

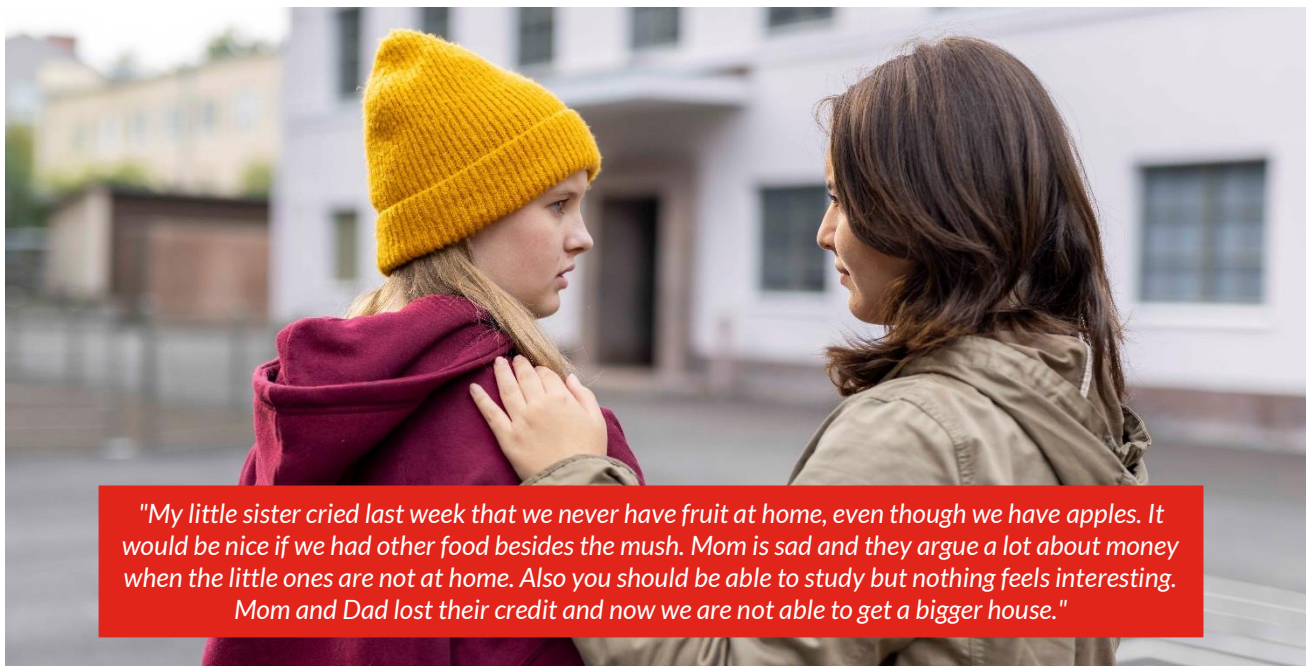


## Children's Voice 2024. Summary of results.

Children's Voice is a survey that Save the Children Finland has conducted since 2001. The survey maps the thoughts of children and young people on their everyday life and life in general. In spring 2024, a total of 1653 children and young people aged between 12–17 responded to the survey to give their thoughts on their wellbeing, everyday life, and their family's income level.

The respondents themselves assessed the financial situation they believed their family to be in. Almost half estimated their family to have an average income. Of the respondents, 35% felt their family had a high income, and 17% reported a low income.

Family background sets children and young people in unequal positions amongst one another. Children and young people who assessed their family to have a low income reported a lack of basic needs, such as food and clothing, and difficulties participating in leisure activities like hobbies. The family's income level also affected the ever-increasing amount of worry, stress and anxiety among children and young people, causing a decline in children's wellbeing.



*"My little sister cried last week that we never have fruit at home, even though we have apples. It would be nice if we had other food besides the mush. Mom is sad and they argue a lot about money when the little ones are not at home. Also you should be able to study but nothing feels interesting. Mom and Dad lost their credit and now we are not able to get a bigger house."*

### Poverty creates experiences of an everyday life that is lacking

Only 4% of children from low-income families felt that their family could easily manage their outgoings. The children reported that their parents' wages were insufficient, or that their parents had to work more than one job in order to cover costs. The children's responses indicated that single-parent households were facing particularly difficult situations. Many felt that inflation, a reduction in benefits, and the COVID-19 pandemic had all affected their financial situation.

Of the respondents to the Children's Voice survey, 19% felt that they did not receive sufficient or regular food at home. The respondents said that the food was very basic and that the refrigerator was empty towards the end of the month as money had run out. For many respondents, the situation appeared worse than previously, with a rise in prices having a particular impact.

A rise in the cost of living and the price of fuel also posed challenges for families. Families had attempted to solve the problem by e.g., looking for a smaller and cheaper home, and by cutting back on activities that require a car.

Poverty clearly restricts children's leisure activities and recreational opportunities. For example, 37% of children from low-income families reported that it was not possible for them to have a hobby that wasn't free of charge, whereas the same figure for respondents overall was 11%. Going to the cinema and travelling were simply not possible for many children from low-income families. A low income narrows children's and young people's friendships, weakens their sense of community, and strengthens feelings of inequality.



### **Poverty worsens wellbeing and the outlook for the future**

Only 12% of children who responded to the Children's Voice survey from low-income families felt that their wellbeing was good when they responded to the survey. Feelings of stress and fatigue were common, and many found it difficult to relate positively to themselves. For children and young people, their family's financial situation caused negative and burdensome emotions, such as shame and guilt. Children from low-income families in particular worry about how their parents are coping. As parents are concerned about finances, the children strive to spare them from extra stress, setting aside their own needs and desires.

Respondents from low-income families also had poorer feelings of wellbeing in the digital environment. Online bullying, such as mean comments, threats, and exclusion were all more common among children from low-income families than for other respondents. More often than for other respondents, these children and young people felt that their parents were uninterested in what they do online or on social media.

Children's Voice –survey respondents from low income families	2022	2023	2024
I worry how my parents are coping	49%	58%	70%
I'm worried about the future	45%	53%	71%

The future appears uncertain to many children and young people in poverty. According to the 2022–2024 the Children's Voice surveys, children's concern about their parents' coping and their own future has increased considerably. Poverty among families with children can, however, be prevented and reduced. It is important to invest in child-oriented policy measures and to reserve sufficient resources for services at various levels of decision-making. The benefit to children must always take priority and be at the core of decision-making. A Child Rights Impact Assessment in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must also be integrated into decisions.