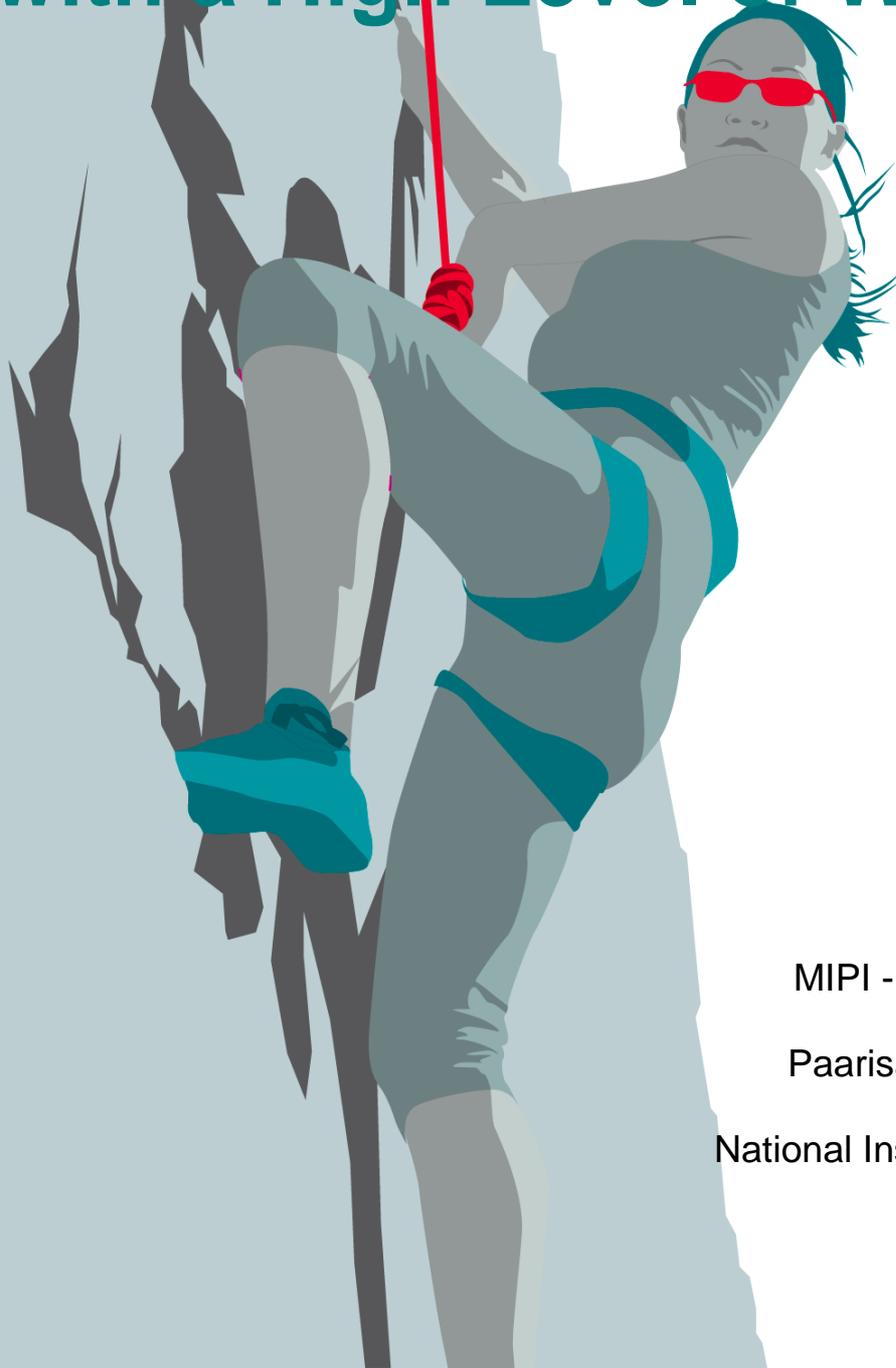
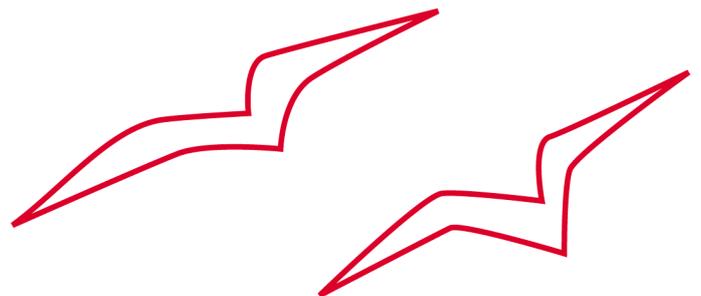


# Memorandum Concerning Youth with a High Level of Well-Being



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The memorandum is published in collaboration with MIPI – Documentation Centre on Children and Youth, Paarisa – Ministry of Health/Greenland Home Rule and National Institute for Public Health.

## **Memorandum Concerning Youth with a High Level of Well-Being**

During the years 2004 and 2005, the National Institute for Public Health Copenhagen, Denmark and Paarisa (Office of Health and Preventive Measures) carried out a study of the well-being of school-age children in seven towns in Greenland. The main findings are published in the report *Well-being of Youth in Greenland 2004-2005* by Tine Curtis et al., published by the Home Rule Authority's series of working papers of *INUSSUK - Greenlandic Research Journal* 2006:2. Subsequently, MIPI - Documentation Centre on Children and Youth, has ordered a more deep-going analysis of the data with special emphasis on suicidal behaviour, and what characterizes the youth with a high level of well being, and finally, the opinions of youth about what is needed in order for children to have better quality of life. This memorandum focuses on the youth with a high level of well-being and about the young people's own views about how to make a better life for children in Greenland. The study comprises 508 15-17-year-olds and individual 18-year-old school pupils from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grades, 231 boys and 277 girls. The young people answered an electronic questionnaire with Greenlandic and Danish text and speech.

### **Part 1. Comparisons of youth with a high and moderate level of well-being**

Up to now, focus has largely centred on the group of youth who don't thrive in Greenland. Seen from a preventive perspective, it is interesting to obtain more knowledge about what characterizes youth with a high level of well-being. An individual with a high level of well-being is in this paper defined as a person who has a positive view of his or her own life situation, who feels him-/herself to be in good spirit and full of energy within the foregoing four weeks. Thus, the following two questions are used to identify youth with a high level of well-being 'How much of the time have you felt yourself to be in good spirit and full of life within the last four weeks?' and 'How much of the time have you been full of energy within the last four weeks?' Participants who respond by saying 'all the time' or 'most of the time' for both questions are categorized as 'youth with a high level of well-being'. Participants who have utilized the remaining response possibilities are characterized as youth with a lower level of well-being. That is, participants who answered 'some of the time', 'a little of the time' and 'at no time' to the two questions, or those who answered 'all the time' or 'most of the time' to only one of the two questions, are classified as youth with a lower level of well-being. The point of departure for the analyses is the assumption that there is an as-

sociation between the level of well-being and several social, health and life-style-related variables. These 'independent variables' can be categorized in terms of seven themes:

<b>Social-demographic factors</b>	Ethnicity; Age; Parents' education.
<b>Upbringing factors</b>	Dwelling at age 10; Housing conditions (living with one or both parents); Conflicts with parents; Alcohol problems in the family.
<b>Social relations</b>	Currently has a boyfriend/girlfriend; Loneliness (to be alone even if you actually want to spend time with someone); Number of close friends; Spends time with classmates/friends outside school; Has someone to talk to about problems (parents, boyfriend/girlfriend, classmates/friends); Relations to classmates.
<b>Life-style factors</b>	Alcohol use; Number of times intoxicated; physical activity.
<b>School and leisure time</b>	Academic performance in school; Enjoy going to school; Outdoor activities; Leisure time activities; Goes out into nature.
<b>Traumatic experiences</b>	Suicide by classmate/boy- or girlfriend/good friend; Victim of violence; Broke up with boy- or girlfriend; Parents separated; Problems in school; Suicidal ideations; Attempts of suicide.
<b>Physical and mental health</b>	Self-rated health; Symptoms of depression; Body perception.

### Data analysis

The analyses were carried out separately for boys and girls. They primarily comprise several cross-tabulations between the above-mentioned 'independent' variables and well-being. The participants are divided into youth with a high level of well-being (N=244) and youth with a moderate level of well-being (N=242).

The data is analysed initially by cross-tabulations and tested for statistical significance using Pearson's  $\chi^2$ -test. The  $\chi^2$ -test measures the degree of association between the selected variables. When differences between the two groups of the youth are reported in the text, it means that a statistical test has revealed that the difference between the two groups is not a result of chance. On the basis of the cross-tabulations, certain selected variables have been chosen within each theme. These are part of a multivariate, logarithmic regression analysis of well-being with odds ratio (OR) as a measure of impact. The odds-ratio is a measure of the strength of association between the variables. Odds describe how many times one outcome occurs in relation to another outcome. If the variables are entirely independent of each other, the OR=1. The more the OR deviates from 1, the stronger the association between the variables. Where nothing else is men-

tioned, the associations mentioned in this report are significant at the 5% level of confidence  $P < 0.05$ ), which indicates a statistically certain difference between the groups.

In a cross-sectional study such as this, the statistical analyses say nothing of causal relations. In some cases, it is probable to assume that one of the aforementioned variables, e.g. few conflicts with the parents, is a contributory cause in the youth having a high level of well-being. In other cases, it is difficult to determine whether the 'independent' variable (a good self-rated health, for instance), is the cause of high level of well-being, whether a high level of well-being is the cause of the 'independent' variable, or whether there is a common underlying cause to both the 'independent' variable and well-being.

In the analyses, we have included those youth who have indicated that they have had thoughts of committing suicide or say that they have attempted suicide, even though it would have been expected that these youngsters thrives more badly. But the analysis shows that a portion of the youth with a high level of well-being may well have had thoughts of committing suicide or had attempted suicide. The explanation that some youth reporting a high level of well-being even though they have indicated thoughts of committing suicide or have attempted suicide could be that these responses deal with events farther back in time and thereby no longer have an impact on the youth's feeling of energy and well-adaptedness during the previous four weeks.

#### **Profile of the youth with a high level of well-being**

The survey data indicate that a large portion of Greenlandic youth consider themselves to be well-adjusted and full of energy, and can thus be considered a group of young people with a high level of well-being. Figure 1 shows the proportion of girls and boys with a high level of well-being in Greenland. Of these, 244 of them, corresponding to half the entire sample ( $n=486$ ) can be categorised as youth with a high level of well-being, of which 129 are boys (59%) and 115 girls (43%).

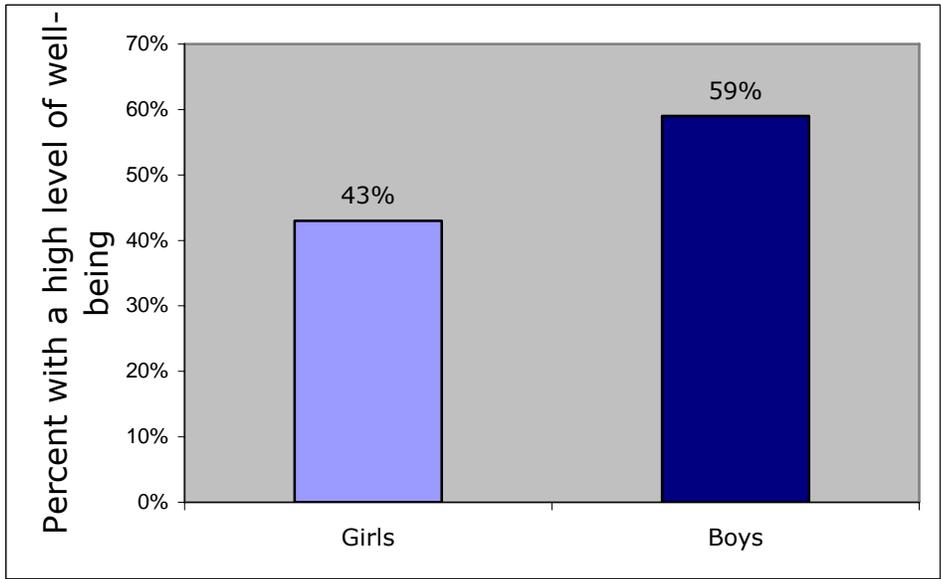


Figure 1: *Proportion of youth with a high level of well-being (percent).*

The association between having a high level of well-being and the selected 'independent' variables is illustrated in the tables below.

### Social-demographic factors

The young people's age and ethnic origins do not appear to have any association with their level of well-being. In relation to the parents' level of education, it appears that the mother's level of education has an association with the level of well-being among the girls ( $P < 0.022$ ) but not the father's. A similar pattern cannot be identified for the boys.

### Conditions of upbringing

Tables 1 and 2 show selected factors as indicators of upbringing conditions. The P-values of  $< 0.05$  indicate a statistically significant difference between groups of youth with a high and moderate level of well-being. The size of each group ( $n$ ) is also indicated.

Table 1: *Upbringing conditions for boys. Percentage indicating upbringing conditions among boys with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being ( $n=129$ )	Moderate level of well-being ( $n=90$ )	P-value
Have many conflicts with parents	25.6	28.9	0.587
Alcohol problems in the family	48.4	65.9	0.011

Table 2: *Upbringing conditions for girls. Percentage indicating upbringing conditions among girls with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being ( $n=115$ )	Moderate level of well-being ( $n=152$ )	P-value
Have many conflicts with parents	20.9	42.8	0.000
Alcohol problems in the family	66.1	69.7	0.526

For the boys, there appears to be a correlation between alcohol problems in the family and level of well-being. Nearly half the boys with a high level of well-being reported alcohol problems in the family (48%), increasing to 66% among boys classified as having a moderate level of well-being. Among the girls, the proportion experiencing alcohol problems in the family is high for girls with both high and moderate levels of well-being (66% and 70%), and it is not possible to identify any difference between the two groups. However, there is a correlation among the girls between the number of conflicts in the home and level of well-being. A larger proportion of girls with a moderate level of well-being have conflicts with their parents (43%) than do girls with a high level of well-being (21%). It appears that level of well-being is linked to differences in whether or not the young people have lived in an outlying settlement or in a town at age 10. Living together with both parents or living with one of the parents does not show any correlation with level of well-being of the youth.

## Social relations

Tables 3 and 4 show the factors, which have been chosen as indicators of the young people's social relations.

Table 3: *Social relations among the boys. Percentage with reported social relations among boys with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=129)	Moderate level of well-being (n=90)	P-value
Have two or more close friends	96.1	83.1	0.001
Get along well with classmates	85.3	76.4	0.096
Find it easy to talk with friends	85.0	85.9	0.856
Find it easy to talk with parents about problems	81.6	80.5	0.854
Sometimes or often feel lonely	23.0	37.1	0.025
Currently have a girlfriend	31.9	31.3	0.927
Spend more than one day a week with classmates or friends	90.6	83.0	0.094
Find it easy to talk with my girlfriend about problems	74.0	83.3	0.225

Table 4: *Social relations among the girls. Percentage with reported social relations among girls with high and moderate levels of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=115)	Moderate level of well-being (n=152)	P-value
Have two or more close friends	88.5	86.7	0.658
Get along well with classmates	77.9	72.0	0.279
Find it easy to talk with friends about problems	93.5	85.5	0.045
Find it easy to talk with parents about problems	77.4	58.3	0.002
Sometimes or often feel lonely	33.0	54.4	0.001
Currently have a boyfriend	36.0	41.4	0.385
Spend time with classmates or friends more than once a week	79.6	79.3	0.950
Find it easy to talk with boyfriend about problems	87.8	69.0	0.005

For both girls and boys, there is an association between feelings of loneliness (to be alone even if you actually want to spend time with someone) and level of well-being. Over half of (54%) the girls with a moderate level of well-being feel lonely occasionally or often, versus only a third of the girls with a high level of well-being (33%). For the boys, the proportions are 37% for boys with a moderate level of well-being and nearly one-fourth (23%) for boys with a high level of well-being. For girls, we can also identify an association between well-being and whether they feel able to talk about their problems with parents, boyfriends and friends. The vast majority of girls (94%) reporting a high level of well-being find it easy to speak to their friends, 77% indicate that they find it easy to talk with their parents about problems, and 88% of the girls with a high level of well-being find it easy to talk with their boyfriends. This is not the case for the boys. For the boys it appears that the number of close friends is associated with level of well-being. A significantly

greater proportion of boys with a high level of well-being (96%) have two or more close friends than do boys with a moderate level of well-being (83%). There appears to be no association between the level of well-being and the youth's relations with their classmates, nor whether they see their classmates and friends often, nor whether they have a girlfriend.

## Life-style factors

Tables 5 and 6 shows the factors selected as indicators of the youth's life-style.

Table 5: *Life-style factors for boys. Percentages with reported life-style factors among boys with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=129)	Moderate level of well-being (n=90)	P-value
Drink alcohol more than once a week	15.7	13.3	0.900
Have been intoxicated more than three times	27.0	33.3	0.370
Exercise at least once a week	78.7	60.2	0.003

Table 6: *Life-style factors for girls. Percentage with reported life-style factors among girls with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=115)	Moderate level of well-being (n=152)	P-value
Drink alcohol more than once a week	13.0	17.8	0.062
Have been intoxicated more than three times	11.8	20.7	0.056
Exercise at least once a week	54.8	41.7	0.035

For both boys and girls, we can observe an association between physical activity habits and level of well-being. A large proportion of boys categorized as having a high level of well-being (79%) exercise each day or at least once a week, while this is the case with only 60% of the boys with a moderate level of well-being. For the girls, just over half of those with a high level of well-being are physically active more than once a week, compared to 42% among girls with a moderate level of well-being. There is no difference between the youth with a high level of well-being and other youth in terms of smoking and alcohol habits. Among the girls, however, there is a tendency for an association between level of well-being and number of times intoxicated. One-fifth (21%) of girls with a moderate level of well-being reported being intoxicated over three times, compared to 12% among those girls with a high level of well-being.

### School and leisure time activities

Tables 7 and 8 shows selected factors indicating factors in the youth's school and leisure time activities.

Table 7: *School and leisure time for boys. Percentages with reported school and leisure time factors among boys with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=129)	Moderate level of well-being (n=90)	P-value
Go fishing/hunting often or occasionally	34.1	29.2	0.447
Go out into the nature often or occasionally	35.7	34.8	0.900
High academic performance in school	65.1	44.9	0.003
Enjoy going to school	80.5	64.0	0.007

Table 8: *School and leisure time for girls. Percentage with reported school and leisure time factors among girls with a high and moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=115)	Moderate level of well-being (n=152)	P-value
Go fishing/hunting often or occasionally	11.5	10.7	0.830
Go out into the nature often or occasionally	40.2	38.3	0.753
High academic performance in school	66.4	48.0	0.003
Enjoy going to school	81.4	72.0	0.077

The academic performance in school and good feelings about going to school seem to be correlated with the youth's level of well-being. Hence, 66% of girls and 65% of the boys having a high level of well-being has a high and very high academic performance in school, compared to less than half of those with a moderate level of well-being. Furthermore, there is an association between the extents to which the youth like going to school and the level of well-being for the boys. For the girls, it is only tendency. Over three-fourths of boys and girls reporting a high level of well-being (81%) indicate that they 'enjoy going to school' or 'very much enjoy going to school'.

Boys with a high level of well-being are more likely to participate in a sports club, jog, bicycle and skiing. Girls with a high level of well-being tend to read more in their leisure time and watch less television and videos than girls with a moderate level of well-being. There is a significant correlation between level of well-being and the above-mentioned leisure time activities.

### Traumatic experiences

Tables 9 and 10 show the factors, which have been selected as expressions of traumatic experiences to which the young people have been subjected.

Table 9: *Traumatic experiences among boys. Percentage reporting disturbing experiences among boys with a high and a moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=129)	Moderate level of well-being (n=90)	P-value
Girlfriend, mate or good friend has committed suicide	37.2	45.6	0.216
Have had suicidal ideations	16.3	25.6	0.109
Have attempted suicide	8.5	14.4	0.168
Subjected to violence	11.6	7.8	0.351
Have problems at school	11.6	6.7	0.220
Broke up with girlfriend	26.4	21.1	0.373
Parents have separated	4.7	12.2	0.039

Table 10: *Traumatic experiences among girls. Percentage reporting disturbing experiences among girls with a high and a moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=115)	Moderate level of well-being (n=152)	P-value
Boyfriend, mate or good friend has committed suicide	35.7	41.4	0.336
Have had suicidal ideations	40.9	59.9	0.002
Have attempted suicide	21.7	42.1	0.000
Subjected to violence	3.5	17.8	0.000
Have problems at school	2.6	15.8	0.000
Broke up with boyfriend	31.3	42.1	0.071
Parents have separated	3.5	12.5	0.009

For both girls and boys, there is an association between their level of well-being and having had parents who separated. Relatively fewer of the youth with a high level of well-being have parents who have separated compared to those with a moderate level of well-being. Only among the girls we find an association between well-being and problems at school, exposure to violence and attempts at suicide or suicidal ideations. Girls with a high level of well-being have fewer problems at school and have been less subjected to violence. Furthermore, the data indicate that the proportion of girls with a high level of well-being who have contemplated or attempted suicide is lower than for the other girls, but still noticeably high for the high-level group. This can be explained by the fact that the youth were surveyed about their level of well-being within the foregoing four weeks, while questions regarding suicidal thoughts or attempts at suicide covered any time in the past. A larger share of both girls and boys with a lower level of well-being have had the experience of a boy-/girlfriend, mate or good friend having committed suicide than youth with a high level of well-being, but the difference is not statistically significant.

## Physical and mental health

Tables 11 and 12 describe the factors chosen as indicators of the youth's physical and mental health.

Table 11: *Physical and mental health among boys. Percentages with reported factors for physical mental health among boys with a high and a moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=129)	Moderate level of well-being (n=90)	P-value
Good self-rated health	79.1	54.4	<0.001
View of body as acceptable	67.2	60.0	0.122
Low score on the depression scale (0-2 symptoms)	53.8	53.6	0.545

Table 12: *Physical and mental health among girls. Percentage with reported factors for physical and mental health among girls with a high and a moderate level of well-being.*

	High level of well-being (n=115)	Moderate level of well-being (n=152)	P-value
Good self-rated health	67.0	47.4	0.001
View of body as acceptable	59.1	52.0	0.033
Low score on depression scale (0-2 symptoms)	45.9	18.0	<0.001

The analyses show that well-being is associated with how the young people rate their health. Hence, 79% of the boys and 67% of the girls with a high level of well-being rate their health as good or very good. Only among the girls do we observe an association between well-being and view of the body. About an equal proportion of girls with a high or moderate level of well-being (59% and 52%) view their bodies as acceptable. The same is true for the boys (67% and 60%). For girls classified as having a high level of well-being, about a fourth (24%) describe themselves as 'slightly fat' or 'much too fat', compared to 36% of the girls in the group with a moderate level of well-being.

A smaller proportion of girls with a high level of well-being have symptoms of depression compared to those with a moderate level of well-being. This correlation is strongly significant. Among boys, there is no significant difference regarding levels of reported symptoms of depression with either a high or moderate level of well-being.

The analyses indicate that nearly half the young people experience a high level of well-being, slightly more boys than girls.

Common features shared among the youth with a high level of well-being are that they experience feelings of loneliness less often than those with a moderate level of well-being, that they exercise

more frequently, and that a greater proportion rate their health as good or very good. Furthermore, a greater proportion of the youth with a high level of well-being manage well in school and there are fewer of them whose parents have separated. Among the girls, those with a high level of well-being find it easier to talk with their friends, boyfriends and parents. They also experience fewer conflicts in the home, and fewer problems in the school. Furthermore, girls with a high level of well-being have fewer suicidal ideations, fewer actual attempts at suicide and fewer experiences of being subjected to violent abuse. For the girls, we can also observe an association between their body perception and level of well-being, and there are relatively more girls with a moderate level of well-being who feel that they are a bit too fat. Among boys, a higher proportion of those with a high level of well-being have more close friends, enjoy school and have fewer alcohol problems in their families than boys with a moderate level of well-being.

On the basis of the above, it is not possible to conclude that there is a causal association between the independent variables investigated and the level of well-being, but the cross-tabulations create the background for a further investigation of the variables which have shown significant associations with well-being.

### Analysis using several explanatory variables

A multivariate statistical analysis was carried out in order to investigate the association between level of well-being and several variables which enter into the model at the same time. The table below shows which variables have been selected for analysis. They have been chosen on the background of significant associations in the cross-tabulations for boys and girls, respectively.

Table 13: *Explanatory variables which have been selected for multivariate analysis.*

Boys	Experienced that their parents have separated Self-rated health Alcohol problems in the family Feeling lonely Exercising High academic performance in school Symptoms of depression
Girls	Experienced that their parents have separated Self-rated health Easy to talk with parents and friends Loneliness Exercising High academic performance in school Suicidal ideations or attempted suicide Symptoms of depression

Table 14 shows the final statistical model for the association between the selected variables and level of well-being for, respectively, boys and girls. A P-value of <0.05 indicates whether the association is statistically significant, and a 95% level of confidence indicates the uncertainty of the estimate (OR).

Table 14: *Factors of significance for a high level of well-being among boys.*

	OR	P-value	Range of confidence interval
Good self-rated health	2.9	0.001	1.56 – 5.45
Exercise every day or at least once a week	2.3	0.011	1.21 – 4.26
Not feeling lonely	1.9	0.041	1.03 – 3.69

The table shows that what is significant for the boys' level of well-being is to have a good self-rated health, to exercise regularly and not feeling lonely. Furthermore, there is a not-significant tendency that high academic performance in school and absence of alcohol problems at home are important for the level of well-being. The remaining variables do not show themselves to be significant when these variables are inserted into the model.

For girls, it appears that when symptoms of depression are incorporated into the model, the remaining factors become insignificant. Symptoms of depression have such a strong association

with level of well-being that the two variables can be seen as indicators of the same thing, and depression will therefore mask the significance of other variables. We have therefore chosen to exclude depression from the multivariate analysis.

Table 15: *Factors of significance for a high level of well-being among girls.*

	OR	P-value	Confidence interval
Parents have not separated from each other	3.4	0.035	1.09 – 10.76
Not feeling lonely	2.1	0.011	1.18 - 3.59
Good self-rated health	1.9	0.023	1.09 – 3.30
Easy talking to parents	1.8	0.048	1.01 – 3.39

It seems that family life has greater importance for girls than for boys. It have great importance for the girls' level of well-being that their parents are living together, while the experience of not feeling lonely, good self-rated health and being able talk to parents are also of an essential importance.

It is important to be aware that these statistical models do not represent the one and only truth. The models are in accordance with data, but other models containing other explanatory variables could also be in accordance with data. This means that there can be other factors of importance for well-being.

## **Part 2. What is needed in order for the children to feel better? A qualitative analysis of the young people's own statements.**

This section discusses what the youth in Greenland believe is necessary in order to improve children's level of well-being. It provides insights into the youth's own experiences, attitudes and thoughts. The section is based upon the responses of 426 young people to the question, 'What do you think is needed in order for children to get a better life?' which makes up part of the survey on 'Well-being among the Eldest School Pupils in Greenland'. As mentioned, 508 schoolchildren participated in the study, and the 426 who responded to the question make up 84% of this sample. In North Greenland, only 7% of the young people did not answer any of the two questions, in Nuuk it was 12% and in South Greenland it was 10%, whereas in East Greenland the proportion of those not answering was 36%. The majority of those who did not answer the questions were 15-16-year-olds. Sixteen percent of the boys and 9.4% of the girls did not answer the questions.

### **Methodological approach**

A qualitative approach is used in the analysis of the young people's responses, and the results will therefore reflect a subjective interpretation. Two persons have read the answers independently. During the reading, several categories have been identified in the text, which cover the young people's different statements and thereby provide an overview of the youth's answers. Following an operationalization of the categories was carried out whereby the content of the individual categories has been elaborated. The categories were then discussed and revised, and the text responses were coded on the basis of the final categories. The majority of the responses were written in Greenlandic and were then translated into Danish. The quotations included in this section have been corrected for language, where it was necessary to facilitate comprehension, but the content remains otherwise unchanged.

### **General considerations**

The question has been asked in such a way that the youth have had the possibility to answer the question without being limited by already fixed responses. The youth came to the study with many ideas about what is needed in order for children to have a better life. Many of the responses are long and detailed, and it is clear that the youth have reflected upon their answers. Common to many of the responses is a special value placed on the family. Many of the youth connect a good life with a good family life. And some of what characterizes good family life is time for each other, community, security, respect, love, attentiveness, consideration, openness, responsibility and setting limits on improper behaviour.

The responses of the young people regarding what is needed for children to have a better life can be divided into the following themes:

- Don't know responses
- Help for parents with their abuse
- Focus on family life
- Role of society
- Openness and dialogue among children and adults
- Places to meet outside school
- Schooling and future opportunities

#### **'Don't know' responses**

Some of the responses begin with 'I don't know', 'I believe', 'I think', 'Maybe', or 'It is difficult to answer because I don't feel bad'. Such responses are evidence of the fact that some of the young people's responses are an expression for ideas and attitudes rather than being based on concrete knowledge or experience. These expressions also attest to the fact that there exists a large group of young people who believe that they have a good life, but at the same time are very aware about what is needed in order to create better life quality for other children and youth.

#### **Help for parents with abuse**

A great many answers point out the need for more efforts to deal with the overconsumption of alcohol among the parents. A few young people recommend a prohibition on the sale of alcohol. Others propose that the sale of alcohol be rationed. Examples of such suggestions are that prices on alcohol being increased combined with lower taxes on other goods, to set limits on how much alcohol and tobacco a person can purchase per month, or to ban the sale of alcohol for a few days after payday. There are also young people who believe that there ought to be more possibilities to enter treatment centers, including the possibility for rehabilitation clinics for the adults. One of the young people underscores the significance of reducing alcohol consumption among the parents with the words: '*Less alcohol, more family life*'.

#### **Focus on family life**

A great deal of the young people suggest that the lives of children can be improved if the parents place more focus on family life and take more responsibility for the children and their upbringing. '*The parents should be more visible, after all, they are the ones who bring up kids. It is they who are the beginning for a good future*'. Many young people mention that the parents must be better at listening to the children, spend more time talking with their children and trying to understand

them. The youth are seeking more attention, security, interest and love from the parents, and more togetherness. As one of the young people express: *'If children are to have better conditions, the parents ought to take care of them in the proper way'*. But in family life there also lies an acceptance and desire for more limits during upbringing. Hence, some of the youth are asking that limits to be set and that they get to know when these limits have been exceeded. *'But when the young people are becoming teenagers, they want to be out with the other teens ... and if they are going to drink [alcohol], then [the parents must] ask the kids to take care, to say that they should not get drunk. And perhaps set a time for when they should be home'*.

A pervasive theme in the responses is a desire for a larger mutual openness within the family. A great portion of the youth point out the closed character of the problems affecting to the parents, but also affecting the children and youth. There is a desire to focus on the need to open up more and to become better at speaking together, also about problems. Furthermore, the young people point out that in raising children, the parents ought to be aware of not passing on to their children their own problems and experiences from childhood. As one of the youth express: *'Whether children have good or not good conditions starts with the parents. ... If the parents have problems in the family or with their partner, then it is necessary that they talk with friends or with someone to whom they are close as much as possible, and not just take it out on the kids. After all, children grow up with different experiences. This is most often the cause of the children's problems... parents shouldn't just let it be passed on to their children'*.

### **The role of society**

Several responses ask that society pay more attention to the welfare of children and youth. The youth in our survey points out the responsibility of authorities and school for children's level of well-being; in their remarks, they call for more attention, active participation and support from various public organs and adults who work with children, including a more open debate. *'We fellow human beings ought to get more involved, we cannot help when we are much too silent'*. One suggestion is that more emphasis be placed on informing children about their rights in society. Some children and youth under the age of 18 years are not aware of the rights that they have and do not know how they should react when they are mistreated. Others perhaps do not know when they are being treated improperly, and therefore there is a desire for information about what it means to be treated badly and about where help can be obtained. Several young people point out that many of the children who are unhappy are very introverted and too shy to speak out about their experiences and therefore do not come forward to obtain help. Therefore, some of the young people say that the authorities, including the school, should keep a closer eye on how chil-

dren should be treated and intervene, including removing children from abusive homes or initiating a dialogue with the parents if they can see that the child do not thrive

One group among the youth propose that living conditions for the population must be improved, and some of them make direct calls on politicians to set different priorities. *'Members of the Greenland parliament should lower the priority placed on swimming halls, new roads and other minor items which have been built and instead prioritize children, adults and the elderly'*.

### **Openness and dialogue between children and adults**

In extension of the above, the responses given by the youth attest to a desire that more concrete possibilities to be created for children and youth to improving the ability to talk about their problems. The youth make proposals to establish children and youth groups where it is possible to talk with others like themselves in an attempt to encourage those who find it difficult to speak with someone about their problems. *'Children should talk together without just being closed off, otherwise there will be more problems'*.

Several young people thus express a need for more venues to meet, places where youth who have problems can obtain help and support. For example, that a club be established or a meeting place which is not just open in the evenings, or for example, a disco for children. One of the youth points out that it can be important that the child talks with an adult, as the adult has several possibilities to find help; *'the social workers ought to be more attentive, and if they discover a child who is suffering, should make an effort to help before it's too late'*. Another mentions more priority on meetings between parent and teacher, and the possibility of seeking out a family counsellor or entering into family therapy. Taken together, it is about creating a dialogue between the youth, between the youth and the adults, and between parents and authorities.

### **Places to meet during free time**

Another proposal made by the youth concerns the desire for more activities and more to do for children and youth. *'Our Municipalities in Greenland should get it together! They just look on while 6-year-olds walk around and beg on the streets for cigarettes or food. [Children of all ages] are out for most of the night because the school board thinks that the recreation center was open too long on weekdays as well as the weekends'*. The youth think that the schools should be renovated, that they should create more activities in the after-school hours for the very young, more opportunities to practice more sports and more user-friendly clubs, and in this way create more options for children and youth. One of the youth mentions the consequences of not having any

place to go during the evenings: *'Because we don't have anywhere to go in the evening, we begin to get the urge to drink just to have something to do. When parents drink in the home, you want to go out, but you don't know where to go, you don't want to go to the club where they smoke and drink!!!'*

### **Schooling and future opportunities**

Some of the youth highlight good schooling as a way in which the youth can feel better. The youth are aware that education is important for their future opportunities, and that it is necessary to participate actively in the school and come to class.

### **The future**

Taken together, the responses of these young people gives a clear impression that it is the parents who bear a great deal of the responsibility for ensuring children's well-being. The statements of the youth point to the fact that there is a need for a generation of parents who show greater openness toward their children, that their upbringing takes place with more love and respect, and that alcohol abuse and sexual abuse are unacceptable. As one of the youth express, *'If a child is to have a better life, I think, the parents must have a good relationship to their kids and to themselves. Parents must not be alcoholics. You have to be able to have fun together, talk together and be comfortable with each other. We all need love, so the parents should also give their kids much of it'*. At the same time, the youth believe that the public sector should intervene in those cases where the parents fail. The youth believe that preventive measures directed toward reducing alcohol abuse among the parents, and more opportunities for family treatment, should receive higher priority. More meeting places for children and youth will create a greater openness and possibility for dialogue about the problems and in this way improve the well-being of the children and youth. The proposals of the youth give a sense of optimism about the future, but also an awareness that active efforts should be made in order to improve children's well-being: *'Children and adults must work together to obtain a better life, to help each other. And then you should of course also believe that there is something better than what you have now. People with a bad life have a tendency to be pessimistic about everything and are therefore not motivated to work for themselves to obtain a better life'*.

### **Summary**

This memorandum draws introductory a profile of teenage schoolchildren aged of 15-18 years with a high level of well-being, Half the youth are classified as having a high level of well-being, somewhat more boys than girls. In general, young people with a high level of well-being are char-

acterized by good social relations, not feeling lonely and a positive rating of own health. Furthermore, for the girls, a high level of well-being is related to being able to talk with their parents about problems and that their parents have not separated from each other. For the boys, a high level of well-being is related to being physical active. The above-mentioned factors can play a role in helping to ensure a high level of well-being for the great number of youth in Greenland.

The youth themselves offer proposals as to what is needed in order for children to have a better life in Greenland. Among the key areas for improving children's well being, are cited higher priority to be placed on family life, initiatives directed toward more openness between parents and children, focus on reducing alcohol consumption among the adults and finally, a desire for a more proactive attitude on the part of society. Many of the youth's responses contain many good proposals and give an impression of the hopes for change and improvement of conditions for those children and youth who do not thrive. Thus, there is reason to be optimistic about the children and youth of the future and for their well-being.