

The Ombudsman for Children The Voices of Children in Iceland

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The Ombudsman for Children

- Established with law no. 83/1994
- Operating from January 1st. 1995
- The Ombudsman is appointed for 5 years at a time (max. 10 years in office)



Role

- Improve the condition of children and guard their rights, needs and interest
- Public spokesman for all children under the age of 18
- Strive to ensure that the rights, needs and interests of children are given full consideration by public authorities, individuals, societies and other associations
- Give instructions and make proposals for the furtherance of children's interests in all walks of life.



Assignments according to Act No. 83/1994

- Take the lead in promoting policymaking discussion
- Put forward proposals for the improvement of law
- Seek further observance of international agreements, ratified by Iceland, relative to children's rights
- Take action if fundamental rights of children are violated
- Be instrumental in fostering public awareness of legislation regarding children and seek to encourage research in this area.



What falls outside the scope of the Ombudsman for Children?

- The Ombudsman for Children does not deal with disputes between individuals, but has the obligation to provide those who turn to him for such matters with guidance as to courses open to them either in administration or the courts of law.



General reference

- Many of these individual cases directed to the office have a certain general appeal or applicability in one way or another.
- Numerous issues that the Ombudsman addresses publicly were originally brought to the Ombudsman's attention as personal matters relating to individual children.
- The conclusion of an authority or a court ruling in an individual matter may affect the rights and wellbeing of children in general. In such cases the Ombudsman may decide to react, for example by proposing an amendment of the law.



Special statues of Ombudsman for Children

- Independency
 - Does not take orders from the executive or the legislative powers.
 - Takes up cases either on her own initiative or following a reasoned indication from others.
- Extensive right for getting information
- Free access to all institutions which house children
- Deals with all aspects of law and practices of law
- Conclusions by the Ombudsman for Children in matters submitted for his consideration are not by law binding



Who can turn to the Ombudsman for Children and how?

- All, children and adults alike, may apply to the Ombudsman for Children for matters pertaining to children
- Children are particularly welcomed
- No form required
- People do not have to provide personal information, such as names and addresses if they choose not to





The Convention on the Rights of the Child

UMBOÐSMAÐUR BARNA

The main principals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

- **Article 2** - The principal of non-discrimination
- **Article 3** – The best interest of the child shall have primary consideration in all actions concerning children
- **Article 6** - The fundamental right to life, survival and development.



The main principals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 12

- All children have the right to express their views freely. Adults have to listen to children and respect their opinion
- The most revolutionary article in the convention.



Article 12 - the voices of children

- The Ombudsman has worked on all of the main principles, but the focus has been on Article 12.
- Children have the right to express their views and furthermore they have a right to be heard and their views shall be given weight.



Changes in law

- The act in respect of children
- The child protection act
- The act on youth activity
- The compulsory school act



Article 12 - the voices of children

The work of
the former
ombudsman



Article 12 - the voices of children

- The youth advisory classes
- Internet meetings
- Conference at Thingvellir



Youth advisory classes

- 18 classes all over Iceland
- 10-12 years old, 322 students, girls 52% and boys 48%
- 64% in 5th grade, 17,6% in 6th, 18,6% in 7th



Youth advisory classes

- 3 questionnaire
- How do you feel in school and how is the condition in the school?
- Children's everyday life after school?
- Stress in the children's life?

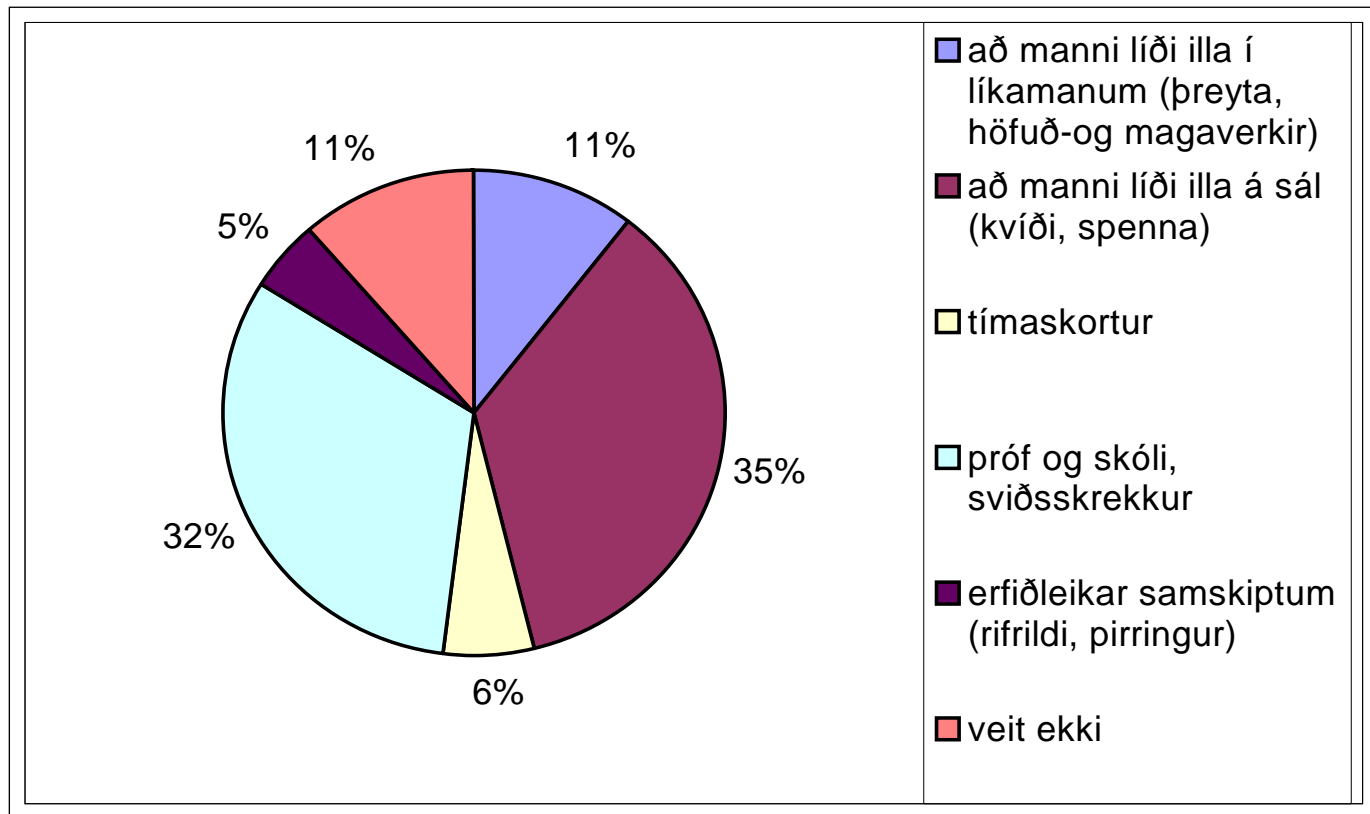
Youth advisory classes

Stress in children's life

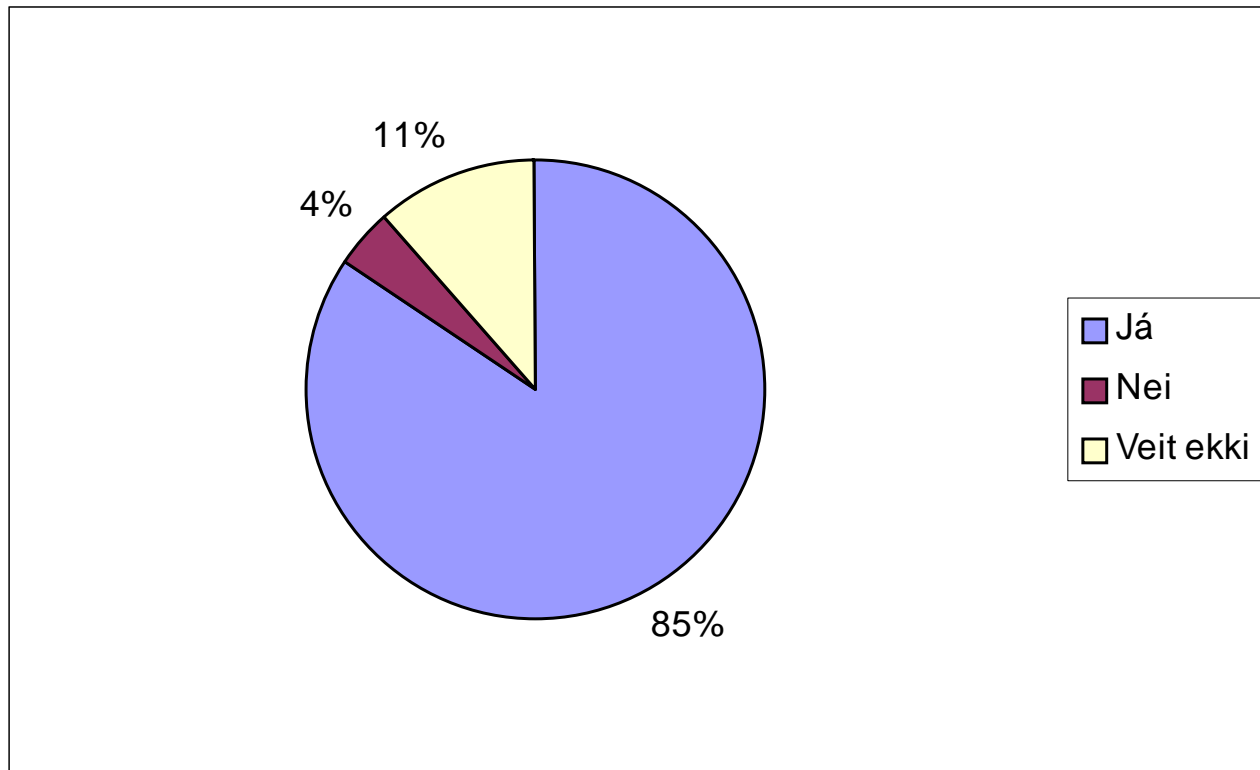
- 77,6% answered (250 of 322)



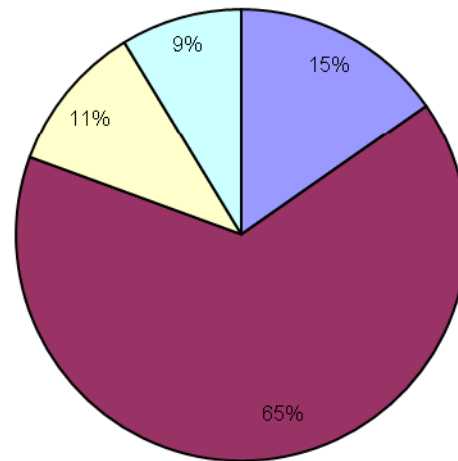
What do you think about when you hear the word stress?



Can children your age feel/sense stress ?

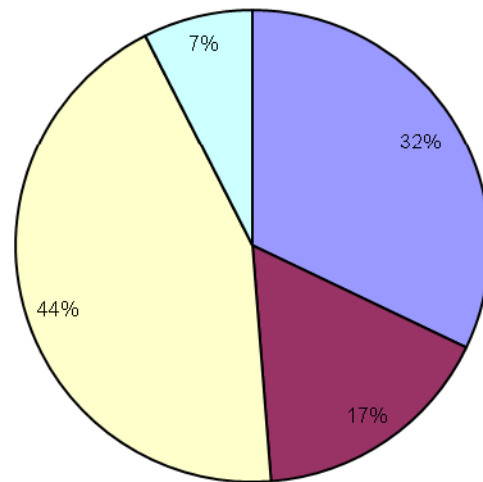


Do you feel stressed?

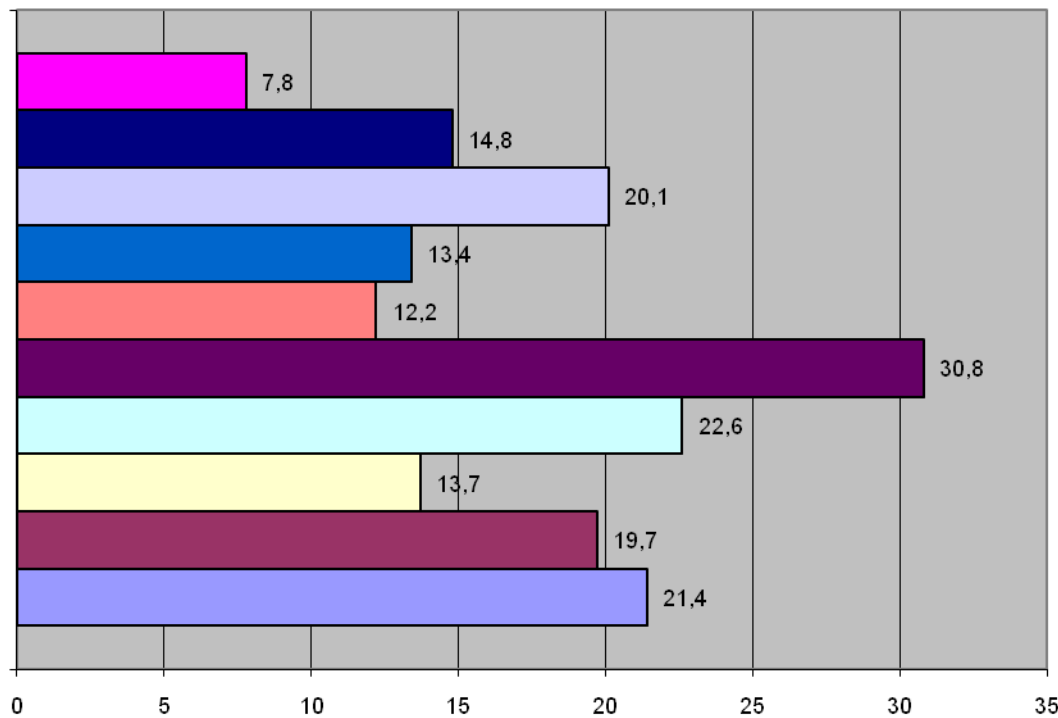


■ Já, oft ■ Stundum ■ Nei, aldrei ■ Veit ekki

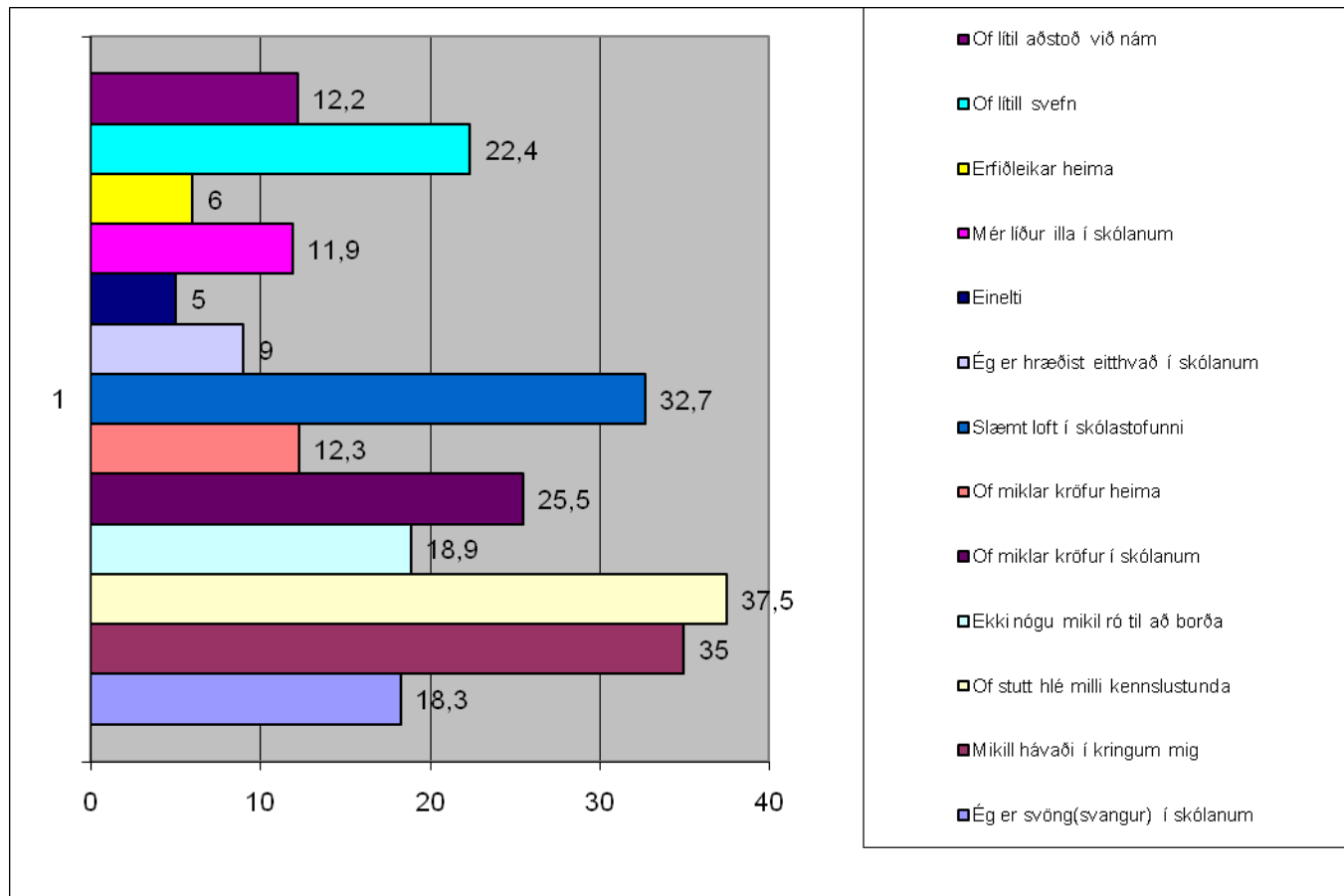
Do you feel anxiety because of exam or other school project?



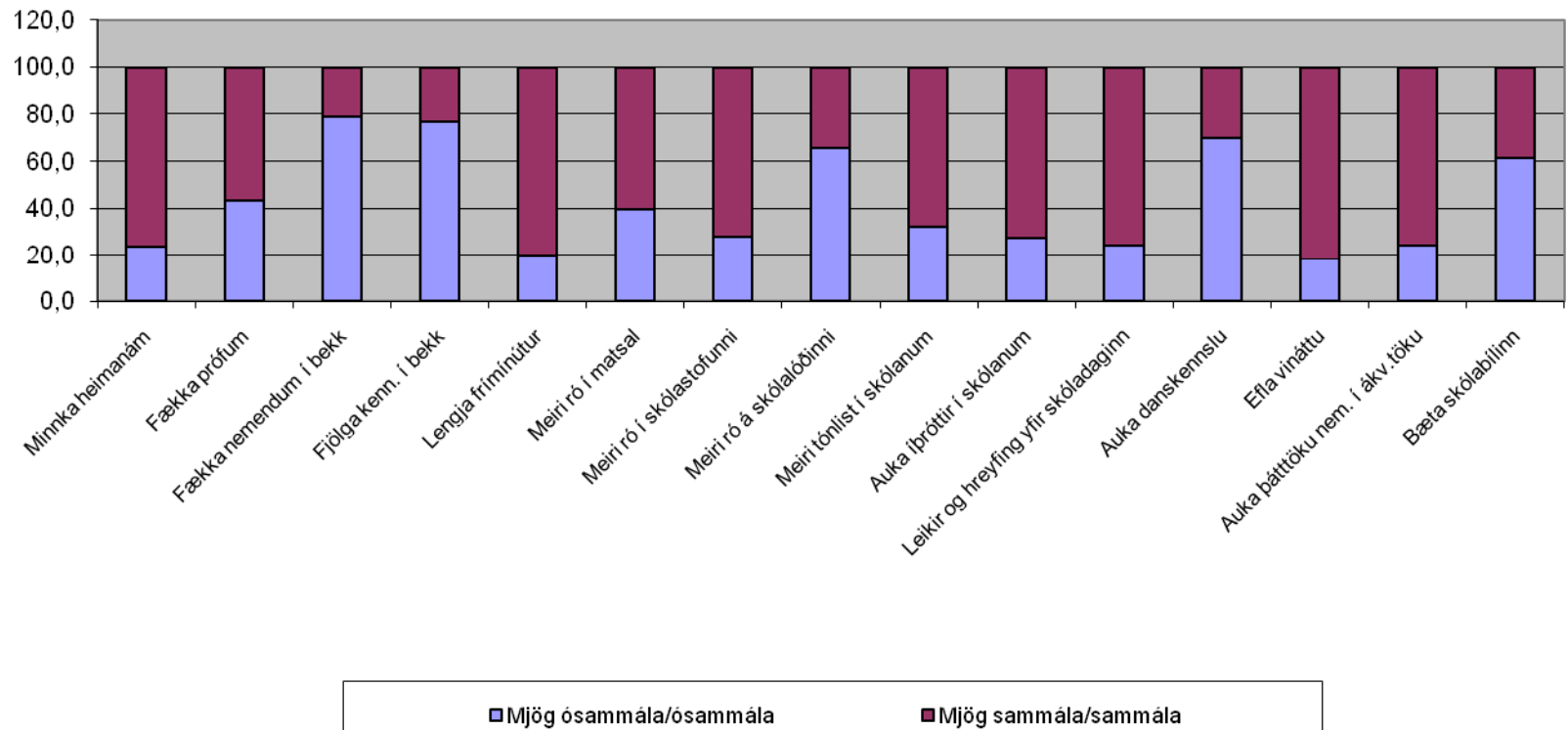
Have you felt any of the following illness/ailment last month?



What causes stress in your environment? (13 options)



What do you think can be done to reduce stress in children?



Article 12 - the voices of children

The work
ahead

