

Child Well-being Index (WHO-5)

A tool to measure children's psychological well-being



Guidance

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What is the tool?

The *WHO-5 Child Well-being Index* is a simple self-reported measure of children's psychological well-being. 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 the 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 in Ghana 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 Well-being Index* can be used to:

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

How was the tool developed?

The *WHO-5 Well-being 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.¹

ICI tested this simplified version of the *WHO-5 Well-being Index* during a field survey with more than 2,000 children in Côte d'Ivoire, in February 2021, and in a study surveying over 3,000 children in Côte d'Ivoire and over 4,000 children in Ghana in early 2022. The results of these studies show that the tool is suitable for use with children aged 5-17 and living in cocoa-growing communities. Since its development the tool is regularly used in ICI's studies in Côte d'Ivoire as well as in Ghana to measure children's well-being.

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"*."

These time-related concepts should be explained using everyday words and a child-friendly language. Additionally, providing an example of a statement can be a good idea to prepare the child. For example:

"Let's do a practice question: I say a phrase like: *"Over the past two weeks, I have been doing what I usually do."*, 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 answer choices only if the child asks to or if needed for clarification. Note down the answer before reading the next statement.

¹ 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.

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 have 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)

How to analyse the data collected?

Since the items of the *WHO-5* have been shown to measure the same dimension (psychological well-being) combining them in an index will reliably reflect the level of a child's well-being. The simplest way to do this, 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: $(item1 + item2 + \dots + item5) \times 5 = \text{well-being score}$. The higher the score, the higher a child's well-being.

For research purposes and when the sample is large enough (at least 150-200 records), a second option, is to compute the well-being 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 provides more robustness and granularity to the well-being 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 well-being below the mean, and any positive score reflects a level of well-being above the mean.

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

Survey Forms

Download the relevant material here:

[All documents on ICI's knowledge hub](#)

- a) [Child Well-being Index – Questionnaire](#) (in English)
- b) [L'indice de bien-être des enfants – Questionnaire](#) (in French)