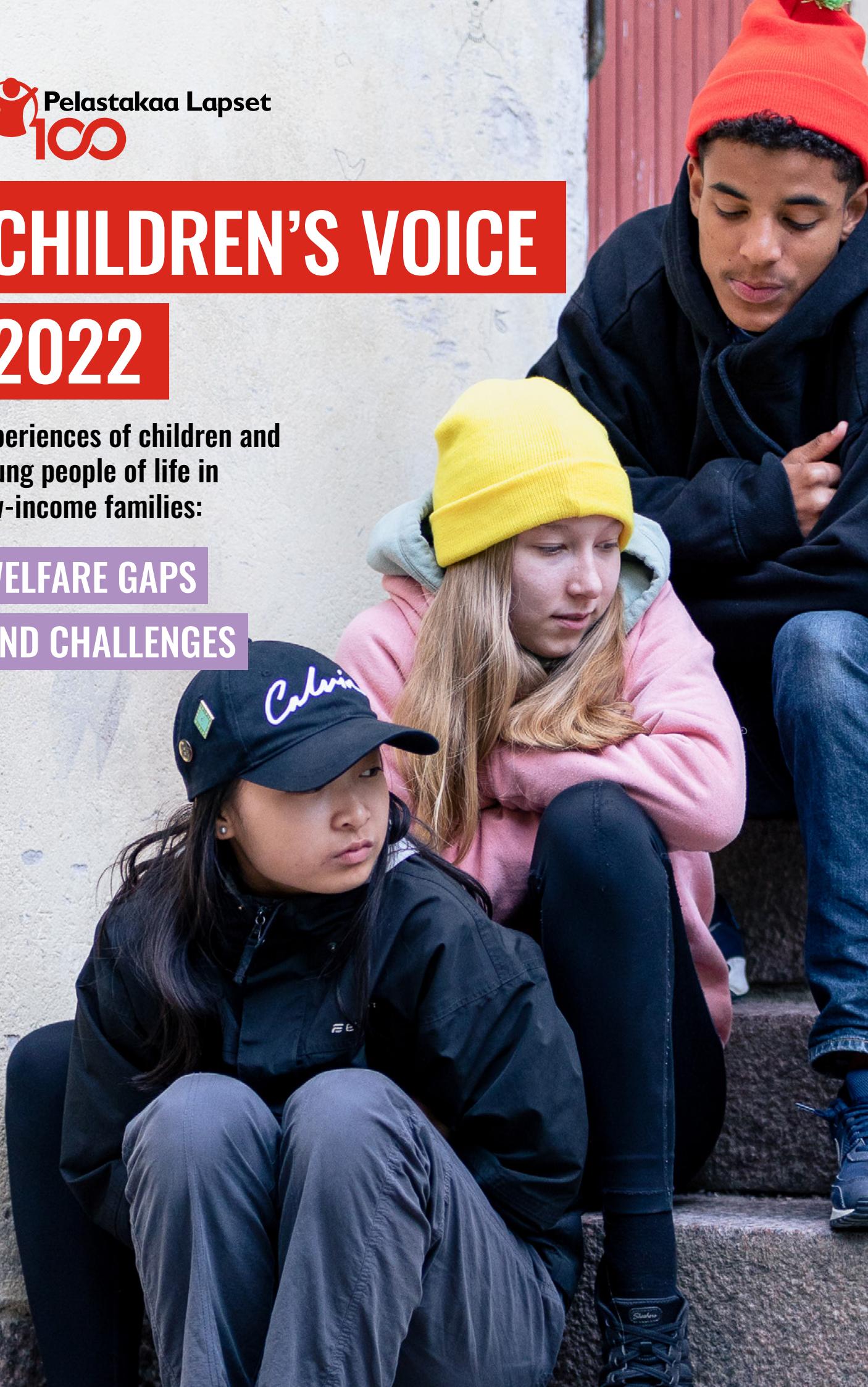


# CHILDREN'S VOICE

## 2022

**Experiences of children and  
young people of life in  
low-income families:**

**WELFARE GAPS  
AND CHALLENGES**



# CHILDREN'S VOICE 2022

## Experiences of children and young people of life in low-income families:

### WELFARE GAPS AND CHALLENGES

*"Well, sometimes I notice that mum doesn't buy certain things.*

*And I hear her saying she got a letter about unpaid bills, and that we need to use less water. So I try to shower less, and I don't really dare drink water when I'm at home."*

Children's Voice is an annual survey carried out by Save the Children Finland. It gives children and young people the chance to share about their lives, their daily routines and their experiences. The survey has been conducted every year since 2001. The report produced from the survey results describes the experiences of children and young people in low-income families – the daily challenges and welfare gaps that they face. In the concluding section, the report proposes pathways for reduction of child poverty.

Every child has the right to express their opinion and be heard. If the goal is to improve the wellbeing of children and families, then the experiences of children must be given both a voice and sufficient space in decision-making processes.



## CHILDREN'S VOICE 2022

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Save the Children Finland 2022

# RESULTS OF THE CHILDREN'S VOICE SURVEY

## LACK OF INCOME LEADS TO UNEQUAL TREATMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES:

**85 %** of children felt that their family had challenges covering their expenses.

**71 %** of children don't get to go on holiday with their family because there isn't enough money.

**23 %** of children have had to give up a hobby.

## WELFARE GAPS ACCUMULATE IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES:

**47 %** of children are worried about their family's livelihood.

**42 %** of children rated their wellbeing as poor.

**9 %** of children liked themselves the way they are.

**55 %** of children felt that COVID-19 stole away years of their life.

**34 %** of children had experienced bullying.

## COMPLEX PATHS OUT OF POVERTY

**27 %** of children felt that their life is unstable.

**24 %** of children felt they don't get enough support from other people.

**22 %** of children in low-income families had not received the service they needed.

# CHILDREN'S VOICE 2022 SURVEY

The Children's Voice survey was carried out as an open online questionnaire at the end of May 2022. A total of 1,130 children and young people between the ages of 12 and 18 responded to the survey anonymously. The questions dealt with the children's everyday life, their family's financial situation, the children's wellbeing and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey also asked about social security and benefits and the children's knowledge and use of services and their service needs. To finish, they were asked about their thoughts for the future.

Most of the children who responded were secondary school children from different parts of Finland who lived in a two-child, middle-income nuclear family within an urban area. Just under half of the respondents felt that they belonged to one or more minority groups.

About one-half of the children who responded to the survey rated their wellbeing as high and their life situation as good, while around one-third of respondents said that their wellbeing was poor, that they did not receive support from other people, and that their life was unstable.

*"I've been diagnosed with various mental health problems."*

*"I often feel very depressed."*

About 10% of children defined their families as having a low income, and 85% of these families had problems covering their expenses. Out of all the children who responded, 27% thought their families had problems covering expenses. Children who defined themselves as being in a low-income family were more likely to live in rural areas and in either a one-parent family or one in which only one of their guardians was working.

Low incomes caused not only concrete deprivation in children's daily lives, but also welfare gaps and difficulties finding leisure-time activities.

*"Before going to the grocery store, we always have to think through beforehand how much each thing costs and work out how much it will add up to."*

*"Things have become much more stressful, and I have to cook meals that will last for several days."*

*"Vegetables and fruit have been cut out, because they are expensive and they easily go bad."*

*"We have to plan everything carefully and buy second-hand, but we manage."*

*"We don't have money for hobbies that aren't free."*

*"We can't go to the cinema or to events that you have to pay for."*

The wellbeing of both children living in low-income families and children belonging to minorities was clearly lower for all areas of mental wellbeing. They had experienced more bullying and negative feelings connected with their family's financial situation. Children from low-income families had made greater use of health and social services and had not coped as well with the COVID-19 pandemic.

*"We are afraid that there won't be enough money for everything."*

*"They pay for everything in my life, for my food and home. It feels like I'm a big burden to them."*

Among the survey respondents, low income was strongly associated with poorer overall wellbeing, and there were significant welfare gaps that extended into several areas of life. Similar results were obtained in the Children's Voice surveys of previous years.

*"I sometimes feel like disappearing or giving up because it seems like it would help others manage better ..."*

*"I feel anxious about everything, and most of all about not being able to be the person I want to be."*

The children and young people recognised well the social security benefits and services presented in the survey, and they also described how they had used the services and what their service needs are. They came up with ways to help families in a fragile financial situation through various forms of monetary and everyday support. The children expressed their hope that their opinions would be heard and taken into account in service development work.

*"Gift cards for grocery stores and money for clothes for my younger siblings and my mum."*

*"Money for mum to buy food."*

*"Some kind of help for buying petrol."*

*"Support for hobby equipment and for travel costs."*

*"That they would listen more to what children have to say."*

Looking to the future, the hopes and desires of children and young people centred around normal everyday things, studies, work, family and wellbeing, but also extended to larger topics such as peace and climate action.

*"To live the life I want to live"*

*"A daily life that I can handle"*



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING CHILD POVERTY

Based on the survey results, it is recommended that the diverse situations and challenges faced by families be given comprehensive consideration as part of efforts to reduce and prevent poverty in families with children. The wellbeing of low-income families should be supported through low-threshold services, and investments should particularly be made in the mental wellbeing of children and young people. Parents' access to employment should be supported and social security benefits should be developed in a child-oriented manner.

In addition to financial support, work should be done to enable practical help and support for families in everyday life. Services provided to families should be timely and sufficient. Service communications and access to services should be developed in such a way that the information reaches children and young people – via digital channels, for example. Particular emphasis should be placed on preventive, low-threshold services and on mental health services that respond to service needs.

Children and families should be given equal support in challenging life situations. Consideration should be given to the everyday challenges faced by diverse families and children belonging to minority groups. Within the service process, it is important to identify children belonging to minorities, to support and encourage them, to positively identify their needs and to ensure experiences of social inclusion. Services and social security should also be targeted precisely and comprehensively at the challenges faced by diverse families. Difficulties caused by societal changes and emergency conditions should be tackled quickly and services should be provided at the right time.

It is particularly important to pay attention to the voice of the children themselves. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees children strong rights to influence and be consulted on matters that affect them. The purpose of the Children's Voice survey is to enable children to express their opinions, to give them the opportunity to share about their lives and everyday experiences, and to offer adults child-oriented solutions for dealing with problems and shortcomings. Children's rights are realised when their opinion is heard and their perspective is taken into account.

*"That we would be taken seriously."*

All the information and materials related to the Children's Voice survey can be found at [pelastakaalapset.fi/lapsenaani](http://pelastakaalapset.fi/lapsenaani) (website in Finnish).





Save the Children Finland is a politically and religiously independent non-governmental organization founded in 1922, which fights for children's rights in order to immediately and permanently improve children's lives in Finland and all over the world.

[savethechildren.fi](http://savethechildren.fi)