The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Everyday Practices in Ukraine

What we learned from the research held in 2021 and How we can use it in light of the humanitarian crisis due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine

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COVID-19 vs. Russian invasion of Ukraine

- The COVID-19 pandemic ended on February 24 in Ukraine.

- 81 children have died and more than 100 have been injured since February 24*. Probably more.

- In Kharkov alone, 30 schools and 27 kindergartens had been destroyed by March 8.

- More than 2 million Ukrainians have left Ukraine, mostly women and children.
  *UN data: 41 and 52 respectively.

Can we still talk about COVID-19 effects on children's lives in Ukraine? And how can we use these research findings in this new reality?

The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Everyday Practices

June - November 2021

Our team:

1. **Desk research**

2. **Qualitative**

3. **Quantitative**

Age of children: 9-16 (3 groups)

28 children took part in anthropological study
1001 children were interviewed by phone in cities and towns in Ukraine (population >50,000, except temporarily occupied territories)

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The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Everyday Practices

Three stages:

1. Desk research

- Methodology
- Topic selection
- Questions
- Ethical issues
- Participatory approach

May - October 2021

2. Qualitative research

28 children from Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv and Lviv

Remote ethnography (Tasks and questions aka quest via Viber and Telegram - we received verbal associations, photos, video tours, and drawings), 1h interview + follow-up task (mental mapping)
July - August 2021

3. Quantitative research

1001 children
28 questions by phone interview (incl. open and multi-optional questions, **1 question from children to children**)
Led by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology

September 2021

The topics:

Formal, non-formal, informal education

Leisure

Everyday spaces (at home and outside)
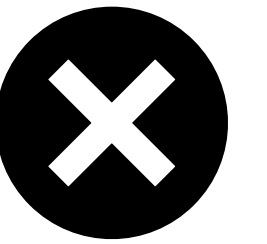
Children's Perspectives on the Pandemic

https://childrencovid19.org.ua/en/ - PDF in English

# The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children's Everyday Practices

Hypothesis One
Being close to parents due to the lockdown restrictions provokes increased control on their part and a lack of personal space for children.
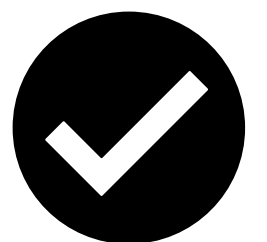
Hypothesis Two
The limitation of physical space caused by the pandemic contributes to the expansion of digital freedom and the acquisition of new skills by children.
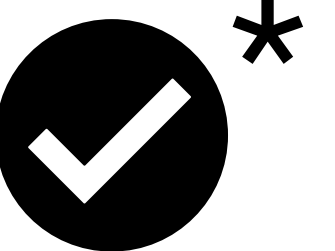
Hypothesis Three
Children's interaction with peers and the level of involvement in public life decreased under the influence of COVID-19, negatively affecting their well-being.
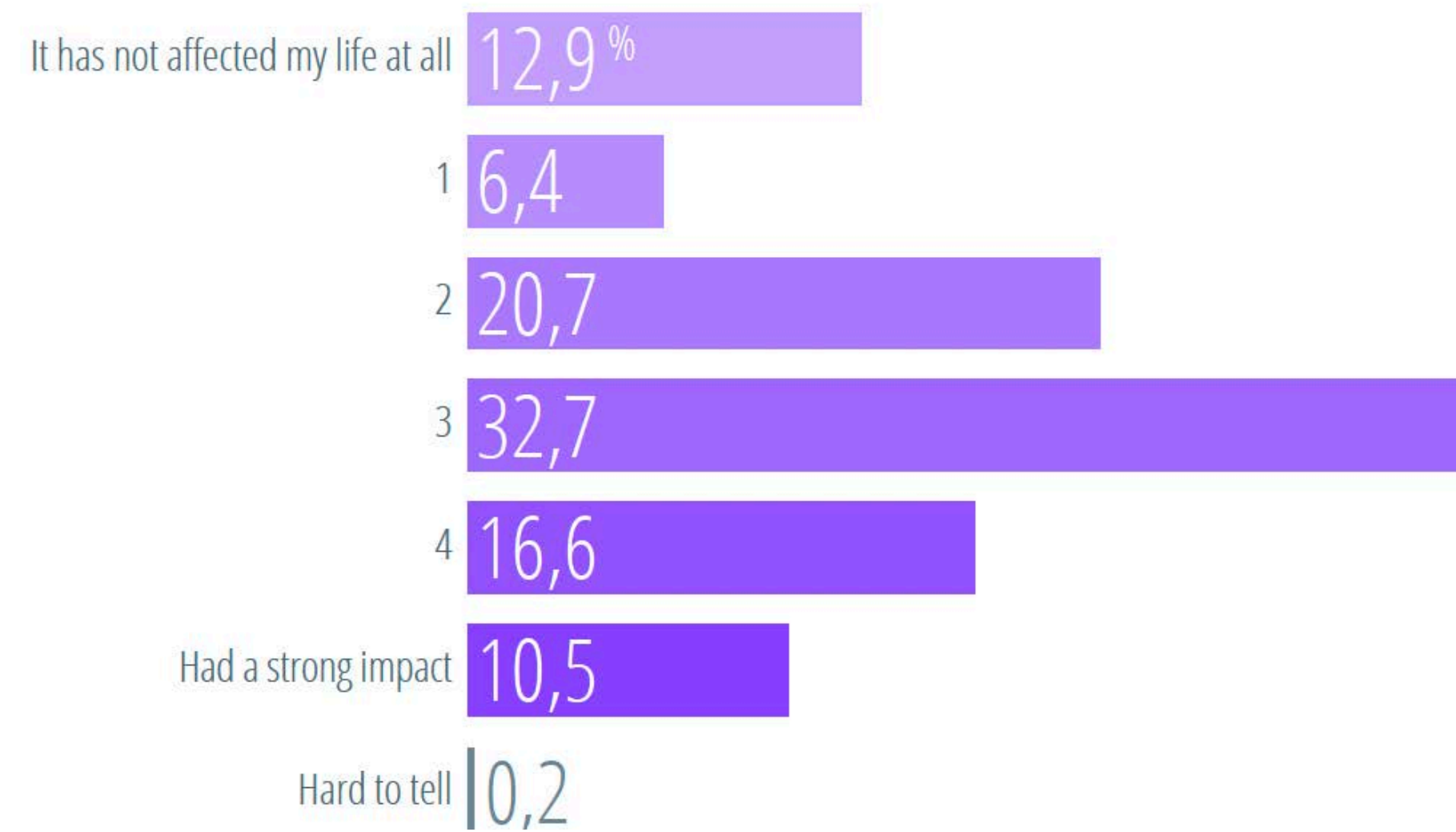
Findings
Children's Perspectives on the Pandemic

How would you assess the impact of the pandemic on your life?
0 — no impact at all, a 5 — strong impact.

It has not affected my life at all	12,9 %
1	6,4
2	20,7
3	32,7
4	16,6
Had a strong impact	10,5
Hard to tell	0,2

How would you describe your emotional state during the lockdown?

Elevated	Neutral	Depressed	Hard to tell
14,8 %	74,0	10,2	1,0

Findings
Children's Perspectives on the Pandemic

How did you cheer yourself up at the lockdown?

Talked / walked with friends	18,5 %
Did something creative	10,3
Played games on the phone, game console or computer	9,7
Told myself that it would eventually end	9,0
Worked out	8,6
Watched anime, movies, animated films or TV series	8,4
Scrolled their social networks or surfed the net	7,3
Went for a walk	5,0
Did something for self-development / learning	4,5
Spent time with relatives (siblings / parents etc.)	4,4
Read books / mangas / comics	4,1
Listened to music	4,0
Food	3,0
Played outdoor games	2,8
Hobbies	2,4
Spent time with a pet	1,8
Housework	1,6
Just relaxed	1,0
Other	5,0
Did nothing to cheer myself up	9,7
Didn't need any cheering / it was all right	14,0
Hard to tell	2,5

Who was your main support during the lockdown?

Parents	52,1 %
Friends	14,5
Other relatives (siblings or grandparents)	5,9
Online-friends	3,1
Teachers / tutors / teachers at clubs	1,5
Classmates	0,9
Other	0,7
Nobody	3,0
Didn't need any support	18,2
Hard to tell	0,1

Findings

Formal, Non-formal, Informal Education

- Digitalization of school education

  Our teachers are not very good at using technology: they found it difficult.

  Oleksii, 12, Kyiv

  Tasks were given either in Google Forms or online. We liked it, it was interactive. Our tech-savvy 'programmers' especially enjoyed it, because all of it was easy to hack.
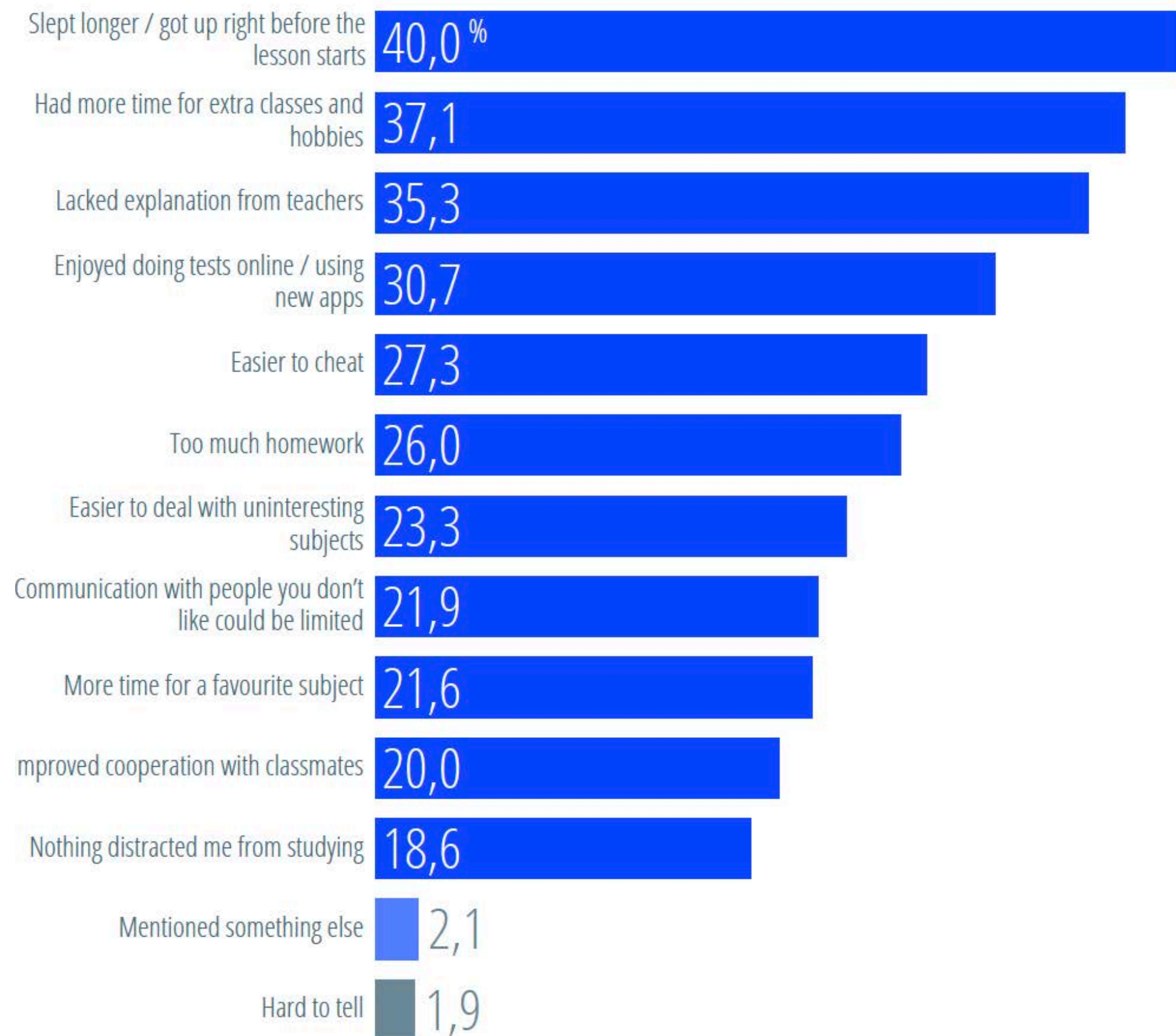
  13 years old

- Remote classmates and teachers

  I started communicating more with my teachers. Sometimes I could even write to them at night and ask them — please, don't set a deadline for 6 a.m. Can I do it later? They showed understanding, and I showed understanding towards them. In this respect, I'd say that students have become closer with teachers, and parents with teachers, too.

  Oksana, 15, Kharkiv

Findings

Formal, Non-formal, Informal Education

What did your experience of distance learning look like during lockdowns?

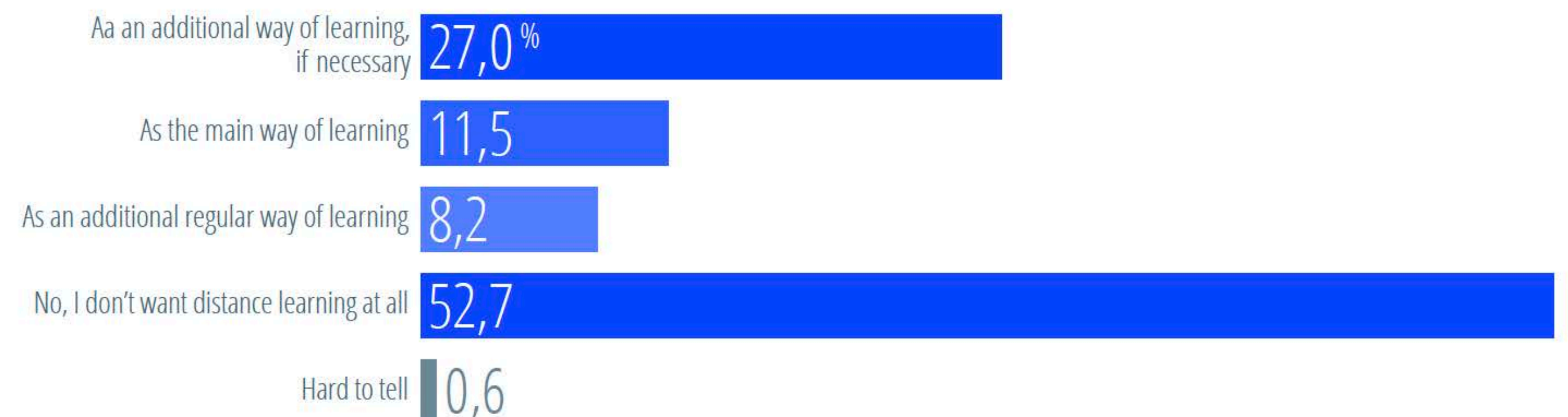|	
Slept longer / got up right before the lesson starts	40,0 %
Had more time for extra classes and hobbies	37,1
Lacked explanation from teachers	35,3
Enjoyed doing tests online / using new apps	30,7
Easier to cheat	27,3
Too much homework	26,0
Easier to deal with uninteresting subjects	23,3
Communication with people you don't like could be limited	21,9
More time for a favourite subject	21,6
Improved cooperation with classmates	20,0
Nothing distracted me from studying	18,6
Mentioned something else	2,1
Hard to tell	1,9

• Freedom, responsibility and control

Nobody controlled me in my studies. I coped well myself. I started planning and writing what needed to be done on a piece of paper.
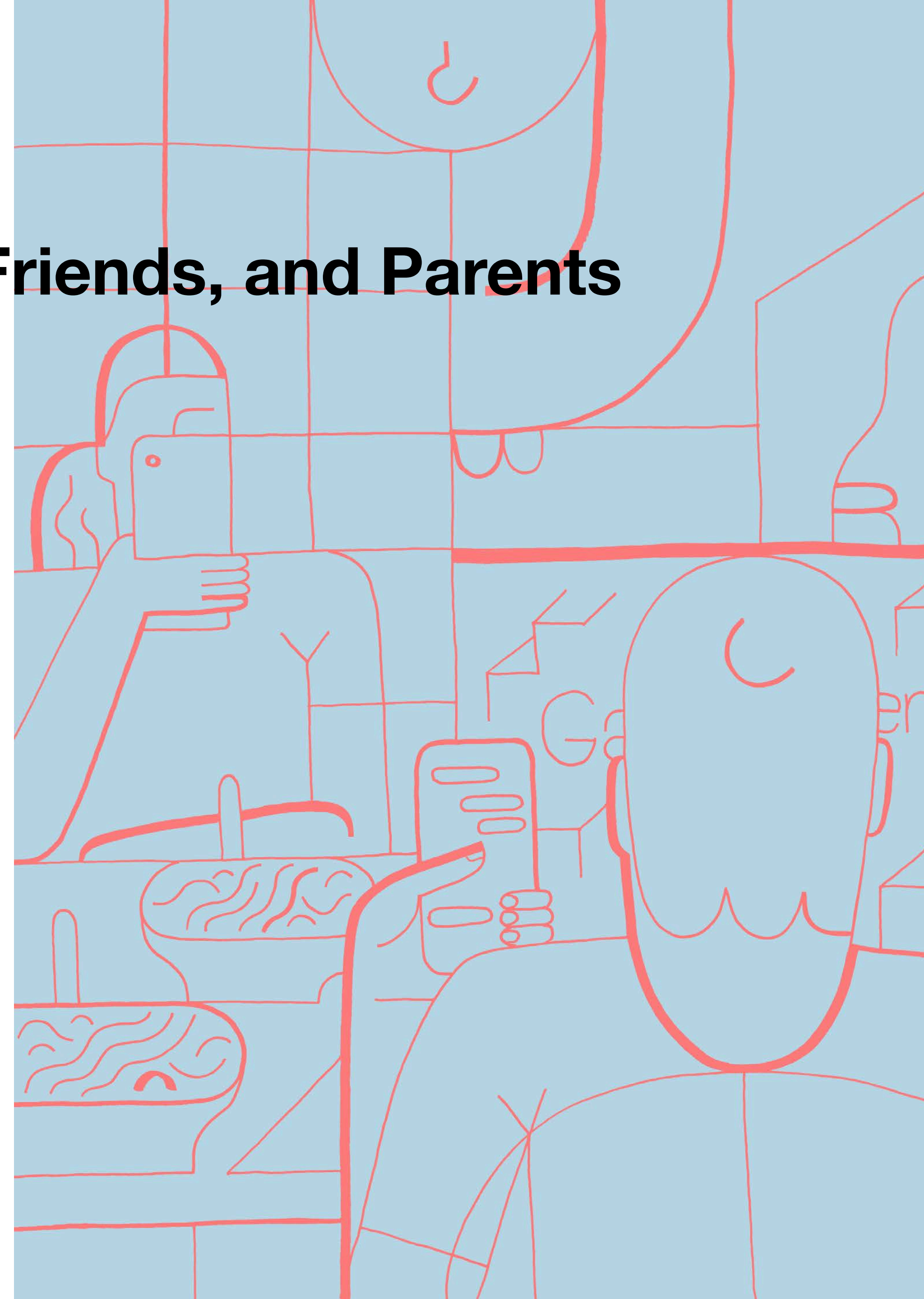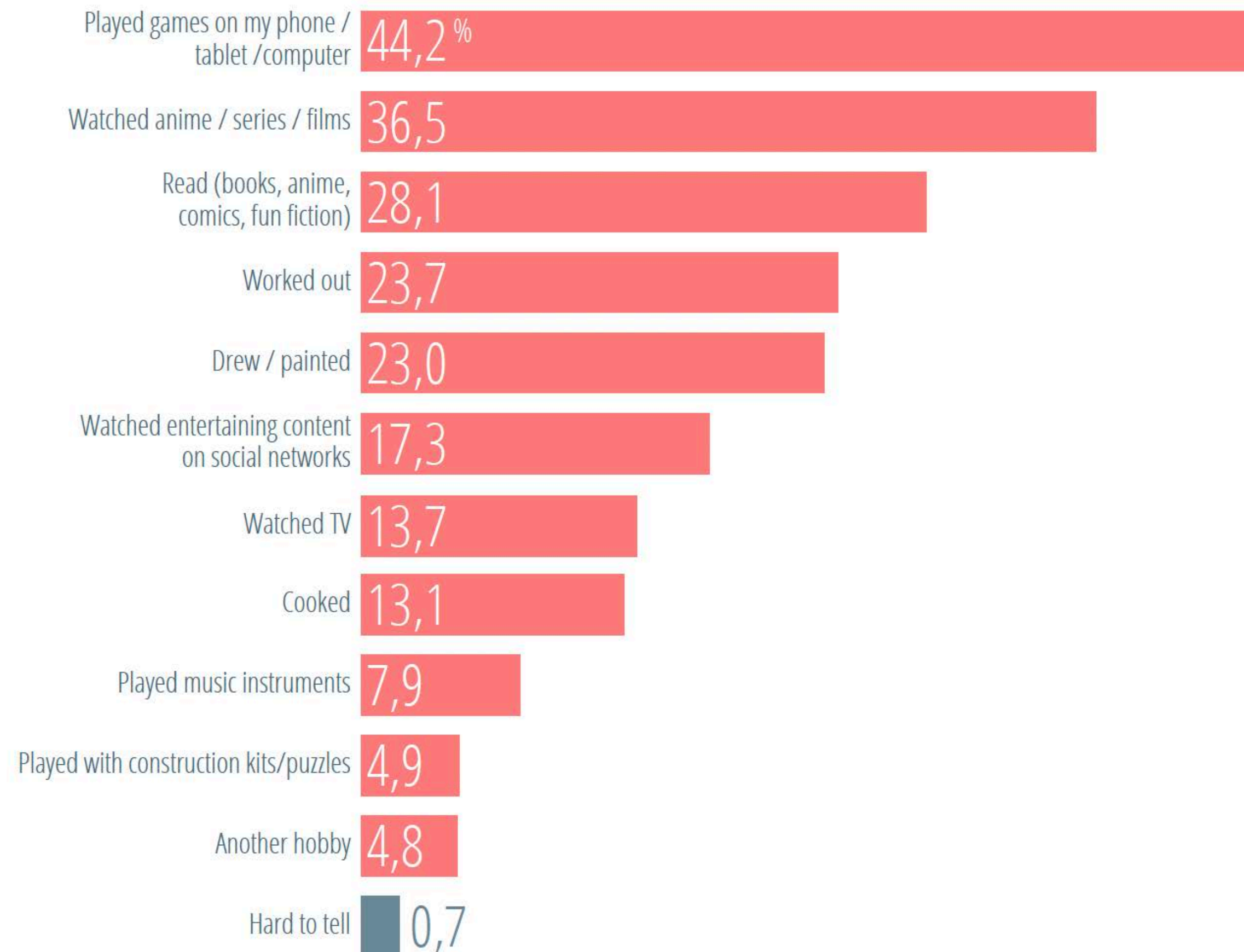
Yaroslava, 15, Kyiv

Would you like to keep having distance education in one of the following modes:

As an additional way of learning, if necessary	27,0 %
As the main way of learning	11,5
As an additional regular way of learning	8,2
No, I don't want distance learning at all	52,7
Hard to tell	0,6

Findings
Leisure in the New Normal: Alone, with Friends, and Parents

What did you keep yourself busy with while alone in your spare time?

Played games on my phone / tablet /computer	44,2 %
Watched anime / series / films	36,5
Read (books, anime, comics, fun fiction)	28,1
Worked out	23,7
Drew / painted	23,0
Watched entertaining content on social networks	17,3
Watched TV	13,7
Cooked	13,1
Played music instruments	7,9
Played with construction kits/puzzles	4,9
Another hobby	4,8
Hard to tell	0,7

Findings
Leisure in the New Normal: Alone, with Friends, and Parents

I played games with friends. We played them online, connected through Discord, from 10–15 people to 100–200. You spoke in Discord and at the same time in the game. It was realistic. Everyone behaved appropriately, and listened to the person in charge. There was an online army. Before the lockdown, I had played at my friend's place.
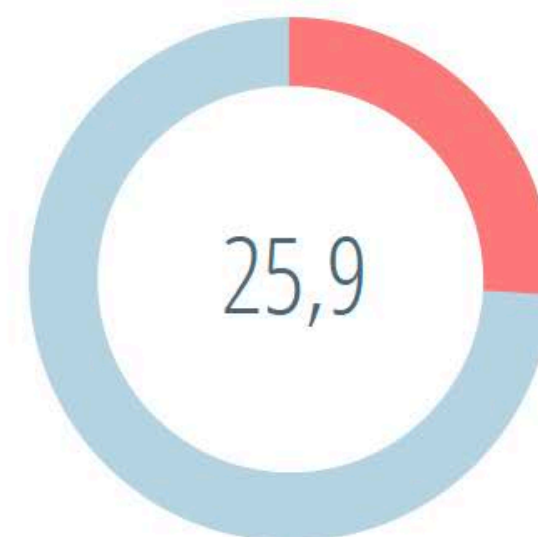
Oleksii, 16, Lviv

We became closer. We got to know each other better. Parents told me stories from their childhood. Nobody felt bored with anyone, on the contrary, we became friendlier.
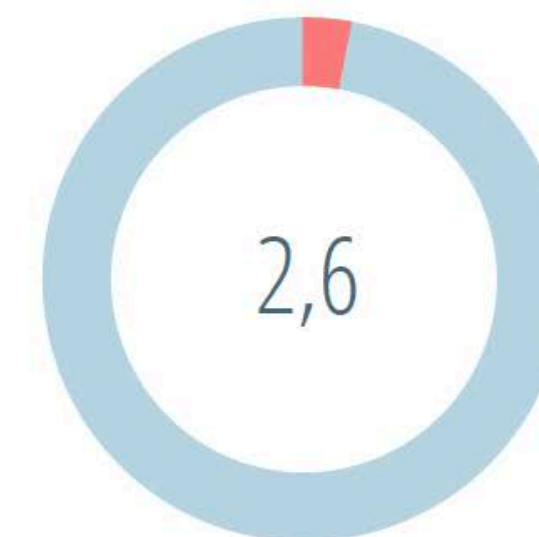
Maryna, 15, Kharkiv

How would you rate your freedom in using the internet at lockdowns?
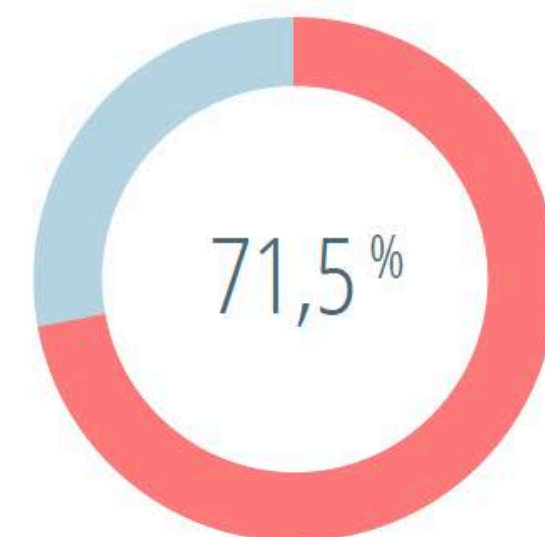
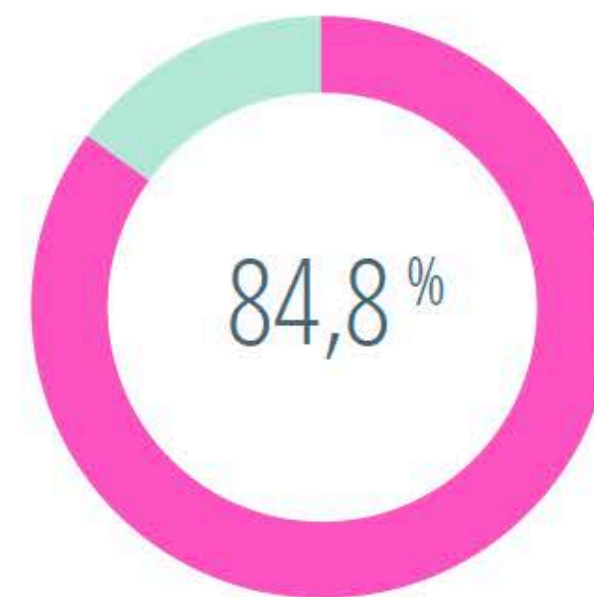| 71,5 %	25,9	2,6
I had a lot of freedom	My freedom was moderate	I had little freedom

Findings
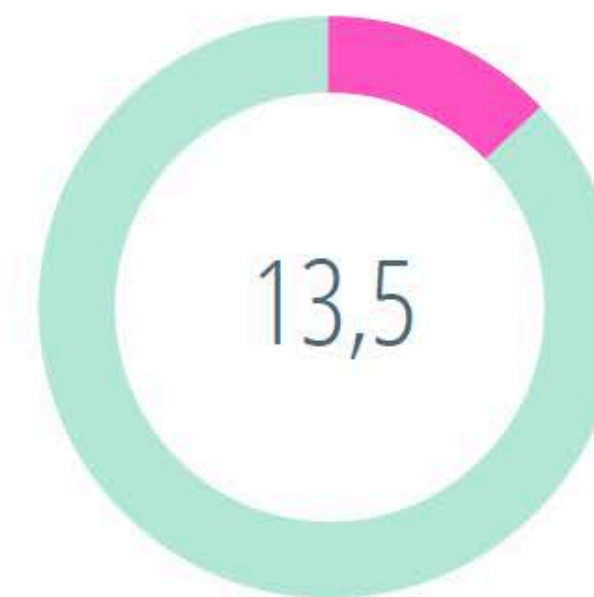
Everyday Spaces: Home and City during the Pandemic

« Adults distracted me when they came in to eat. I then turned off the camera, but the teachers scolded me for it. Well, did it really bother me? Did I have a table? I did. Did I have a chair? I did. Then it's ok. »
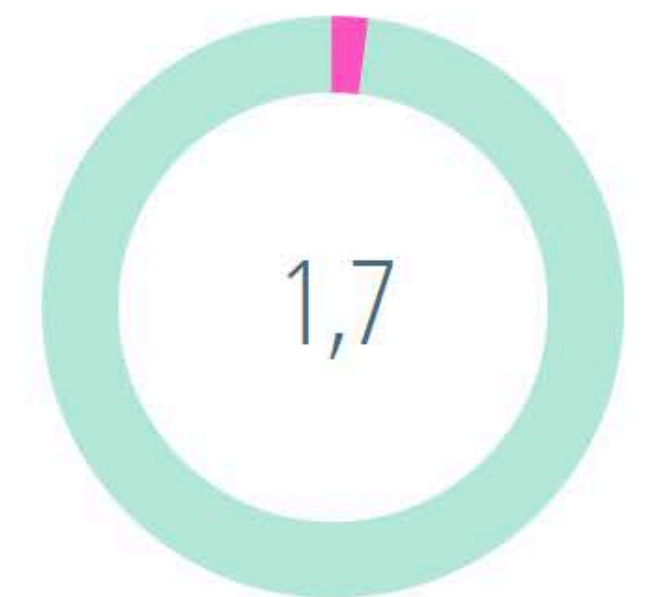
Nikita, 12, Odesa
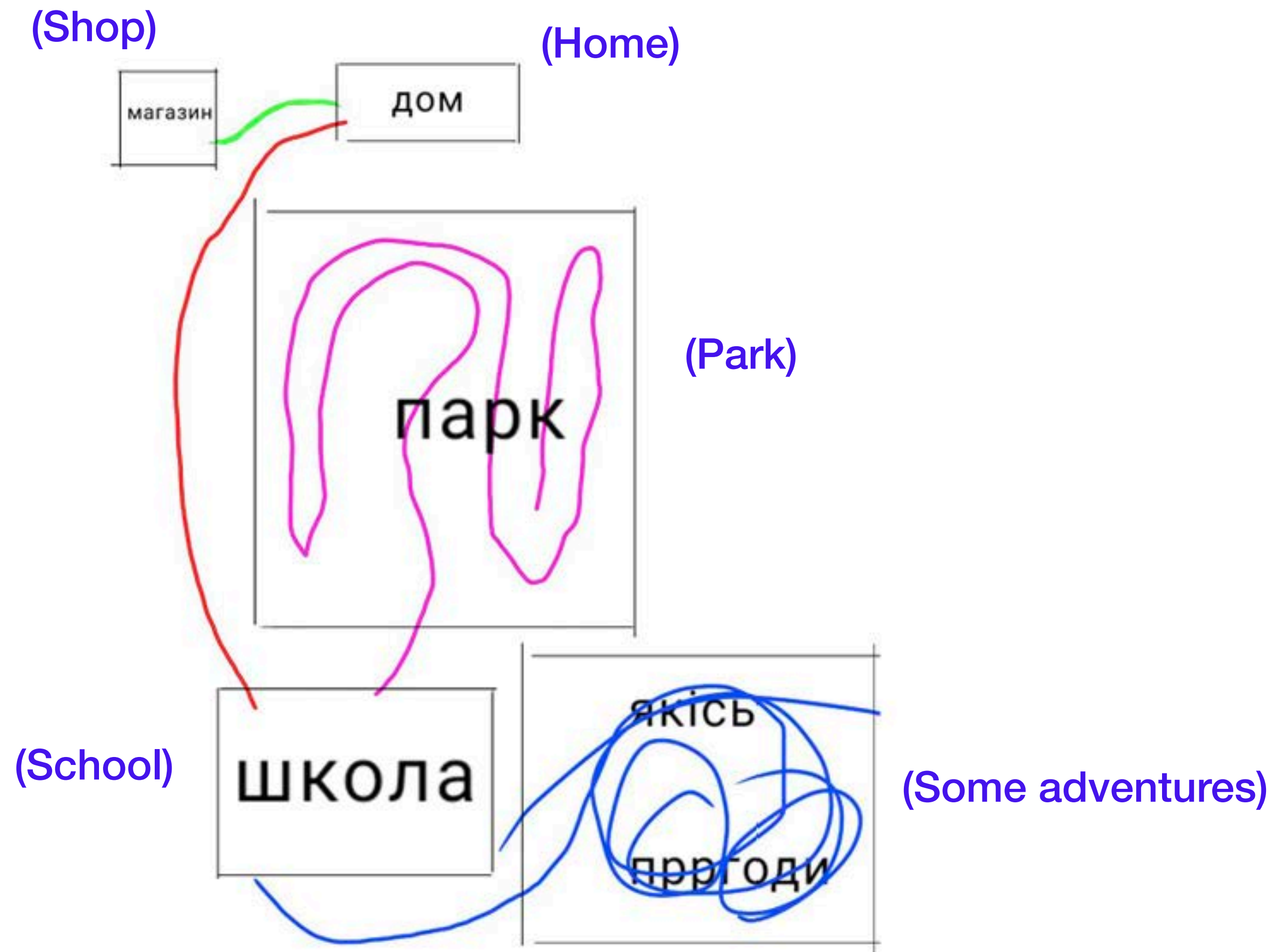
Did you have enough personal space at lockdowns?

84,8 %	13,5	1,7
Enough	Mediocre	Not enough

Findings
Everyday Spaces: Home and City during the Pandemic

(Shop)

(Home)

магазин

дом

(Park)

парк

(School)

школа

якісь

прргоди

(Some adventures)

36.2% of respondents were able to walk wherever they wanted in the city before the pandemic, and during the lockdown there were 24.5% of such.
Fewer were allowed to go to the playground (18% and 12.3% before pandemics and during the lockdown, respectively).
The rate for those who could go to the store unaccompanied did not change at all (as an evidence to the fact that no one canceled a housework on quarantine), and the vast majority could still go anywhere unaccompanied in the area.

Recommendations

- **While most children don't want to ever return to distance learning (52,7 %), there is a significant increase in the audience loyal to digital learning.** A third of the respondents did not mind having additional classes online, if there is such a need or even on a regular basis (languages or extra classes). 11.5 % of the surveyed children would like to study online on a permanent basis (as ~0,1% being on distance education before the pandemic).

- **Many children are interested in new digital alternatives in leisure.** Thus, 43.8 % of them chose simultaneous movie watching and online discussions with friends as a potentially interesting diversion. Movie watching in a new format could be a useful and interactive addition to the educational process in schools. At that, 20.4 % of the respondents were interested in virtual reality and concerts, so there is also significant potential for product development in this area. Online lectures or courses, museum tours, shared reading — there is a demand for a variety of online formats and products, and they are worth exploring.

- **Children still read.** Almost a third of children (28.1 %) chose reading as a leisure practice when they are alone. Games topped the list and were selected by 44.2 % of the respondents, followed by movies and anime (36.5 %). True, tools used for reading and its forms are changing, but an interest in stories has not gone away — it has only transformed.

- **Expand the range of tools used in online education,** improve the skills necessary for online dialogue and discussion, test knowledge, combine different tools and methods.

- **During the pandemic, the vast majority of children studied with a smartphone.** The educational instruments should be updated for using via phone.

- **Parents should take into account the needs of children in their own space.** City planners should also take into account children's needs and provide them with adequate public space.

Solutions for the humanitarian crisis Ukraine faces now:

- Ukrainian schools can go online + Ukrainian language courses available for children who fled abroad

- NGOs and culture sector can provide digital edutainment products

- More Ukrainian books for children abroad

- Teachers can still teach, and should receive support in improving their skills

- School on a smartphone

- New public spaces including children's needs

Contacts

https://childrencovid19.org.ua/en/results/

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Please consider donating to the verified humanitarian charities for Ukraine:

- ✔ Voices of Children https://voices.org.ua/ Relief Fund
- ✔ GlobalGiving Ukraine Crisis
- ✔ Polish Red Cross https://pck.pl/wspieraj-nas/.
- ✔ Ukrainian Red Cross