Smartphone addiction risks	The proportion of children under smartphone addition risk (high risk group and potential risk group)	Elementary, middle and high school students

Relationship

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Family Relationship	Hours spent with parents	Amount of time children spend with their parents on weekdays and weekends	0-5
	Frequency of having dinner with family	The proportion of children who have dinner with their family	9-18
	Recognition of children's opinions in family decision-making	The proportion of children who perceive that their opinions are respected in important family decisions concerning them	Grade 4 in elementary through grade 3 in high school
	Family relationship satisfaction	The level of children's satisfaction with overall relationships with their families	9-18

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Peer and General Relationship	Frequency of playing with friends	The proportion of children spending time playing with their friends at least once per week	3-8
	Children with emotional support when needed	The proportion of children who report having someone they can rely on for emotional support when needed	13-18
	Peer relationship satisfaction	The level of children's satisfaction with overall relationships with their peers	9-18
	Social trust	The level of children's trust in our society	13-18

Subjective Well-being

Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Definition of indicators	age
Life Satisfaction	Life satisfaction	The level of children's satisfaction with their life in general	9-18
Positive and Negative Emotions	Positive emotions	The level of children's positive emotional well-being (happiness)	9-18
	Negative emotions	The level of children's negative emotional well-being (concerns, depression)	9-18
Value and Meaning of Life	Eudaimonia	The level of children's perceived worthwhileness of life	9-18





Children & Youth Well-being in Korea 2025

Summary

AUTHORS

Sujin Shim, Deputy Director of Statistical Research Institute, Ministry of Data and Statistics
Eunah Kim, Manager of Statistical Research Institute, Ministry of Data and Statistics

PUBLICATION DATE

Oct 2025

PUBLISHER

Jin Kim

PUBLISHED BY

Statistical Research Institute, Ministry of Data and Statistics
8F Statistical Center, 713 Hanbat-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon, Republic of Korea

CONTACT

shimsj@korea.kr, eun0437@korea.kr

DESIGNED BY

Donggeuran Book, eumeumeum20@gmail.com

