

# Worries Among Children in Contemporary Europe: What International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index Is Telling Us?



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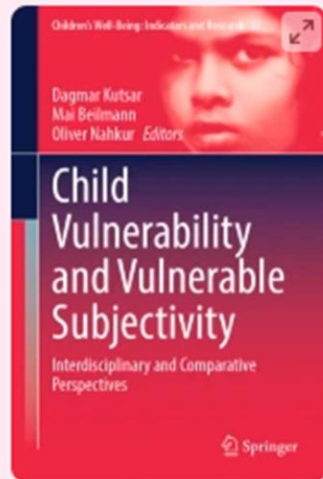
# Background

- Growing up in a rapidly changing world contributes to fears, worries and anxieties among children
  - E.g. with COVID-19 pandemic mental health problems increased and subjective well-being decreased among children (Cosma et al. 2023; Nahkur and Kutsar 2022; Nahkur and Zarina 2024; Soo and Nahkur 2024)
- Using **International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI)**, developed by Nahkur (2024), to get an overview about children's worries in systematic and detailed way based on the sources of their worries

# Aims

1. Introduce the first version of the International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI) that aims to be an international cross-country comparable child subjective vulnerability measure
2. Test internal consistency and external validity of ICSVRI;
3. Provide European comparisons of children's worries, including highlighting the most important ones in each of the countries;
4. Examine inequalities in child worries by age and gender.

# 1. What is International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI)?



## Child Vulnerability and Vulnerable Subjectivity

Interdisciplinary and Comparative Perspectives

Book | © 2024

Edited by Dagmar Kutsar, Mai Beilmann and Oliver Nahkur  
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<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-61333-3>



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Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research 27

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# Child Vulnerability and Vulnerable Subjectivity

Interdisciplinary and Comparative  
Perspectives

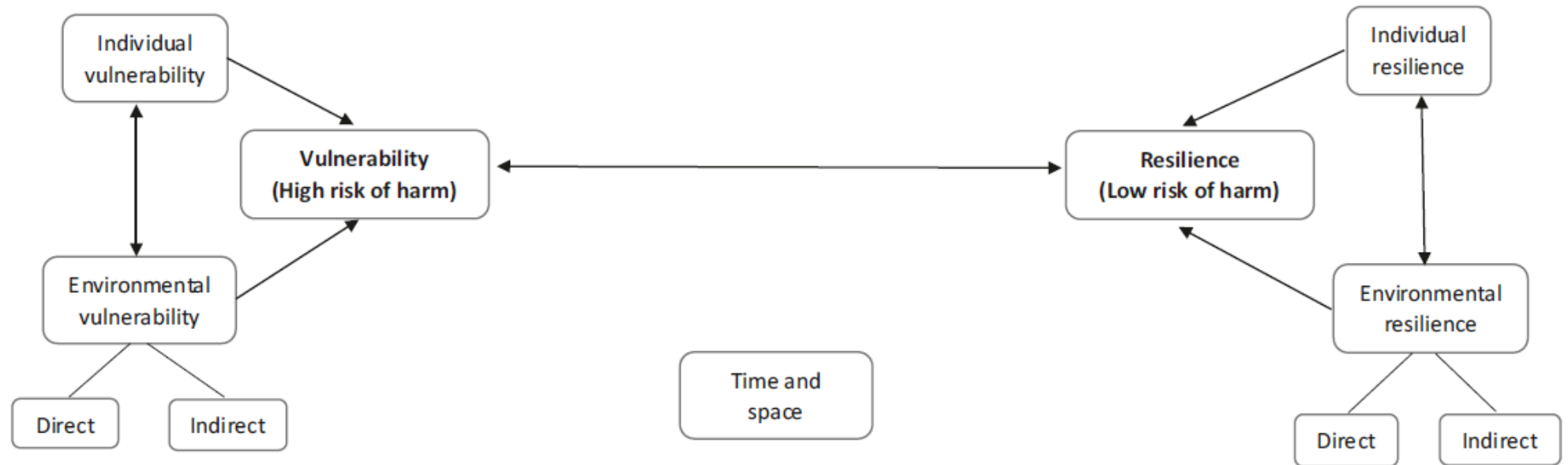
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## Conceptualisation of International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI)

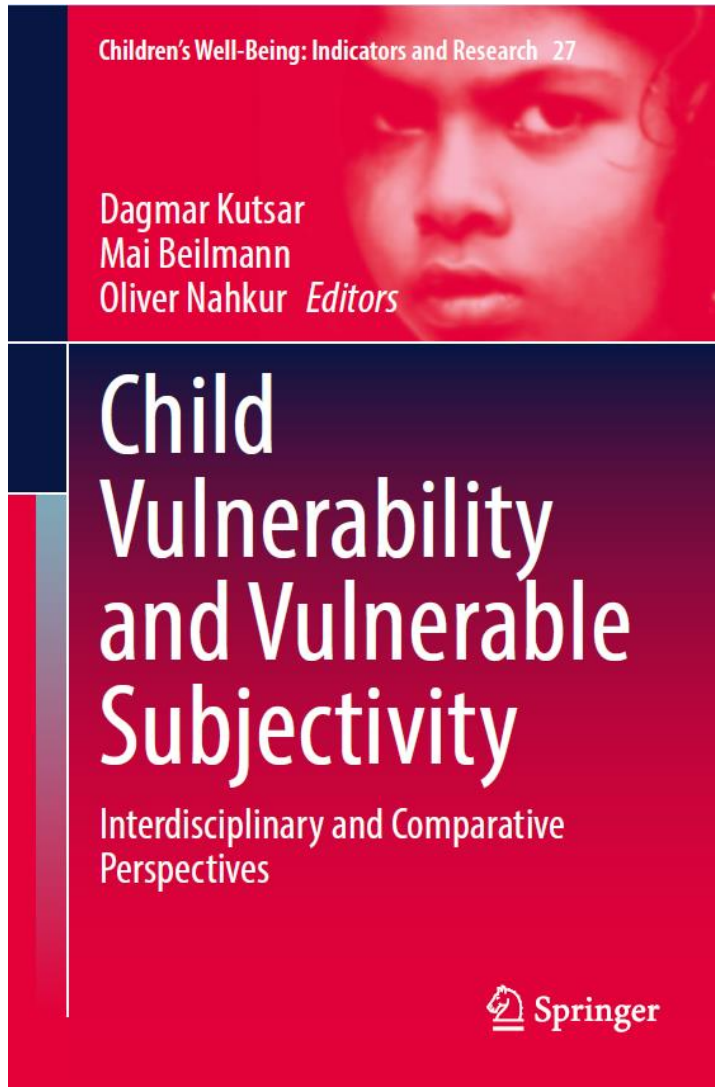
Chapter 1, see [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-61333-3\\_2](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-61333-3_2)

This framework is based on ecological model of child development by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the social-ecological model of resilience by Ungar et al. (2013) and previous multidisciplinary knowledge on the most common vulnerability and resilience factors

The risk of harm to a child's well-being is high when risks accumulate, and child vulnerability outweighs resilience.



In this framework, child vulnerability, as a high level of the risk of harm, and resilience, as a low level of the risk of harm to child well-being, form a continuum suggested as such also by Arora et al. (2015) and Daniel and Wassell (2002).



# Operationalisation of International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI)

Chapter 4, see [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-61333-3\\_4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-61333-3_4)

- Measuring vulnerability is not an easy task, but it can be mapped, monitored or quantified by means of surveys (Arora et al., 2015).
- International Survey of Children's Well-being (ISCWeB) as children-based, robust, regular and not a “WEIRD” (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies -based) dataset is used.
  - Data collected in 2017/2018 from 10 and 12-year-old children from 20 countries, including 10 European countries/territories: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, England, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Spain and Wales
  - N=58,853
- 10 variables measure individual dimension, 21 direct environmental dimension and 3 indirect environmental dimension of subjective vulnerability-resilience. No suitable variables were found for the society/country/global world dimension



Sub-dimensions	Variable(s)	Original scale	ICSVRI scale	ICSVRI dimensional sub-indices
<b>Individual subjective vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Mental health	I_MH1: Last two weeks: How often feeling happy I_MH2: Last two weeks: How often feeling calm I_MH3: Last two weeks: How often feeling full of energy I_MH4: Last two weeks: How often feeling sad I_MH5: Last two weeks: How often feeling stressed I_MH6: Last two weeks: How often feeling bored	0-not at all ... 10 – extremely	Happy, calm, full of energy: 0-extremely ... 1-not at all Sad, stressed, bored: 0-not at all ... 1 – extremely  Arithmetic mean of these 6 variables	Individual vulnerability-resilience sub-index= (I_MH1+ I_MH2+ I_MH3+ I_MH4+ I_MH5+ I_MH6)/6 + I_SE + I_CON + I_HO + I_SC
Self-esteem	I_SE: Satisfaction with: The way that you look	0-not at all satisfied ... 10 – totally satisfied	0-totally satisfied ... 1 – not at all satisfied	
Sense of control over life/Locus of control	I_CON: Satisfaction with: The freedom you have			
Hope, faith, optimism*	I_HO: Satisfaction with: What may happen to you later in your life		0-5 -> 0.5, 6 -> 0.4, 7 -> 0.3, 8 -> 0.2, 9 -> 0.1, 10 -> 0	
Social competence	I_SC: My friends are usually nice to me	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	

<b>Direct environmental subjective vulnerability-resilience</b>				
<b>... Parental/caregiver vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Parent-child relationship quality	DE_PRQ: My parents/carers listen to me and take what I say into account	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	Parental/caregiver vulnerability-resilience sub-index = DE_PRQ + DE_PC
Parental care	DE_PC: There are people in my family who care about me			
Developmental support*	Is there a place in your home where you can study?	1-Yes, 2-no, 3-not sure	<i>Excluded</i>	
<b>... Family vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Financial and material resources of the family	DE_FRES: How often do you worry about how much money your family has	0-Never, 1-sometimes, 2-often, 3-always	0-never, 0.33-sometimes, 0.67-often, 1-always	Family vulnerability-resilience sub-index = DE_FRES + DE_FCOH + DE_FCON + DE_FaSUP + DE_FINV
Family cohesion and interaction	DE_FCOH: We have a good time together in my family	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	
Family violence and conflicts	DE_FCON: I feel safe at home			
Perceived social/psychosocial/emotional support from family	DE_FaSUP: If I have a problem, people in my family will help me			
Opportunities for meaningful family involvement	DE_FINV: My parents and I make decisions about my life together			

<b>... Friends/peers/schoolmates vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Quality of peer relationships/ friendships*	<u>DE_FrRQ</u> : Me and my friends get along well together	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat + agree a little bit + I do not agree	Friends/peers/schoolmates vulnerability-resilience sub-index = DE_FRQ + ( <u>DE_ScMBUL</u> *0.5+ <u>DE_ScMVBUL</u> *0.5) + ( <u>DE_ScMREJ</u> *0.5+ <u>DE_FrSI</u> *0.5) + ( <u>DE_FrSUP</u> *0.5+ <u>DE_ScMSUP</u> *0.5)
Bullying by peers	<u>DE_ScMBUL</u> : How often: Hit by other children in your school	0-Never, 1-once, 2-two or 3 times, 3-more than 3 times	0-never, 0.33-once, 0.67-two or 3 times, 1-more than 3 times	
	<u>DE_ScMVBUL</u> : How often: Called unkind names by other children in your school			
Social isolation, peer rejection	<u>DE_ScMREJ</u> : How often: Left out by other children in your class			
Perceived social/psychosocial/emotional support from peers	<u>DE_FrSI</u> : I have enough friends	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	
	<u>DE_FrSUP</u> : If I have a problem, I have a friend who will support me			
	<u>DE_ScMSUP</u> : If I have a problem at school other children will help me			

<b>... Teachers' vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Quality of child-teacher relationship*	DE_TRQ: My teachers listen to me and take what I say into account	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat + agree a little bit + I do not agree	<u>Teachers</u> vulnerability-resilience sub-index = DE_TRQ + DE_TC + DE_TSUP
Care and encouragement from teachers	DE_TC: My teachers care about me		0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	
Perceived social support from teachers	DE_TSUP: If I have a problem at school my teachers will help me			
<b>... School vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Safety of school environment	DE_SSAF: I feel safe at school	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	School vulnerability-resilience sub-index = DE_SSAF + DE_SENG + (DE_SQC1*0.5 + DE_SQC2*0.5)
Engagement in school	DE_SENG: At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important			
Quality of curriculum*	DE_SQC1: Satisfaction with: Things you have learned	0-not at all satisfied ... 10-totally satisfied	0-5 -> 0.5, 6 -> 0.4, 7 -> 0.3, 8 -> 0.2, 9 -> 0.1, 10 -> 0	
	DE_SQC2: Satisfaction with: Your life as a student			

<b>Indirect environmental subjective vulnerability-resilience</b>				
<b>... Local area vulnerability-resilience</b>				
Access to recreational facilities and programmes in local area	IE_LAC: In my area there are enough places to play or to have a good time	0-I do not agree, 1-agree a little bit, 2-agree somewhat, 3-agree a lot, 4-totally agree	0 - totally agree, 0.25 – agree a lot, 0.5 – agree somewhat, 0.75 – agree a little bit, 1 – I do not agree	Local area vulnerability-resilience sub-index = IE_LAC + IE_LSAF + IE_LSUP
Safety of the surrounding environment in local area	IE_LSAF: I feel safe when I walk in the <a href="#">area</a> I live in			
Supportive community environment	IE_LSUP: If I have a problem there are people in my local area who will help me			

ICSVRI = Individual vulnerability – resilience sub – index  
+ Parental / caregiver vulnerability – resilience sub  
– index + Family vulnerability – resilience sub – index  
+ Friends / peers / schoolmates vulnerability  
– resilience sub – index + Teachers’ vulnerability  
– resilience sub – index + School vulnerability  
– resilience sub – index + Local area vulnerability  
– resilience sub – index

ICSVRI values range from 0 to 23, where a higher value indicates a higher level of subjective vulnerability, meaning a higher level of the child’s perceived risk of harm to their well-being. More precisely, values 0–5.75 indicate the child is subjectively ‘very resilient’, 5.75–11.5 ‘somewhat resilient’, 11.5–17.25 ‘somewhat vulnerable’, and 17.25–23.0 ‘very vulnerable’.<sup>11</sup>

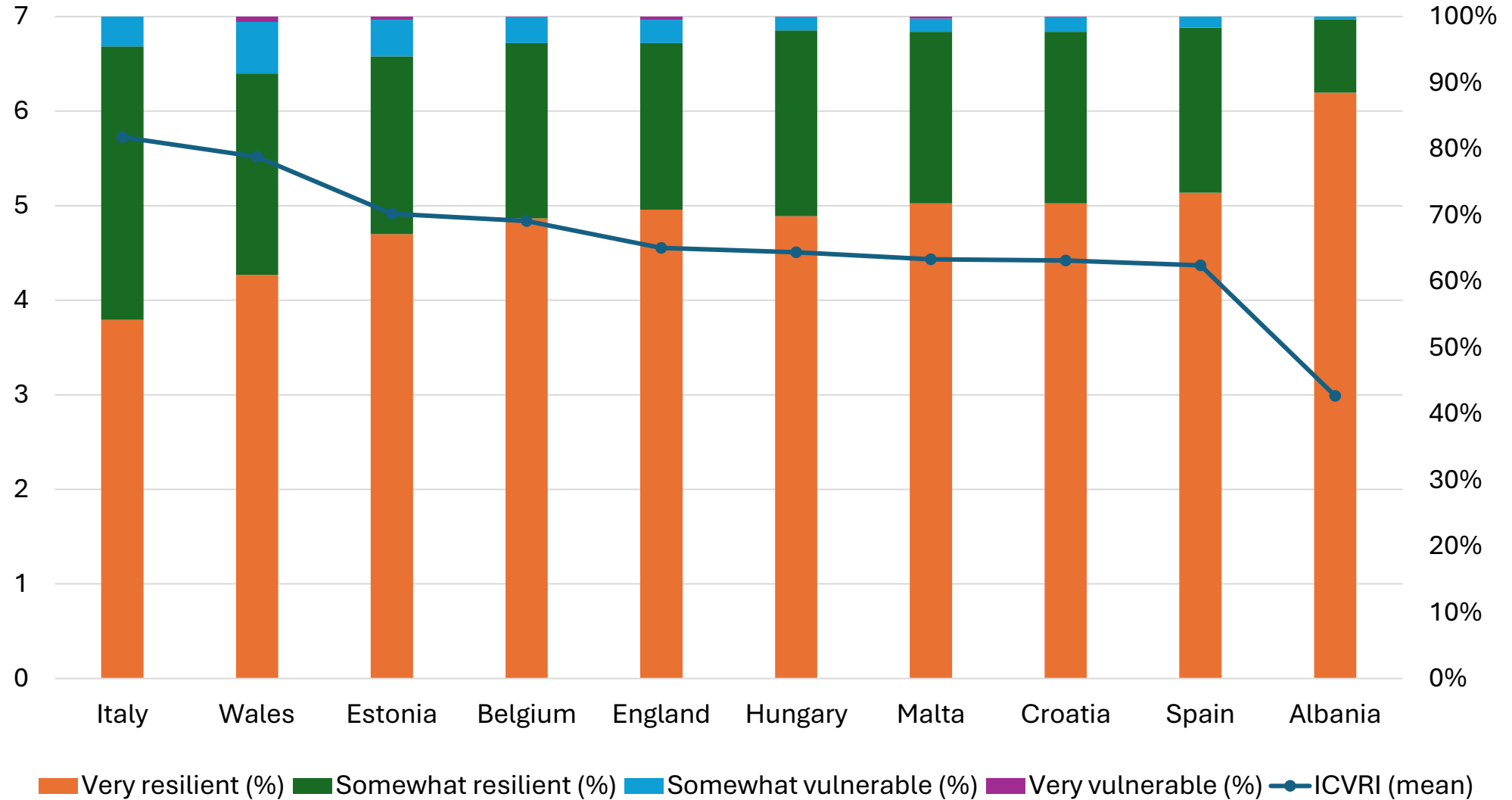
## **2. Internal consistency and external validity of ICSVRI**

- Internal consistency of ICSVRI, measured with Cronbach's alpha, was very good, e.g. ranging from 0.813 in Albania to 0.915 in Wales
- ICSVRI is strongly and negatively (Pearson  $r = -0.668$ ) associated with the 5-item version of the Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale (CW-SWBS5)

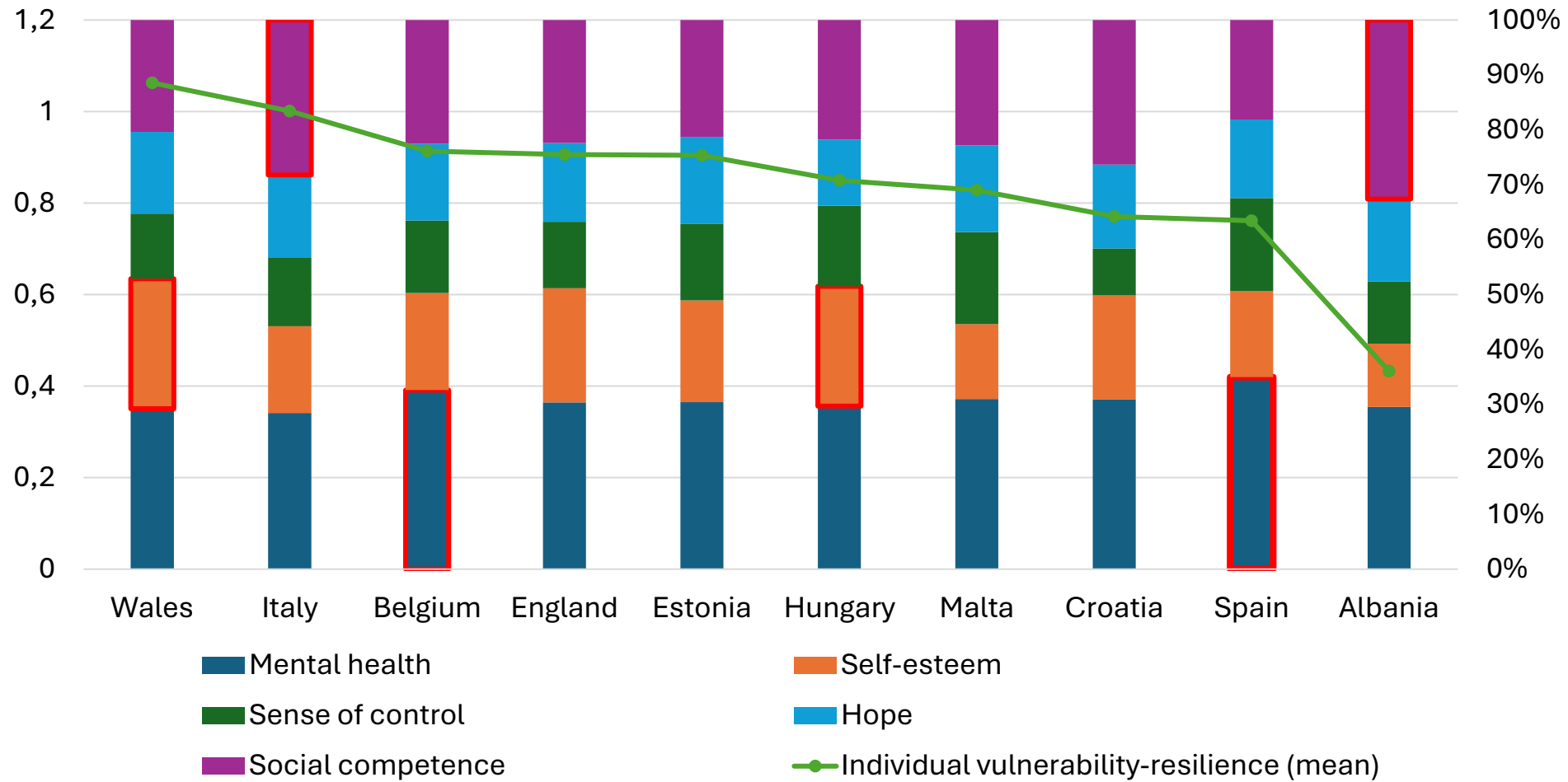


**3. European comparisons of children's worries, including highlighting the most important ones in each of the countries**

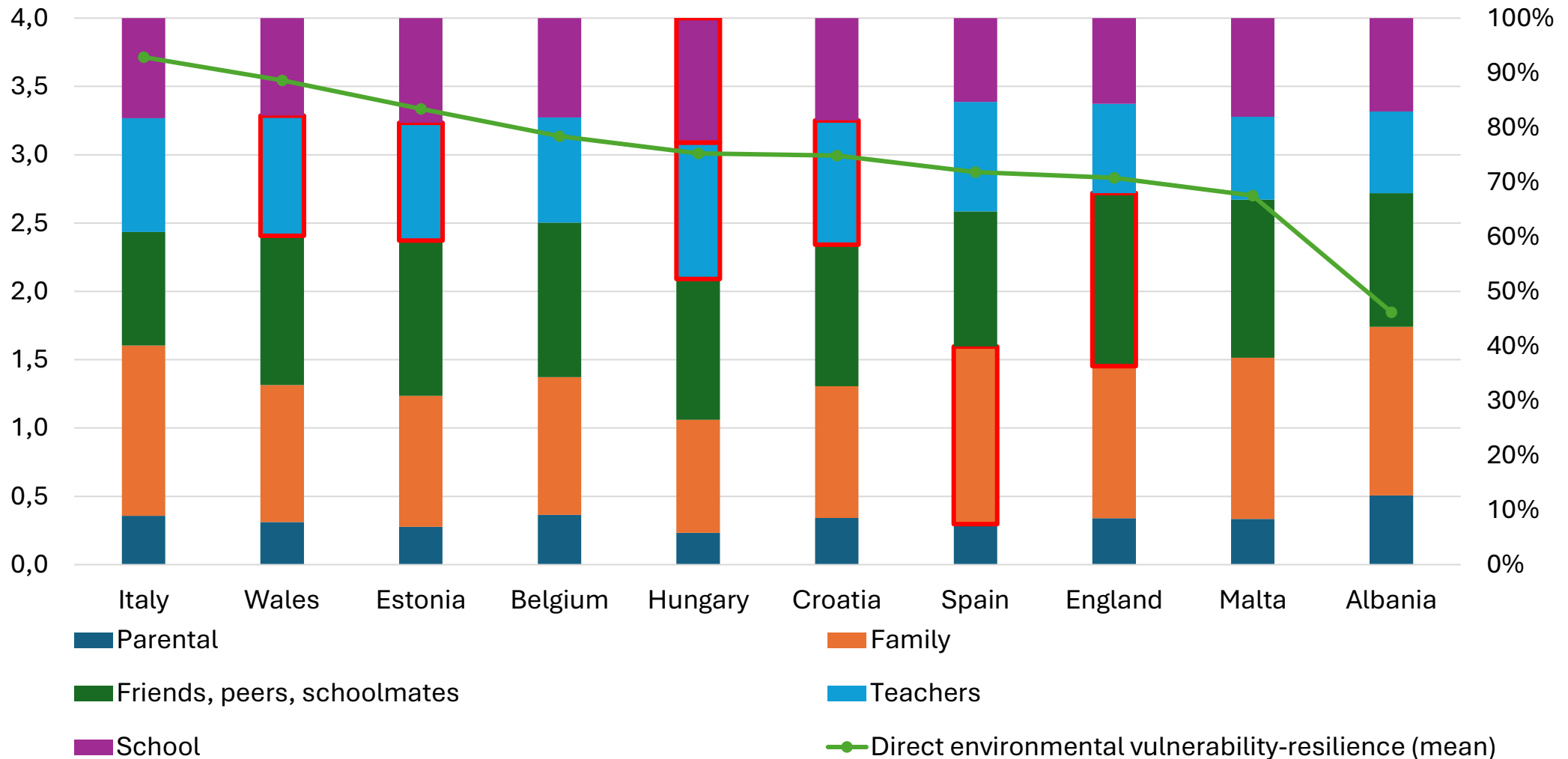
# Overall subjective vulnerability/ worries



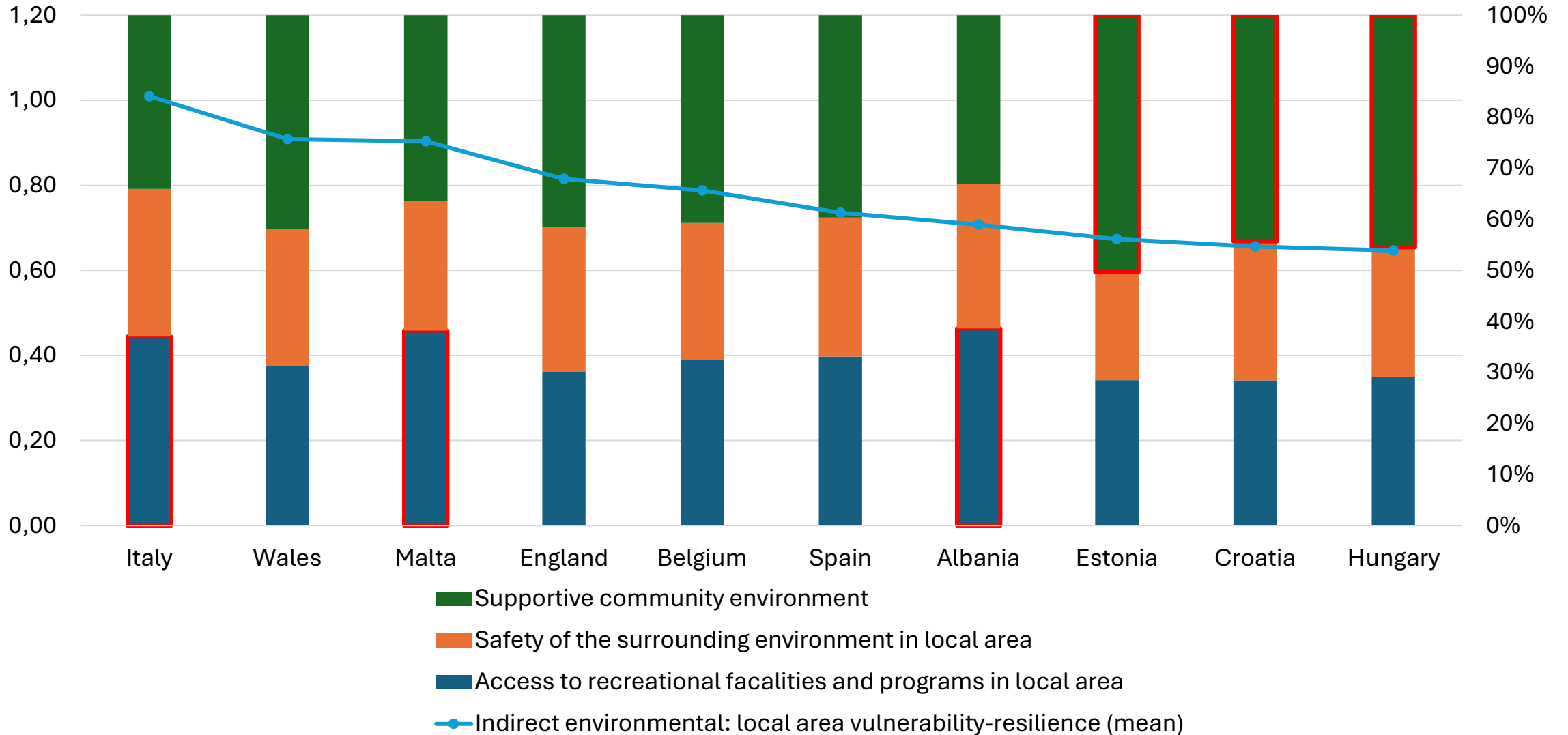
# Individual Subjective Vulnerability/ Worries



# Direct Environmental Subjective Vulnerability/ Worries



# Indirect Environmental Subjective Vulnerability/ Worries



# Most important worry

- Financial and material resources of the family
  - Italy, Estonia, Malta, Spain, Albania
- Unsupportive community environment
  - Wales, Belgium, England, Hungary, Croatia

## **4. Inequalities in child worries by age and gender**

**In most of the selected European countries**

- among 10-year-olds boys have higher subj. vulnerability/ worries than girls

**BUT**

- Girls subj. vulnerability/ worries increase more than for boys in the early teens

- Boys > girls in both age groups
  - Albania
- Boys > girls among 10-year-olds BUT no gender difference among 12-year-olds
  - Croatia, Estonia, Spain
- Boys > girls among 10-year-olds BUT girls > boys among 12-year-olds
  - Italy, Malta, Wales
- No gender difference among 10-year-olds BUT girls > boys among 12-year-olds
  - Hungary
- No gender difference in both age groups
  - Belgium



# Conclusion

- International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI), developed by Nahkur (2024), allows us to get an overview about children's worries in systematic and detailed way based on the sources of their worries
- Internal consistency and external validity analyses of ICSVRI showed good results
- The level of subjective vulnerability/worries are highest in Italy, Wales and lowest in Albania
- Financial and material resources of the family and (un)supportive community environment were the most important worries
- In their early teens girls subj. vulnerability/ worries increase more than for boys