

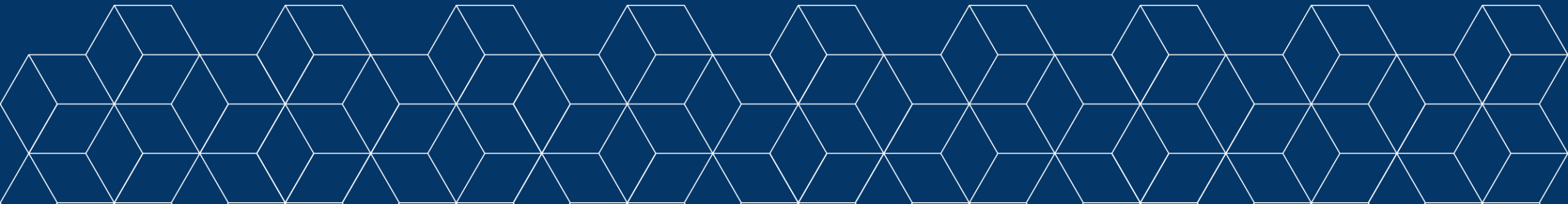
Risk and Protective Factors for Wellbeing and School Success among Italian and Migrant background Students

Paloma Vivaldi Vera, Giovanna Giuliano, Lucia Chiurco

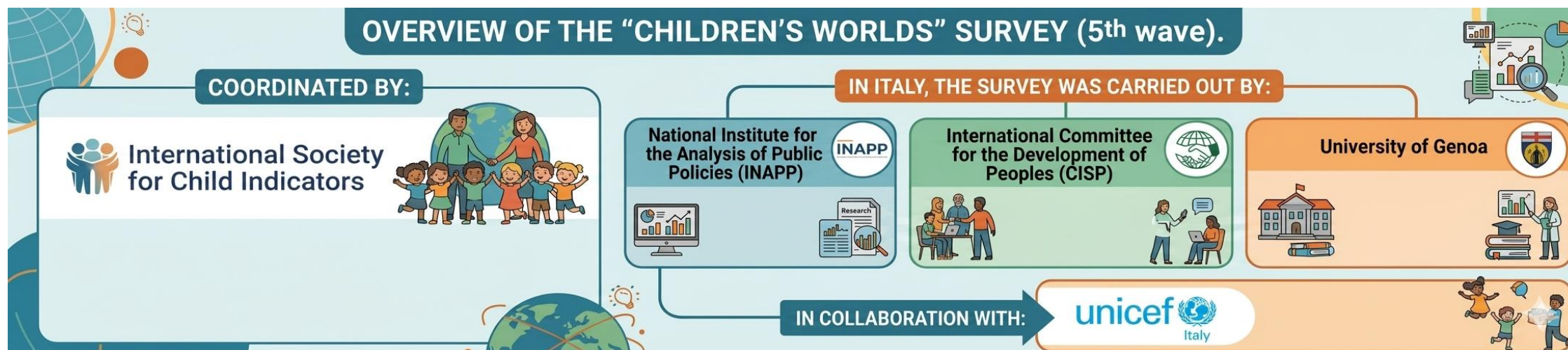
ISCI Conference 2026

Oregon State University Corvallis, Oregon, USA

June 30, 2026



INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI GENOVA

D3FOR Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione



ISTITUTO NAZIONALE PER L'ANALISI
DELLE POLITICHE PUBBLICHE



COMITATO INTERNAZIONALE
PER LO SVILUPPO DEI POPOLI



THE SAMPLE



4750

children and
pre-adolescents
in Italy



15

Italian regions
involved



41

Schools
involved

CHILD POPULATION OF THE STUDY



3,211

participants aged 10–14
(53.8% of 11–14 year olds
and 46.2% of 10 year olds),
including just 53 who are 14.

76%

natives:

native born with
both native parents.



24%

children with
a migrant background.

This group is composed by:



● **Native-born with at least
one foreign born parent
(2nd generation),
the majority**



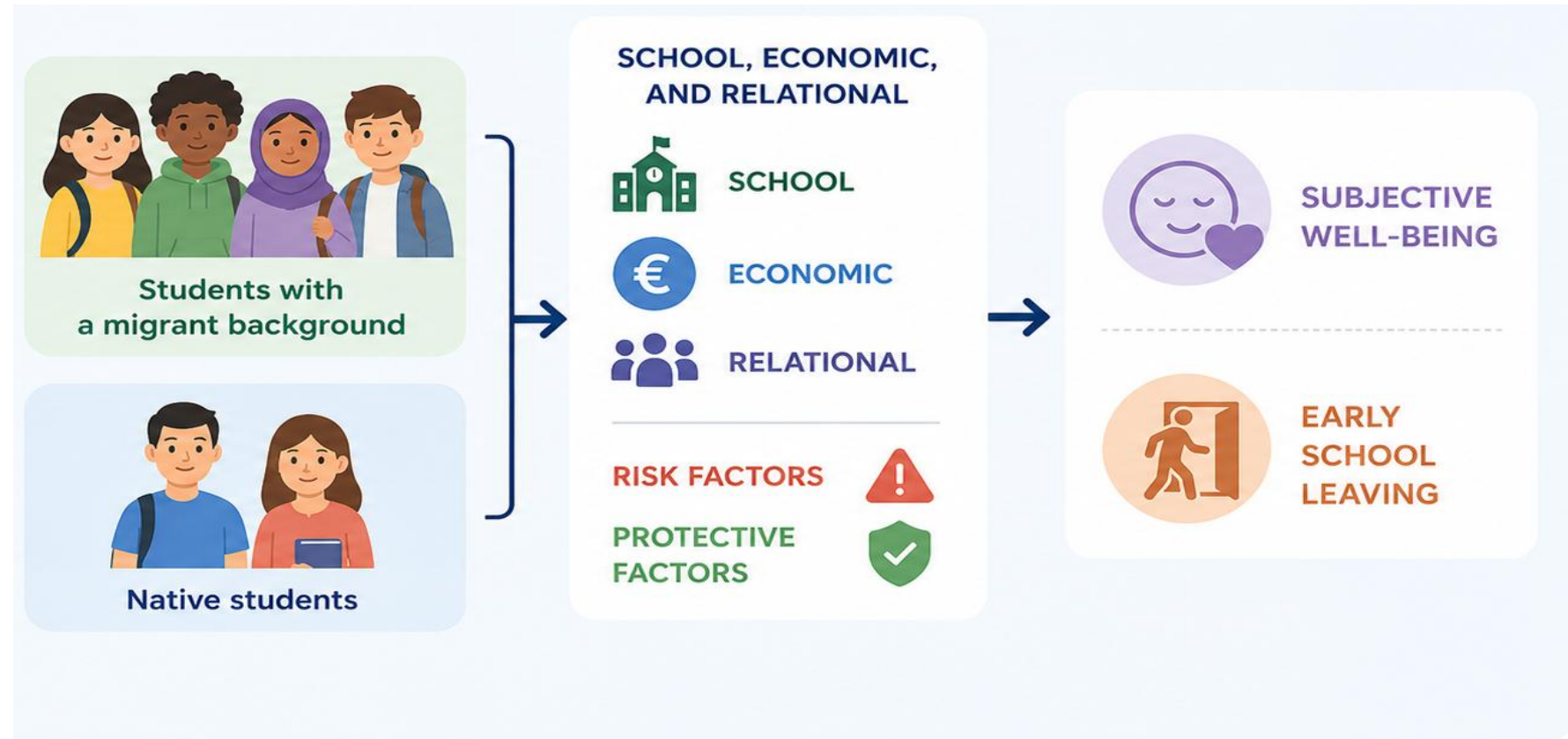
● **Foreign born
(1st generation)**

only 3%

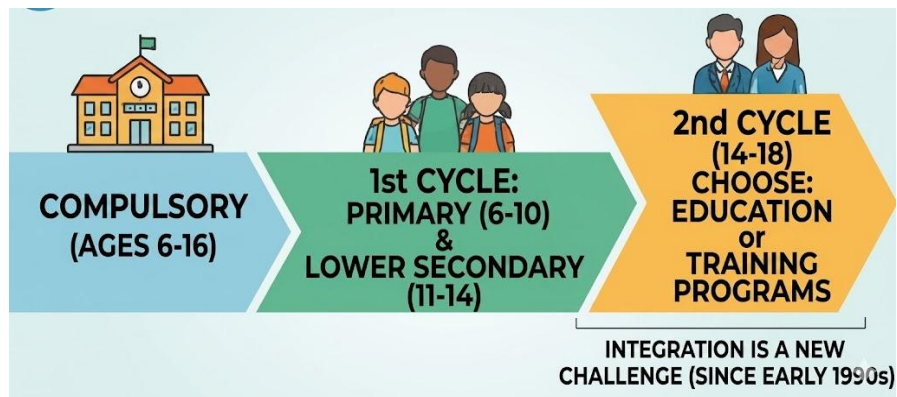


OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

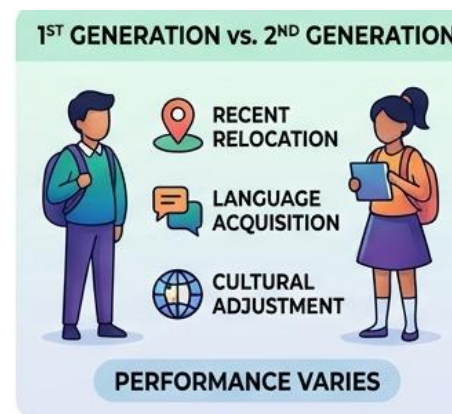
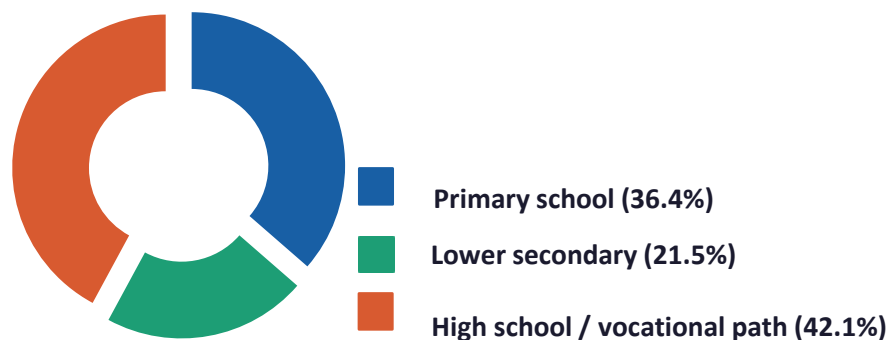
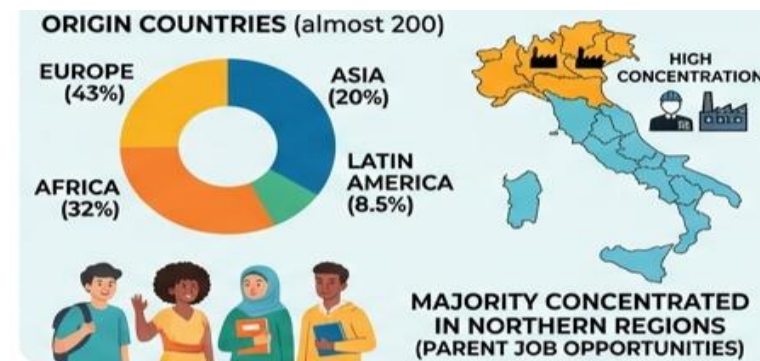
The study aims to examine differences in outcomes between students with a migrant background and native students across a range of school, economic, and relational indicators identified as risks or protective factors for early school leaving.



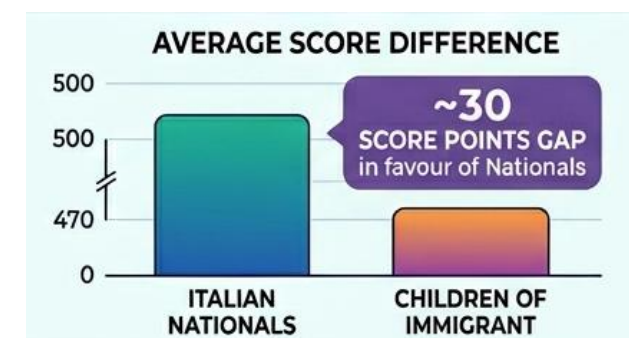
STUDENTS WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND IN THE ITALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM



930,000 foreign national students,
10.4% of the total school population
(ISMU 2026)



PISA 2022 (MATHEMATICS AND READING)

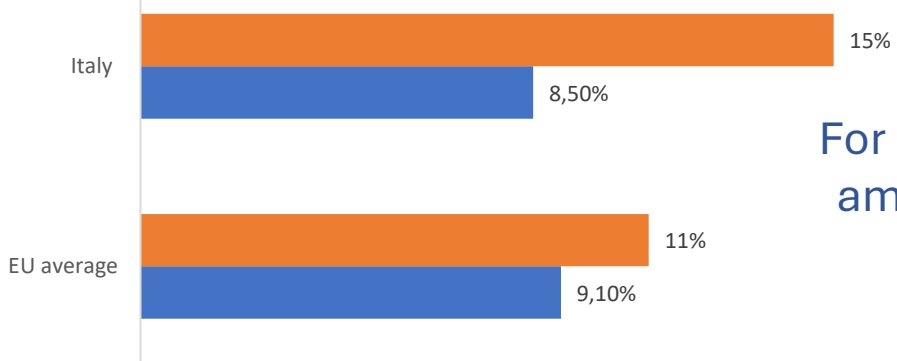


After accounting for students' socio-economic profile, not significant difference observed



EARLY LEAVERS AGED 18-24 FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ELET*)

2015 2025 (EUROSTAT 2026)

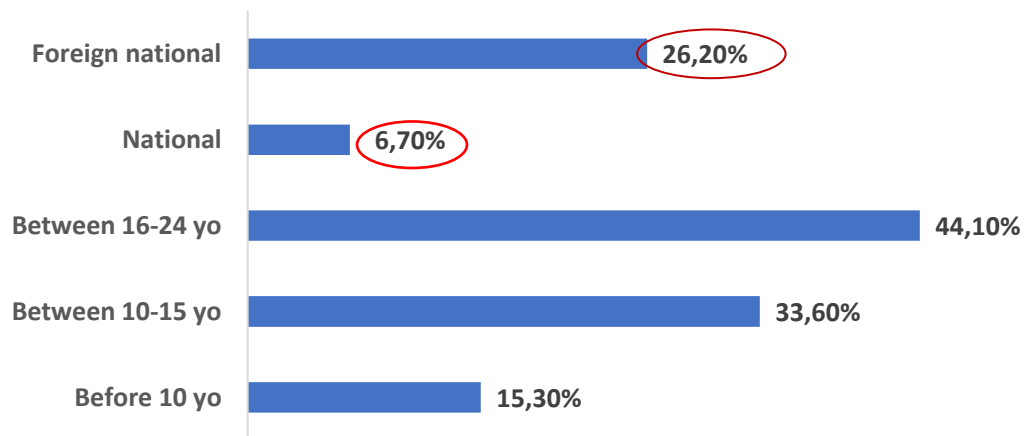


For decades, Italy consistently ranked among the worst countries in the EU (25% of Elet in 2000 in Italy)

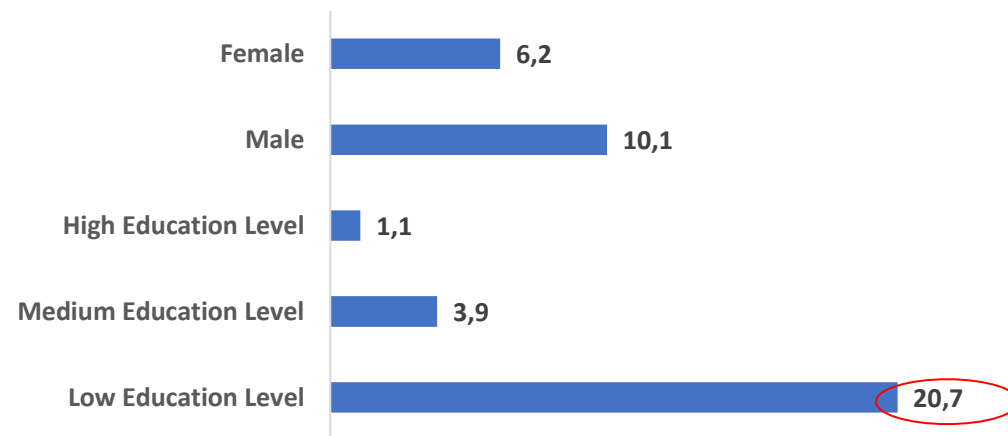
LIFELONG CONSEQUENCES



Early leavers by citizenship and time of arrival in Italy (%) (Istat 2026)



Early leavers by sex and parental educational attainment in Italy (%) (Istat 2026)



*The indicator ELET is expressed as a % of the people aged 18-24 who has completed, at most, lower secondary education out of the total population aged 18 to 24

PROTECTIVE AND RISK FACTORS: EVIDENCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON STUDENTS WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND ^(1/2)

1 SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (SWB) AS A DRIVER OF PERFORMANCE



- Feeling good at school and positive relationships with teachers and peers...
- ...boost motivation and engagement...
- ...leading to better academic achievement.

For students with a migrant background:



Well-being at school (relationships with teachers and peers) matters more than well-being at home, especially in middle school.

Due to the "double disadvantage" (socioeconomic and immigration), these students depend more on the quality of the school climate for:

 socialization

 self-esteem

 academic outcomes

2 PEER ACCEPTANCE AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Students with a migrant background are more exposed to:

- ✗ peer exclusion
- ✗ social isolation
- ✗ low acceptance in the class group

Being accepted by classmates is linked to:

- Lower intention to drop out of school
- Higher self-esteem
- Greater well-being at school
- Emotional support through multicultural friend networks

Peer acceptance at school acts as a protective factor for migrant students, counteracting low self-esteem and supporting their well-being.

3 DISCRIMINATION AND BULLYING: A NEGATIVE IMPACT



Experiences of discrimination and bullying are directly linked to:

- ↓ lower sense of security
- ↓ lower sense of belonging
- ↓ lower well-being at school
- ↓ poorer academic performance

The negative impact is statistically **stronger for foreign students** than for their native peers.



PROTECTIVE AND RISK FACTORS: EVIDENCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON STUDENTS WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND (2/2)

4. SENSE OF BELONGING

Students who feel part of their school generally demonstrate **better performance** and **higher self-esteem**.

FEELING PART OF SCHOOL

- ✓  Better academic performance
- ✓  Higher self-esteem
- ✓  Stronger relationships with peers and teachers
- ✓  Greater motivation and engagement



FEELING "OUT OF CLASS" OR ISOLATED

The perception of feeling "out of class" or isolated is one of the main emotional causes of:

- ✗ Low self-esteem
- ✗ Disengagement
- ✗ Delay and dropout



5. FAMILIES' SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

Families' socioeconomic disadvantage **negatively affects** students' learning outcomes and substantially **increases the risk** of school absenteeism and early school leaving.

RISK FACTORS LINKED TO LOWER OUTCOMES



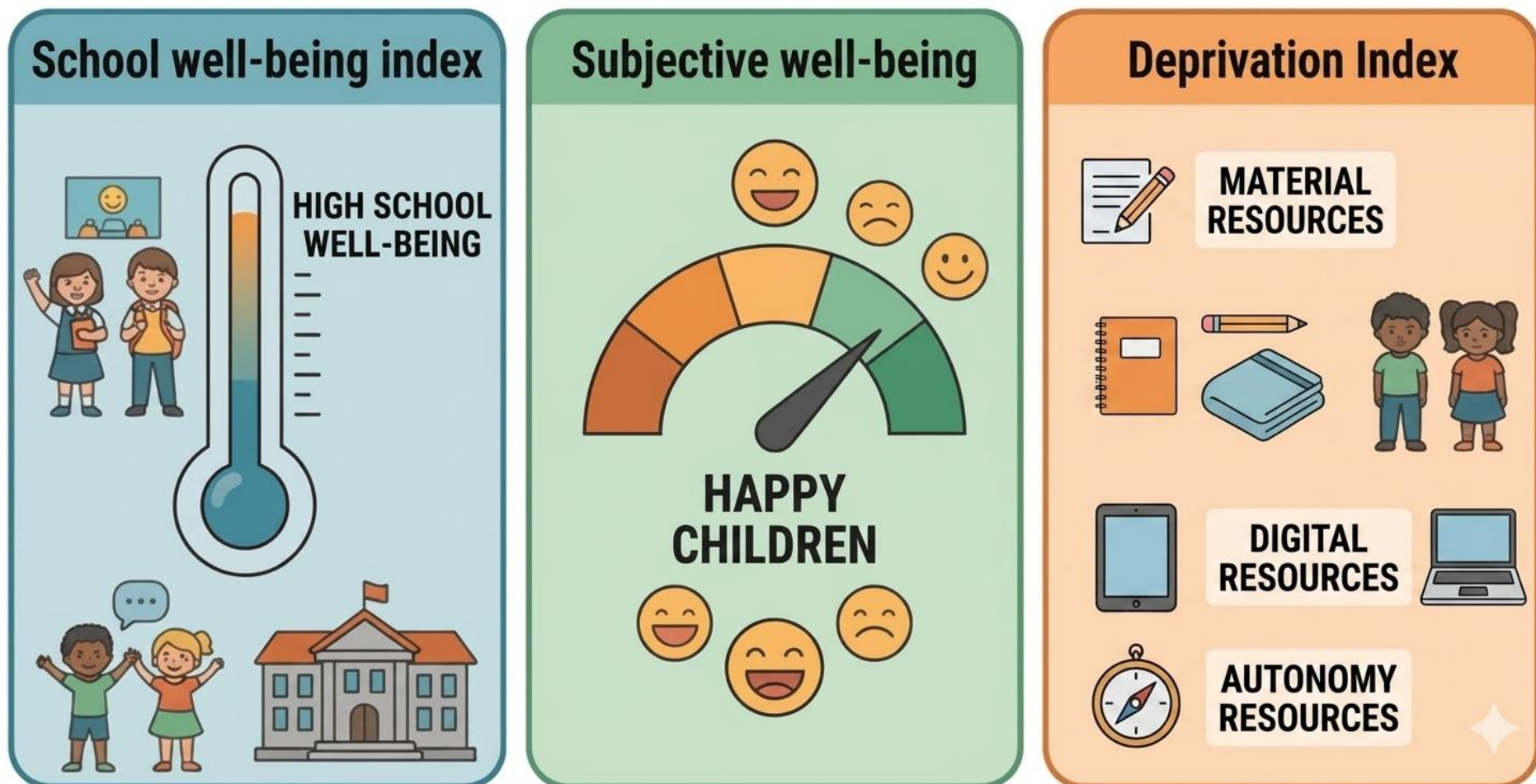
-  Lower parental education
-  Lower household income
-  Limited family resources

ASSOCIATED CONSEQUENCES

-  Poorer academic achievement
-  Reduced educational engagement
-  Higher risk of absenteeism and dropout



MAIN FINDINGS



SCHOOL WELL-BEING INDEX

COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOL WELLBEING INDEX

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE KEY FACTORS

1. SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL OUTCOMES



How satisfied are you with your life as a student?



How are your overall school outcomes (in all subjects)?



How satisfied are you with your school marks?



2. SCHOOL CLIMATE



How satisfied are you with your relationship with teachers?



How safe do you feel when you are at school?



If you have a problem at school do your teachers help you?



How satisfied are you with your classmates?



3. FEELING OF SAFETY & SECURITY



How often in the last month did other children hit you at school?



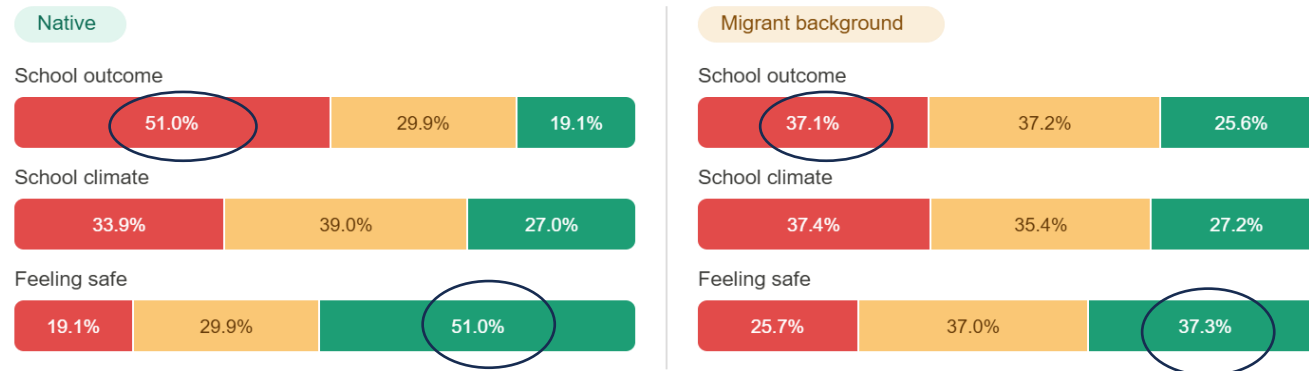
How often in the last month did other children call you unkind names in your school?



How often in the last month have you been left out by other children in your class?

SCHOOL WELL-BEING INDEX BY AGE AND BACKGROUND

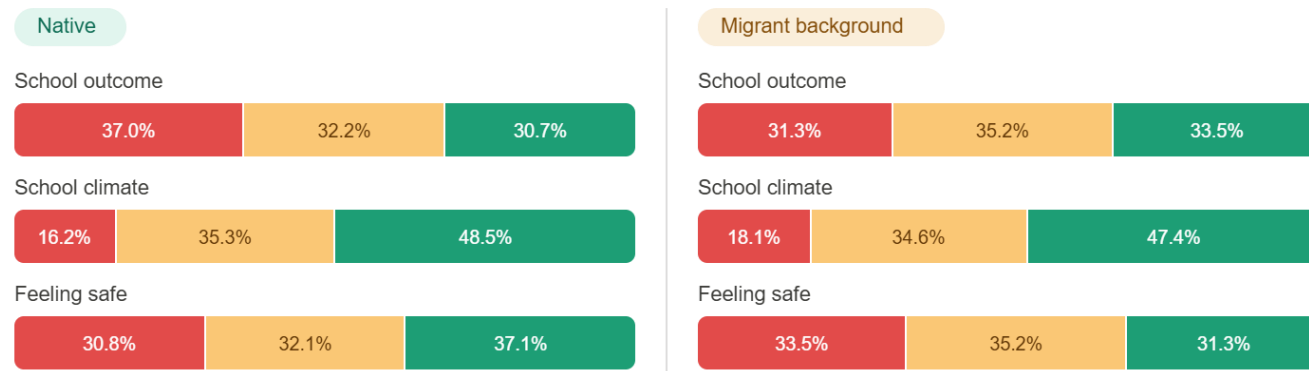
11–14 years old



Distribution across low / medium / high levels — Native vs Migrant background by age group

Low Medium High

10 years old



SCHOOL WELL-BEING INDEX BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA (11-14 YEARS OLD)



1. SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL OUTCOMES

NATIONAL (ITALY)

NATIVES



51%

at the
low level

MIGRANTS



37.1%

at the
low level

GAP

13.9
POINTS

WORST AREA FOR BOTH
MIGRANT-BACKGROUND
CHILDREN AND NATIVES:

NORTH WEST

42.8% vs 52%

at the low level



2. SCHOOL CLIMATE

WORST AREA: ISLANDS

NATIVES



43.9%

at the
low level

MIGRANTS



46.3%

at the
low level



BEST FOR MIGRANT-BACKGROUND CHILDREN:

CENTRE

39,6% vs 29,2%

at the high level



3. FEELING SAFE

SOUTH

NATIVES



15.7%

at the
low level

MIGRANTS



30.9%

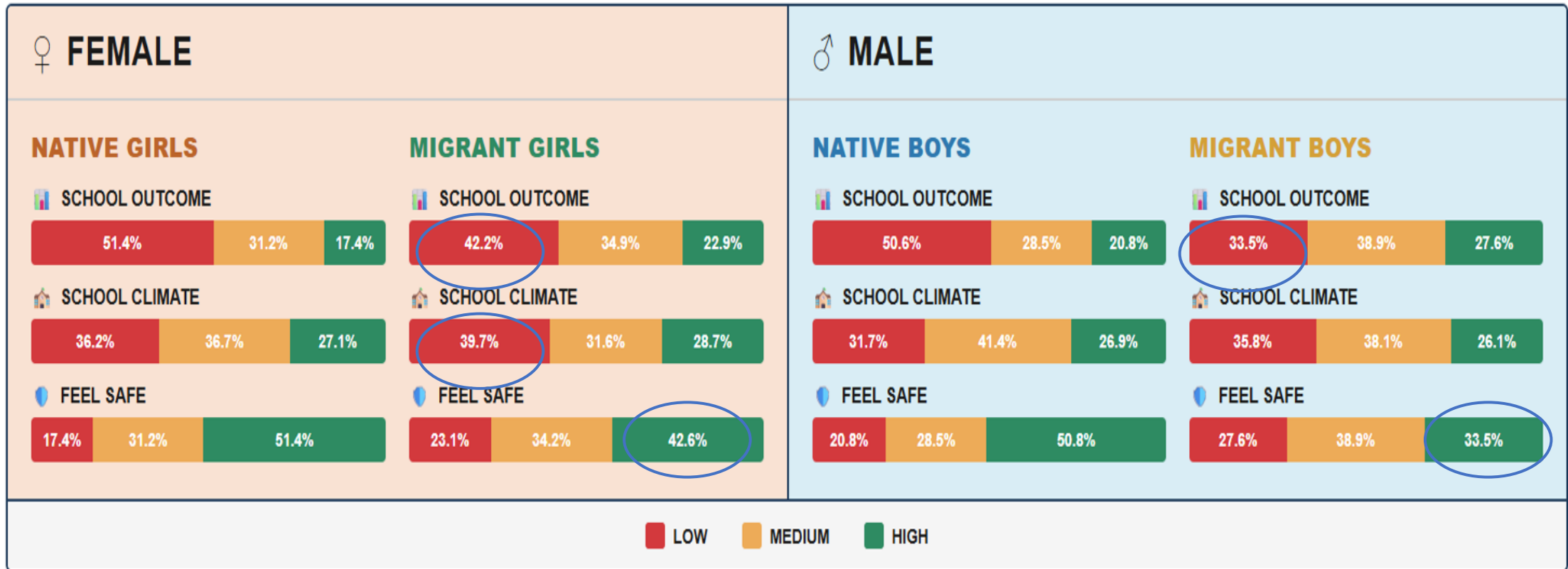
at the
low level

GAP

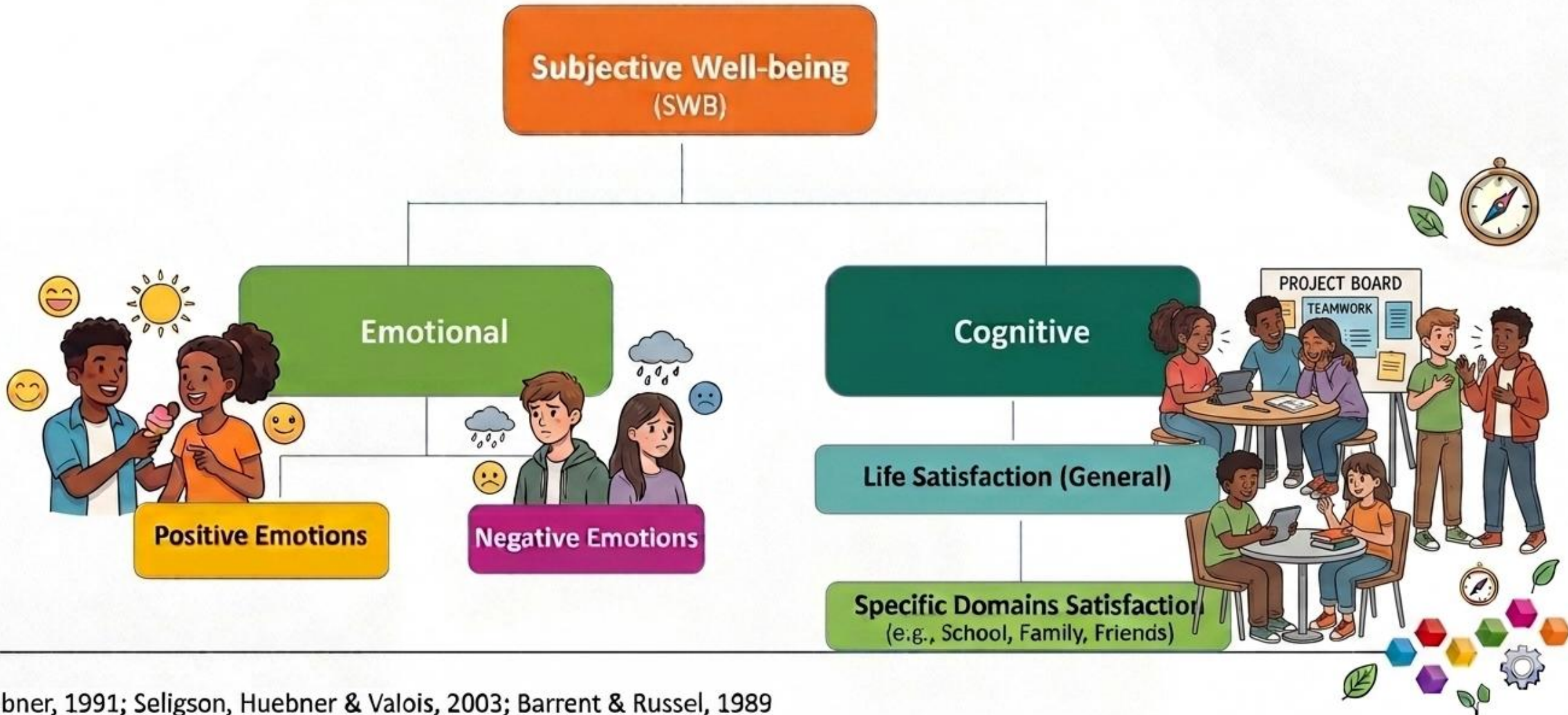
15.2
POINTS



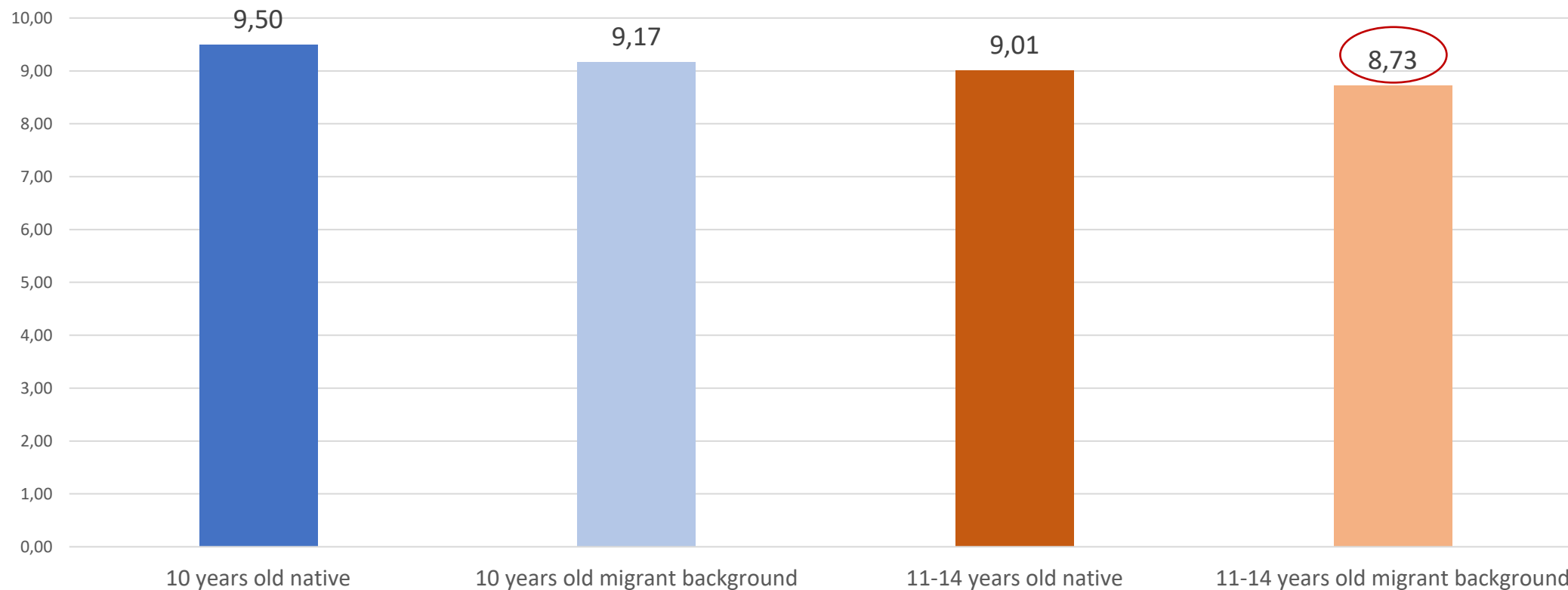
SCHOOL WELL-BEING INDEX BY SEX AND BACKGROUND (11-14 YEARS OLD)



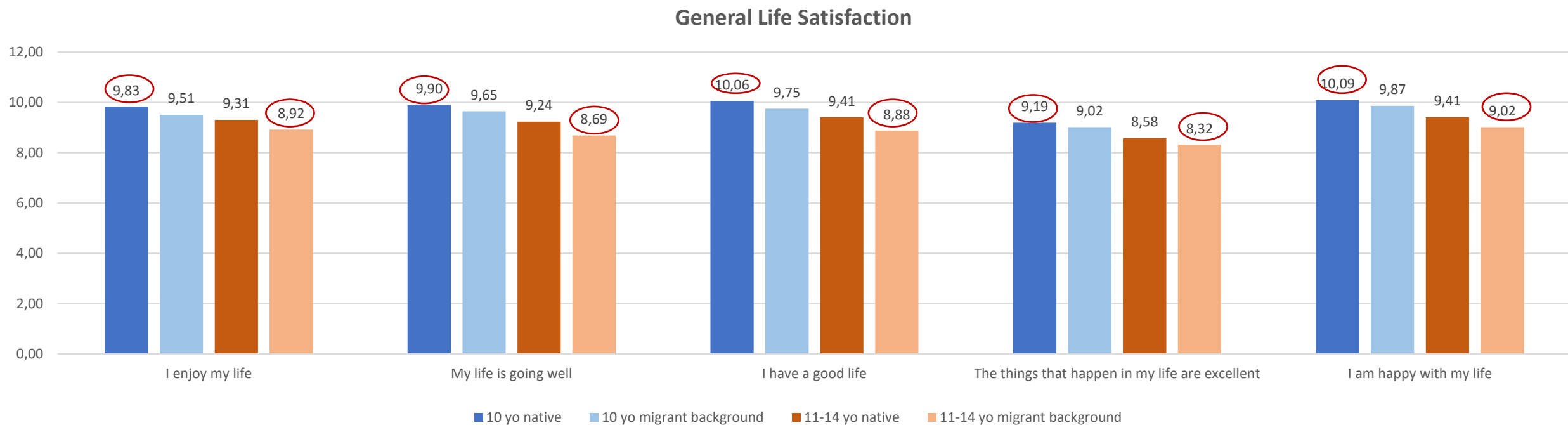
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING



GENERAL LIFE SATISFACTION BY AGE AND BACKGROUND (MEAN)



GENERAL LIFE SATISFACTION BY AGE AND BACKGROUND (MEAN)



LIFE SATISFACTION BY DOMAIN, AGE AND BACKGROUND (MEAN)

Domains		Bonds & material contexts — Stable				Relations & autonomy — Moderate						More critical areas		Overall
		Things I have	Family (people)	Home	Health	Friends	Safety	Freedom	Area I live in	Time use	Future	Life as student	Physical appearance	General life sat.
Native	11–14 yrs	10.2	10.1	10.2	9.8	9.8	9.7	9.4	9.3	9.1	9.3	8.6	8.3	9.01
Native	10 yrs	10.4	10.3	10.4	10.2	10.0	10.2	9.7	9.8	9.6	9.7	9.4	9.2	9.50
Migrant	11–14 yrs	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.6	9.5	9.5	9.0	8.9	8.8	9.0	8.2	8.2	8.73
Migrant	10 yrs	10.0	10.1	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.9	9.3	9.4	9.4	9.6	9.1	9.1	9.17
Domain avg (all groups)		10.1	10.1	10.1	9.9	9.8	9.8	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.4	8.8	8.7	9.10

CHILDREN'S LIFE DOMAINS — WELLBEING SCORES

Mean scores (0–10) by migration background and age group · 11–14 years old and 10 years old

Stable (avg ≥ 9.8) Moderate (avg 9.0–9.7) More critical (avg < 9.0)

Values: ■ ≥ 9.8 ■ 9.0–9.7 ■ < 9.0

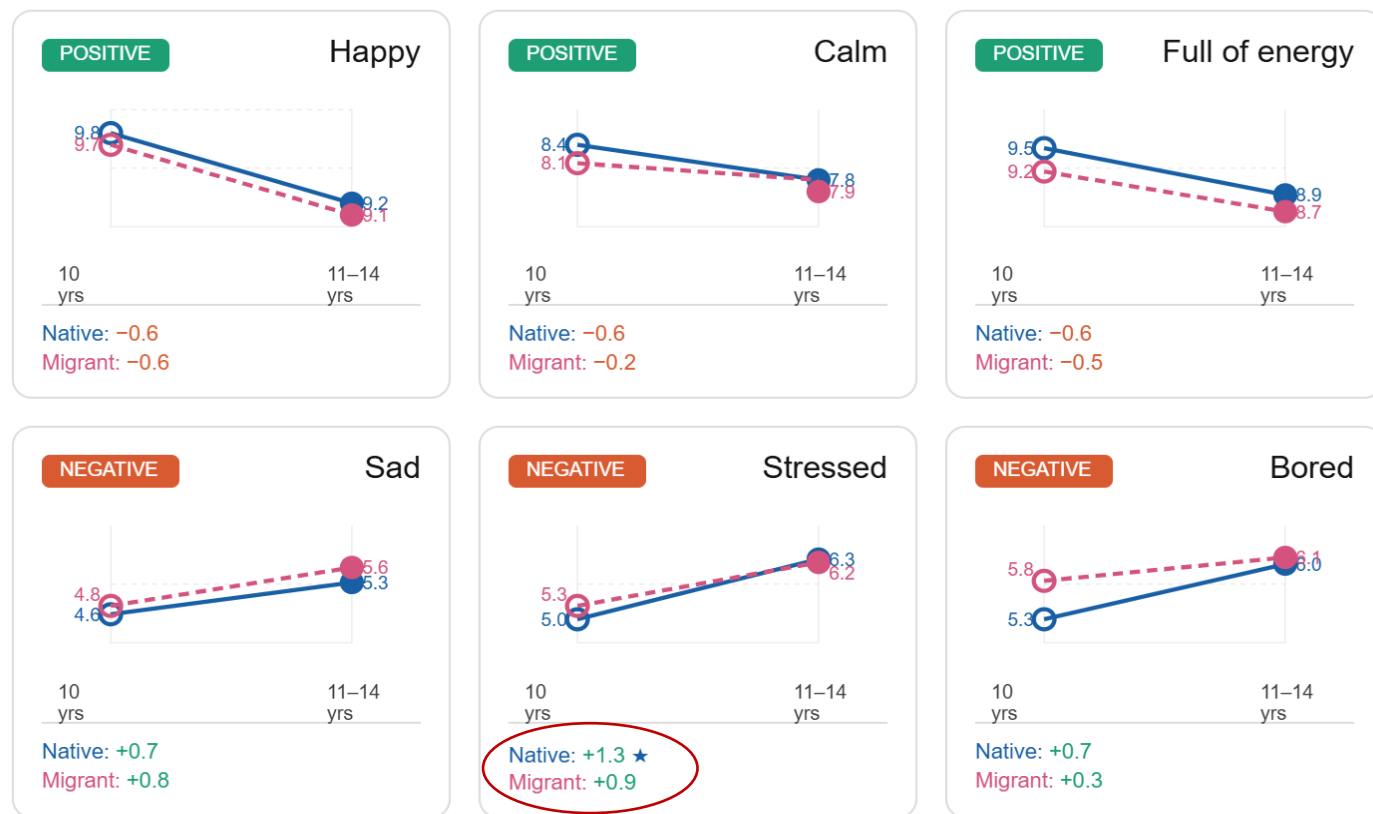


POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECTS BY AGE AND BACKGROUND

POSITIVE & NEGATIVE AFFECTS

Mean scores (0–10) · Native vs Migrant background · 10 years old → 11–14 years old

Native Migrant background ○ = 10 yrs ● = 11–14 yrs



DEPRIVATION INDEX

DEPRIVATION INDEX

UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

MATERIAL RESOURCES



Clothes in good condition



Two pairs of shoes in good condition



The equipment/things I need for school

DIGITAL RESOURCES



Access to a computer/tablet at home



Access to WiFi/internet at home



My own mobile phone

AUTONOMY RESOURCES



The equipment/things I need for sports and hobbies



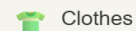
Pocket money/ money to spend on myself

DEPRIVATION INDEX

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Material deprivation index (0–4) by migration background and age group

Indicators included:



Clothes



Two pairs of shoes



School materials



Money for activities / trips

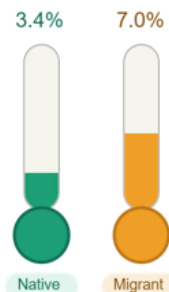
0 — not deprived 1 — lacking 1 good 2 — lacking 2 goods 3 — lacking 3 goods 4 — lacking all goods

BACKGROUND	AGE GROUP	NOT DEPRIVED (SCORE = 0)	SCORE 1	SCORE 2	SCORE 3	SCORE 4
Native background						
Native	11–14 years old	95.5%	3.8%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
Native	10 years old	96.6%	2.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%
Native — Total	All ages	96.0%	3.3%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%
Migrant background						
Migrant	11–14 years old	91.7%	6.6%	1.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Migrant	10 years old	93.0%	5.9%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%
Migrant — Total	All ages	92.3%	6.3%	0.9%	0.1%	0.3%
Overall (all backgrounds)						
All	11–14 years old	94.5%	4.5%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%
All	10 years old	95.8%	3.5%	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
TOTAL	All ages	95.1%	4.1%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%

Material deprivation

% deprived (score ≥ 1) · scale 0–15%

10 YEARS OLD



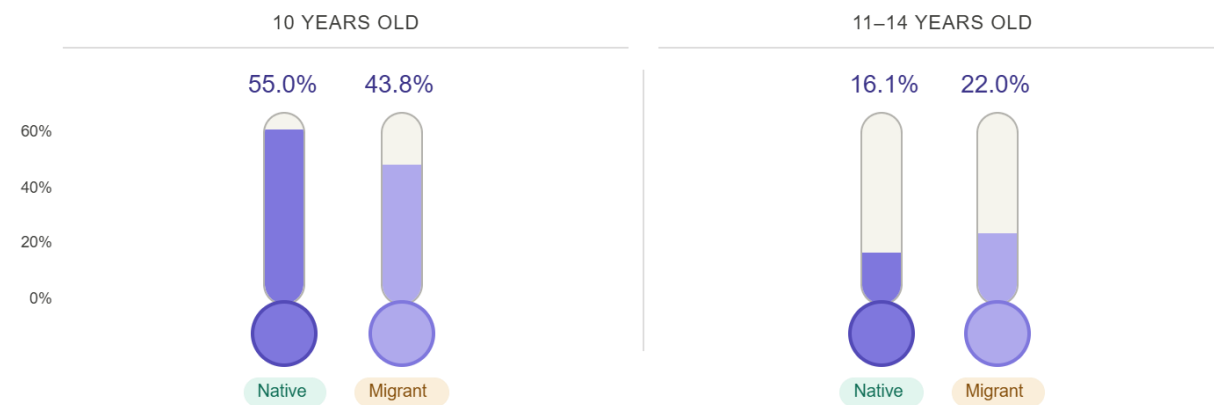
11–14 YEARS OLD



DEPRIVATION INDEX

Digital deprivation

% deprived (score ≥ 1) · scale 0–60%



DIGITAL RESOURCES

Digital deprivation index (0–3) by migration background and age group

Indicators included:

Computer

Internet connection

Smartphone

0 — not deprived 1 — lacking 1 good 2 — lacking 2 goods 3 — lacking all goods

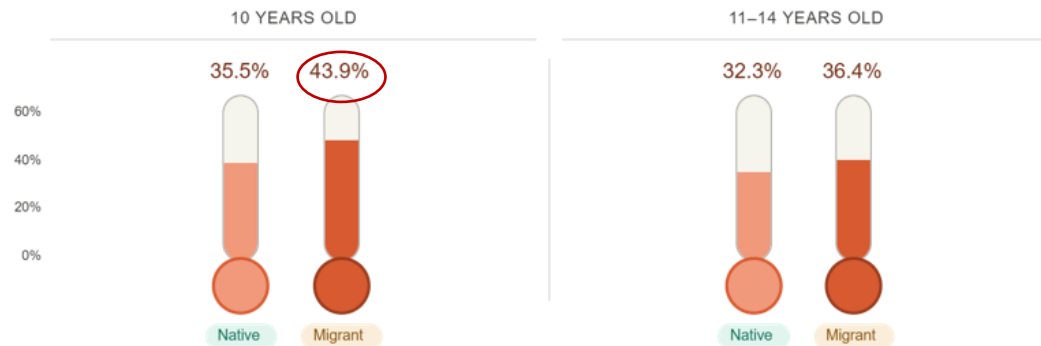
BACKGROUND	AGE GROUP	NOT DEPRIVED (SCORE = 0)	SCORE 1	SCORE 2	SCORE 3
Native background					
Native	11–14 years old	83.9%	14.8%	0.8%	0.5%
Native	10 years old	45.0%	48.2%	5.8%	0.9%
Native — Total	All ages	65.6%	30.5%	3.2%	0.7%
Migrant background					
Migrant	11–14 years old	78.0%	17.7%	4.1%	0.2%
Migrant	10 years old	56.2%	33.6%	8.8%	1.4%
Migrant — Total	All ages	68.4%	24.7%	6.2%	0.7%
Overall (all backgrounds)					
All	11–14 years old	82.4%	15.5%	1.7%	0.4%
All	10 years old	47.6%	44.9%	6.5%	1.0%
TOTAL	All ages	66.3%	29.1%	3.9%	0.7%



DEPRIVATION INDEX

Autonomy deprivation

% deprived (score ≥ 1) · scale 0–60%



AUTONOMY RESOURCES

Autonomy deprivation index (0–2) by migration background and age group

Indicators included:



Sports & hobby equipment



Pocket money

0 — not deprived 1 — lacking 1 good 2 — lacking all goods

BACKGROUND	AGE GROUP	NOT DEPRIVED (SCORE = 0)	SCORE 1	SCORE 2
Native background				
Native	11–14 years old	67.7%	29.9%	2.4%
Native	10 years old	64.5%	32.1%	3.3%
Native — Total	All ages	66.2%	31.0%	2.8%
Migrant background				
Migrant	11–14 years old	63.6%	30.9%	5.5%
Migrant	10 years old	56.1%	38.2%	5.7%
Migrant — Total	All ages	60.3%	34.1%	5.6%
Overall (all backgrounds)				
All	11–14 years old	66.7%	30.2%	3.2%
All	10 years old	62.6%	33.5%	3.9%
TOTAL	All ages	64.8%	31.7%	3.5%



PLACE TO STUDY AND VACATION

☐ Quiet place at home to study

Native · 11–14 yrs



Native · 10 yrs



Migrant · 11–14 yrs



Migrant · 10 yrs



Always Sometimes Never

☐ Family vacation in last 12 months

NATIVE · 11–14 YRS

Never	7.2%
Once	20.6%
Twice	25.7%
2+ times	46.6%

NATIVE · 10 YRS

Never	4.6%
Once	20.4%
Twice	25.6%
2+ times	49.5%

MIGRANT · 11–14 YRS

Never	7.6%
Once	24.4%
Twice	24.8%
2+ times	43.2%

MIGRANT · 10 YRS

Never	7.3%
Once	18.0%
Twice	22.7%
2+ times	52.0%

Never Once Twice 2+ times



MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, significant differences between groups are more tied to age than to background except for the deprivation Index. All indexes decline with age.
- **School wellbeing gender gap:** girls aged 11-14 of both groups show worse school wellbeing in all its components.
- **Subjective well-being:** migrant background children report lower general life satisfaction (especially in life as a student and physical appearance) and slightly higher negative affect, although the emotional component is more tied to age than to background.
- **Deprivation:** migrant background children are more deprived than their native peers, in all dimensions considered.

POLICY & RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

- **More specific research is needed** targeting immigrant and native students living in poverty.
- **Educational pacts** are needed to foster inclusion and shared responsibility.
- **Climate and safety:** School climate must be improved and relational safety strengthened through anti-bullying programmes and peer-support strategies.
- **Dropout prevention:** Early school leaving prevention policies are needed, with specific attention to risk and protective factors and to territorial differences.
- **International comparability:** further analysis within the Children's Worlds framework will allow international comparison.



THANK YOU!

RESEARCH GROUP: PALOMA VIVALDI VERA, GIOVANNA GIULIANO, LUCIA CHIURCO, MATTEO D'EMILIONE, SIMONA SPERINDÈ, ANTONELLO SCIALDONE

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: P.VIVALDI@INAPP.GOV.IT

