

# Child Wellbeing Index (WHO-5)

A scale to measure child wellbeing



*Guidance*

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## What is the tool?

The WHO-5 Child Wellbeing Index is a simple self-reported measure of children's psychological wellbeing. It consists of five, positively phrased questions, which can be administered in under five minutes.

It was introduced in its current form in 1998 by WHO Regional Office in Europe for use with children aged nine and above. This document presents a slightly simplified version of the original tool, with five answer options instead of six. This version of the tool was successfully tested by ICI in Côte d'Ivoire and found to be suitable for use with children aged 5-17.

## How does it work?

The tool consists of five statements describing a positive state. The child is asked to say how often they felt that way during the past two weeks, by selecting one of the following options:

*All the time, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never*

## Why use the tool?

The *WHO-5 Child Wellbeing Index* can be used to:

- **Understand relationships between a child's mental wellbeing and other areas of their life**, such as their family situation, school attendance, participation in child labour etc.
- **Measure changes** to children's mental wellbeing, for example as part of an impact evaluation of the effect of an intervention (eg. between baseline and endline)

## How was the tool developed?

The WHO-5 Wellbeing Index has been used in multiple studies with children and adolescents and has been translated into more than 30 languages. It has been shown to adequately serve as a predictor of depression, as well as to be significantly correlated with adverse work conditions, like workload, insecurity or work-life imbalance.<sup>1</sup>

ICI tested this simplified version of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index during a field survey with 2,217 children in Côte d'Ivoire, in February 2021. The results of this test show that the tool is suitable for use with children aged 5-17 and living in cocoa-growing communities.

## How to use the tool?

The WHO-5 ([questionnaire available here](#)) can be administered on its own or integrated into a larger survey, such as a child labour prevalence survey.

The enumerator should begin by introducing the exercise. For example: "Now, I would like us to talk about how you have been feeling over the last two weeks. To do so, I will speak as if I were you and for each sentence I am going to say, tell me if you felt this way "All the time", "Often", "Sometimes", "Rarely" or "Never"."

Time-related concepts should be explained using everyday words, using in language the child understands. Providing an example of a statement can be a good idea to prepare the child: "Let's do a practice question: I say a phrase like: "Over the past two weeks, I have felt happy", what will you answer?"

Once the child has understood, the enumerator should read the statements slowly, in a neutral tone, always including the words "Over the past two weeks..." at the beginning. Allow time for the child to think about the answer after each question and repeat the choices only if the child asks to or if needed to clarify the answer given. Note the answer before reading the next statement.

## What are the questions?

The WHO-5 consists of five statements describing positive states of being. For each statement, the child is asked how often they felt that way during the past two weeks:

Over the past two weeks...	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1 I have felt good	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
2 I have felt calm and relaxed	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
3 I have felt full of energy and healthy	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
4 I woke up feeling fresh and rested	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
5 I did a lot of things that interested me during the day	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

<sup>1</sup> See for example: Schütte, S. C.-T. (2014). Psychosocial working conditions and psychological well-being among employees in 34 European countries. *International archives of occupational and environmental health*, 897-907.

Questionnaires are available in both English and French on the ICI Knowledge hub:  
<https://www.cocoinitiative.org/knowledge-hub/resources/child-wellbeing-index-who-5>

### How to analyse the data collected?

The simplest way to compute a wellbeing score is to sum up the respective values of the items and multiply the sum by 5 in order to obtain a final score ranging from 0 to 100:  $(item1 + item2... + item5) \times 5 = wellbeing\ score$ . The higher the score, the higher a child's wellbeing.

Since the items of the WHO-5 have been shown to measure the same dimension (psychological wellbeing) combining them in an index will reliably reflect the level of a child's wellbeing.

For research purposes and when the sample is large enough (at least 150-200 records), a second other option is to compute the wellbeing score by using the Item Response Theory (IRT) framework and an IRT-method adapted to multiple response items (the graded response model, for example).

This will provide more robustness and granularity to the wellbeing scores, since this method is sensitive to the "difficulty" and the "discrimination power" of each item, which will in turn provide more variate and differentiated scores among the participants. The scores will be centred around 0: any negative score reflects a level of wellbeing below the mean, and any positive score reflects a level of wellbeing above the mean.

Further information about the tool and how to use it is available here: [The World Health Organisation- Five Well-Being Index \(WHO-5\)](#).