

Happiness SURVEY



RELEASED: Monday 9th October

BTN's KIDS' HAPPINESS SURVEY 2017

Sleep has been identified as a key indicator of children's happiness in a recent survey of 47,000 children across Australia.

46,974 kids responded to the second BtN Kids' Happiness Survey – making it the biggest survey of youth mental health and wellbeing in Australian history.

The BTN Kids' Happiness Survey was conducted online by *Behind the News*, the ABC's popular current affairs program for students. This year's results have been released to coincide with World Mental Health Day.

"We were blown away by the number of responses we got from kids right around Australia. With the help of The University of Melbourne, the results from this survey will help increase awareness about some of the biggest challenges kids today face." said series producer, Nathan Bazley.

"Some of the findings around bullying and worry are quite frightening, but there are some really positive insights in there too. The kids of Australia are generally a pretty happy bunch."

This year, *Behind the News* has partnered with the The University of Melbourne for help analysing the huge amount of data recorded.

“These results provide compelling evidence that sleep is a key indicator of child wellbeing,” said Associate Professor Lisa Gibbs, the Chair of The University of Melbourne Children’s Lives Initiative, research partners with ABC *Behind the News*.

“If children feel safe and secure they are more likely to be getting the right amount of sleep for their age, and if they are getting the right amount of sleep they are more likely to report feeling happy.”

Children who did not feel safe at home, at school or in their neighbourhood were 2-3 times less likely to be getting the recommended amount of sleep than their peers.

When a wider range of sleep patterns was taken into account to allow for natural variation, **children who did not feel safe were 4 times more likely to have atypical sleep patterns** – i.e. either not getting enough sleep or sleeping more than is recommended.

“The evidence shows us that children who are exposed to family violence will often exhibit sleep difficulties,” said Cathy Humphreys, Professor of Social Work at The University of Melbourne.

“Poor sleep patterns are recognised as a sign of anxiety, stress or possible trauma,” said Professor David Forbes, Director of Phoenix Australia: Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health.

“Children who don’t get enough sleep can also struggle with behaviour, emotions, concentration and memory in the classroom,” said Dr Jon Quach, Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Children who were sleeping for the recommended hours per night were twice as likely to report feeling happy lots of the time than those children who were not sleeping for the recommended hours per night.

47% of children reported sleeping with a screen-based device in reach on at least some nights of the week and **29% of children reported their device stopped them from getting enough sleep** on at least some nights during the week. This was significantly more common in older children (37% vs 27%).

“Screen time and digital devices are issues for both young people and their parents. It’s a good idea to discuss and agree on device use and rules as a family. To encourage good sleep habits, one rule could be devices stay out of bedrooms after lights out.” says Raising Children Network’s Executive Director, Associate Professor Julie Green (http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/screen_time_6-11_years.html/context/1106)

“We have moved on from concerns about having a television in children’s bedroom to the mobility of screen devices,” said Dr Bjorn Nansen, Media and Communications program, The University of Melbourne, “But technology is evolving and in addition to disrupting sleep, mobile devices may also be used for child relaxation activities including reading, music and mindfulness applications.”

“There are many factors that influence child wellbeing including individual traits, social connections and the circumstances in which children live, learn and play,” said Associate Professor Lisa Gibbs.

- **Traditional childhood options were still identified by children as a source of happiness including friends (64%), family (60%), music (51%) and sport (52%)**
- **Girls and younger children were significantly more likely to report that family, reading and artwork made them feel happy. They were also more likely to report that cooking and being outside in nature made them feel happy**
- **Boys were significantly more likely than girls to report that sport and computer games made them feel happy**
- **Girls and older children were significantly more likely to report that music made them feel happy**
- **Many children reported that their pets made them feel happy.**

Professor Gibbs said the results provided valuable insight into the lives of Australian children, and researchers would continue to analyse the data over the coming months.

“Behind the News is proud to not just help teach Australian kids about the world around them, but also to help teach the world a bit more about them, too.” said Nathan Bazley.

“I would like to sincerely thank all of the teachers and students around Australia that got involved in the 2017 BTN Happiness Survey. We will make sure your efforts make a difference.”

What makes you feel most happy?

	Overall	Gender		Age	
		Boys	Girls	Younger (6-11yrs)	Older (12-18yrs)
N	44,284	20,800	23,484	33,297	10,987
My Friends¹	64%	59%	68%	64%	64%
My Family^{1, 2}	60%	56%	63%	62%	54%
My school^{1, 2}	24%	21%	27%	26%	21%
Playing sport¹	52%	57%	48%	52%	52%
Watching TV/movies^{1, 2}	46%	47%	44%	45%	48%
Reading^{1, 2}	39%	33%	45%	41%	34%
Playing computer games¹	39%	52%	26%	38%	38%
Playing/listening to music^{1, 2}	51%	44%	57%	49%	56%
Artwork/painting/drawing^{1, 2}	38%	27%	49%	40%	34%
Cooking^{1, 2}	32%	21%	42%	33%	31%
Being outside in nature^{1, 2}	43%	38%	47%	44%	41%

¹Gender difference significant (p< 0.001)

²Age difference significant (p< 0.001)

For further information please contact:

Peri Wilson, Communications Specialist, News and Current Affairs
wilson.peri@abc.net.au | 02 8333 2263 | 0409 888 866

Nathan Bazley, Behind the News Series Producer
Bazley.nathan@abc.net.au | 08 8343 4660

For research enquiries please contact:

Kathryn Powley, Media Advisor, University of Melbourne
Kathryn.powley@unimelb.edu.au | 0428 734 902



Media Release