

IN- EQUALITIES



Fondazione
CARIPLO

TUTE SERVARE MUNIFICE DONARE • 1816



INEQUALITIES REPORT ENGLISH EDITION

An investigation into the
blossoming of human potential

GROWTH AND EDUCATIONAL PATHS

From kindergarten to secondary schools,
an investigation into the hindering factors
and the development of young people

2025

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2025

Inequalities and the Future of the Country



Knowledge for action: how Fondazione Cariplo contributes to opportunity, cohesion, and social mobility

by **Giovanni Azzone**

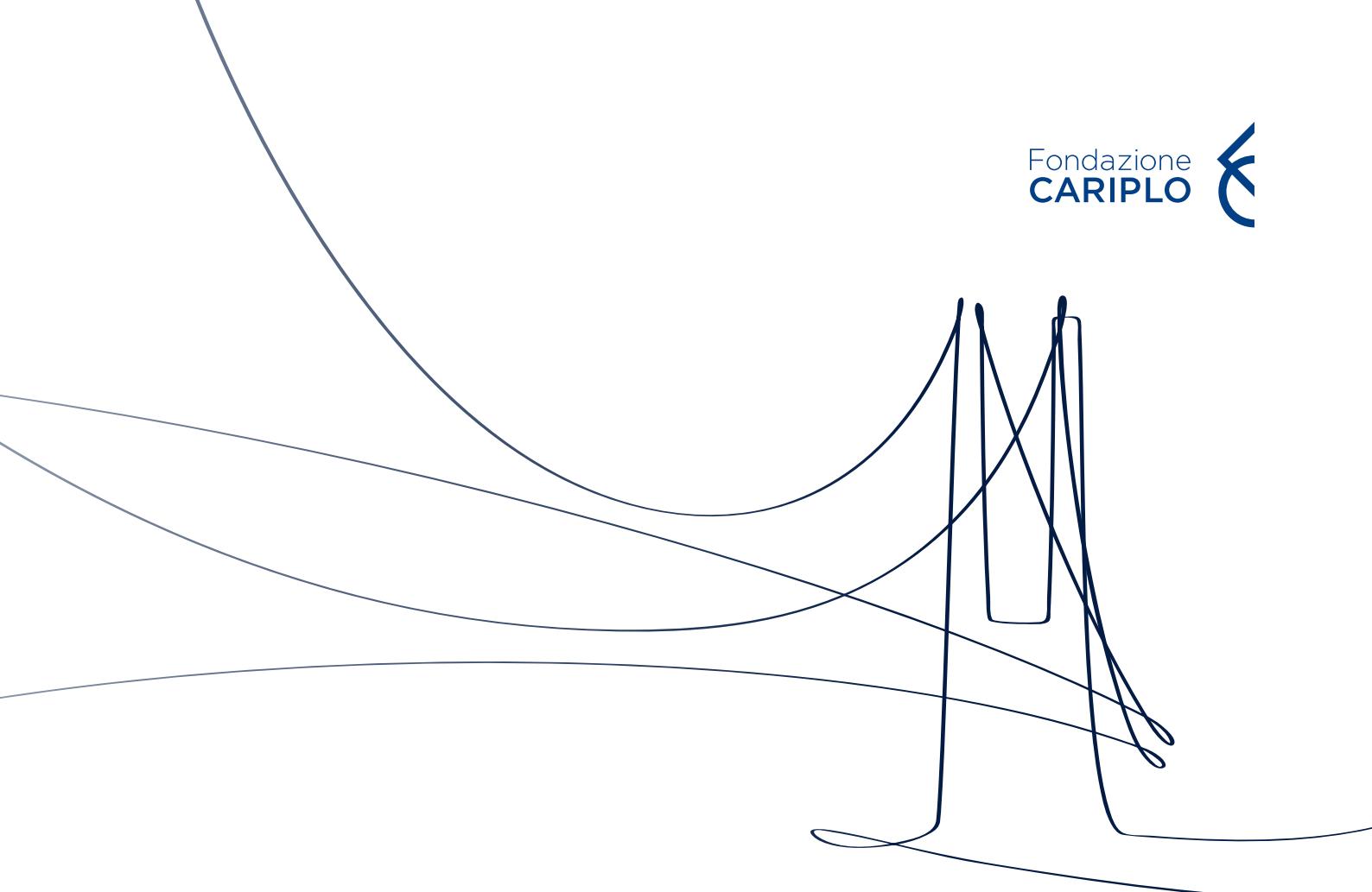
Presidente Fondazione Cariplo

The issue of inequalities has represented, for years, one of the strategic priorities of Fondazione Cariplo's commitment. It is not only an economic or social matter, but a challenge that affects the very quality of our democracy, the cohesion of communities, and the country's ability to look to its future with confidence. Inequalities, in fact, do not simply create gaps in living conditions: they tend to reproduce themselves over time, undermining the opportunities of new generations and weakening the collective actions.

To address this complexity, Fondazione Cariplo has chosen to invest continuously in the production of knowledge, convinced that only a profound understanding of the mechanisms that fuel inequalities – and those that instead foster the expression of human potential – can generate effective, lasting, and shared responses.

The Report you are about to read is part of this journey. It is not merely a collection of data or testimonies, but an operational tool designed for institutions, educational communities, the world of volunteering and the third sector, and for all those who have the responsibility to build fairer and more inclusive conditions. It clearly shows that the flourishing of human potential does not depend solely on individual resources, but on the context of relationships, opportunities, and support that society is able to provide.

This work is linked to the first Report on inequalities published by the Foundation in 2023, in which there was talk of a "broken social lift" – a powerful image that also resonated in the words of Monsignor Matteo Zuppi, president of the Italian Episcopal Conference. That metaphor effectively described the growing difficulty for many people, especially young people, to



improve their living conditions through merit, commitment, and education. Today, some time later, that reflection remains relevant and urges us to continue seeking levers of change that can reactivate paths of social mobility and emancipation.

The Foundation's investment in this area is not sporadic. It is part of a long-term strategy that intertwines research, concrete interventions, the experimentation of innovative practices, and the building of alliances between different actors. Philanthropic actions, to be effective, must be based on solid foundations, capable of understanding complexity and transforming it into visions and public policies.

Now more than ever, an integrated effort from the whole community is needed. No actor, alone, can face and bear the weight of such profound

challenges. An alliance between institutions, civil society, local communities, businesses, and citizens is indispensable. Fondazione Cariplo intends to continue to play its role as promoter and facilitator, making available not only financial resources, but also skills, networks, and listening capacity.

This Report is part of an ongoing commitment that looks to the future with the awareness that fighting inequalities means unleashing energy, strengthening cohesion, and generating opportunities for all. Only in this way we can build a society in which everyone, regardless of their starting conditions, has the real possibility to thrive and contribute to the common good.

Inequalities. A study on human flourishing: breaking the chain of disadvantage is possible.

Inequality is not just a question of numbers or income. It is a personal experience; diverging trajectories; possibilities that stretch or shrink depending on the context in which you are born, grow up and live.

The first Inequalities Report by Fondazione Cariplò stemmed from a deep belief: **inequality does not only affect those who suffer from it. It touches upon the entire community.**

It undermines social cohesion, slows down development and affects mutual trust. However, as we highlighted in 2023, inequality is far from an inevitable fate. Every person has talents, and it is possible to make the most of them, even when the starting conditions are unfavourable.

This second Report aims to understand **what enables human potential to flourish and what hinders it, instead.** We have worked following a structured path, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, data and stories, numbers and voices. We have talked to experts, collected data on a representative sample of young adults, and explored their experiences through individual interviews.

The Report opens with an **analysis** that explores the literature on both risk and protective factors exerting their influence on educational and social trajectories, with a special focus on the role of family, school and the local context.

Starting from this overview, that represents the reference context for the research that we have conducted, the presentation of the first results

obtained starts. From page 22 onwards, in fact, the contributions of 21 experts, selected on the basis of the five dimensions of flourishing that guide our journey – social, health, economic, educational and existential – are reviewed. The following pages provide a rich picture of reflections, highlighting the intertwining of different aspects such as context, relationships, school and community.

From page 34 we get to the heart of the investigation, focusing on **what “flourishing” means.**

What emerges is a complex picture in which personal fulfilment comes from the intertwining of health, relationships, education, economic and family circumstances.

Equally interesting is what emerges on page 56 regarding the key role of family and health in the process of flourishing, which instead sees economic conditions playing a role that is not always decisive. In this regard, the importance of reference figures such as mentors, but also relationships and community, in the stories we have collected and recounted on page 74 certainly leaves its mark.

This report has contributed to highlight that working on inequalities requires **time, listening and vision.** In this regard the opportunity to build a wide and generative alliance between different subjects, public and private entities and citizens emerges, which is capable of nourishing young people generating trust and opening new life trajectories. Because personal growth stems from the balance between individual resources, favourable contexts and support networks. For every person to have the opportunity to flourish, regardless of their starting point.

Summary

INEQUALITIES REPORT ENGLISH EDITION

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THE STORIES BEHIND
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The research work presented was carried out under the coordination of Fondazione Cariplo, with contributions from a small team of three researchers who conducted and analyzed the qualitative interviews, the technical support of IPSOS for the implementation of the quantitative questionnaires, and ongoing dialogue between Fondazione Cariplo and the Advisory Board of the Report. The latter is composed of seven experts, including both members of the Foundation's governing bodies and external professionals, whose expertise ranges from academia to the social, educational, and communication fields. Finally, Lorenzo Salvia, journalist at Corriere della Sera, helped to convey in words the complexity of the findings collected.

Understanding inequalities to design possibilities

Stories of Change

The issue of inequality is complex and multi-layered, and it can be viewed from many angles



“It is possible to break the cycle of social disadvantage: these are stories of blossoming, fulfilment, and quest for the own potential”



From early childhood, every person carries with them a set of inclinations, desires and latent abilities. Under favourable conditions, these potentials find space to express themselves and consolidate. But this does not always happen.

Sometimes external factors such as economic or family situations hinder development; other times, personal or relational resources are the main factors at play. Often, these elements influence each other. It is from this awareness that the work presented in these pages begins. The intent is not to offer definitive answers, but to question – listening carefully to the voices of those involved in this research – the conditions that favour or inhibit the realisation of human potential. We do this through a dual approach: on the one hand, the analysis of quantitative data, which allows us to map difficulties and resources; on the other, the analysis of qualitative data, through listening to individual experiences, which gives depth and complexity to the numbers.

The issue of inequality is complex and multi-layered and it can be viewed from many angles. The first Inequalities Report by Fondazione Cariplo (2023) clearly showed that this phenomenon does not only affect those who suffer its direct consequences but it touches on the entire community.

As with a stone thrown into a pond, the effects of inequality are not limited to individuals but spread to affect everyone. Furthermore, this phenomenon is not limited to the present: it tends to replicate over time, across generations. ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) data clearly show that only 12.8% of young people from families with a low level of education manage to graduate from university, compared to 67.1% of the children of graduates. This gap is not only a number. It reflects a process that begins in the early years of life, within the family, and has a profound impact on the children's cognitive, emotional, linguistic and social development. The consequences reverberate over time, influencing their adult life

and the very fabric of society.

Yet, that 12.8% also tells us something else. It tells us stories of exceptions, and paths that escape the linearity of statistics. Thanks to the research conducted in recent months – and documented in the First Report –, we met young people who have managed to make use of their talents, despite starting from fragile conditions, thus achieving significant results in their educational and professional careers. Their stories do not usually gain the spotlight, often overshadowed by a dominant narrative that focuses on failure, fuelling a deterministic and monotonous view in which individual action seems to have no place. In these stories, those who live in disadvantaged conditions – even if only due to limited access to education – appear to have no alternatives, almost unable to gain the opportunity to change their own and their children's destiny. However, as Professor Paola Milani reminds us in the first Inequalities Report, it is very important not to feel threatened by the prophecy

Inequalities are not a problem for the few: like a stone thrown into a pond, their effects spread, touching on the entire social body





of “failure”. In fact, data confirm that it is possible to break the cycle of disadvantage. With this work, whose goal is to contribute to the spread of generative dynamics, we wanted to give voice to those paths of blossoming, fulfilment and discovery of one’s potential.

To complement the reference literature, we decided to take a closer look at cases that “*do not conform to the rule*” in order to try to understand what happens when things work, and therefore what levers are capable of multiplying stories of unexpected success. This is not a matter of mere curiosity: it is a work of research and reconstruction.

Before delving into the field research, it is useful to remember

that the literature has identified both some risk factors – elements that hinder social enhancement – and some protective or enabling factors¹, which make it possible to flourish even in difficult contexts. The distinction, however, is not rigid: in real life, these factors intertwine and blend together in unpredictable ways, generating paths of resilience or stagnation, development or fragility. Research teaches us that, **rather than the number of risk or protective factors present in a person’s life, the possibility of building environments capable of balancing these elements matters the most**, thus tipping the scales towards more positive outcomes.

This is not a matter of mere curiosity: it is a work of research and reconstruction that aims to show how the future is not carved in stone, but it can be built, even when favourable conditions are missing

1. These are often referred to as protective and risk factors. In this report, we will use alternatively terms such as hindering and development factors, obstacles and enabling factors.



STORIES OF CHANGE

Risk factors

The family and social roots of educational inequalities

When origins matter more than talent in life trajectories

According to several researchers, including Carriero, Filandri, and Parisi (2014), one of the most important risk factors concerns the set of social, economic, cultural, and individual elements that characterise the family of origin in a strict sense, hence the parents. The literature tells us that these elements exert a major influence on the future lives of both sons and daughters.

Such influence can be linked directly to the family of origin, starting from the parents and therefore to the educational, cultural and training opportunities they are able to offer to their children; alternatively, it can be more closely linked to the social component, i.e. to the relational networks. When these are solid and of high quality, they contribute

positively to access privileged positions. As highlighted in other studies, including those by Matras (1984) and Schizzerotto (2011), the influence of the family of origin can also act indirectly, for example through the parents' level of education, which is reflected in the children's expectations, role models and educational decisions.



The family is not only a place where material resources are conveyed: cultural orientations and aspirations are also transmitted, which contribute to defining the educational and professional trajectories of the younger generations

as Breen & Goldthorpe (1997), argue that families boasting a high socioeconomic status aim to maintain their acquired status and therefore tend to enrol their children in a grammar school, while families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds prefer shorter courses to facilitate the children's access into the labour market.

Challenging the “social division” that characterises the modern school system can have significant consequences. In particular, students from low-income backgrounds who enrol in schools perceived as being *“out of their scope”* are at greater risk of dropping out. As highlighted by the work of Reyes, Navarro & Tapia-Ladino (2019), these students tend to be influenced by complex dynamics, including problems with motivation, stigmatisation and low expectations, from both the school environment and the wider social context. The tension between social belonging and educational environment can generate a sense of mismatch, which translates into difficulties in adapting, loss of confidence in one's abilities and, in some cases, dropping out.

In this sense, the family is not only a place where material resources are conveyed: cultural orientations and aspirations are also transmitted, which contribute to defining the educational and professional trajectories of the younger generations.

As Gambetta (1987) and Schizzerotto (1995) remind us, the family plays an important role in making decisions about the children's educational path, from the choice of which secondary school to attend, to deciding whether to continue their studies after their diploma or not. Several researchers, such

The family also has a strong influence on the academic performance of children, as highlighted, for example, by Coleman and Mowat (2019) in their study on the impact of social inequality and poverty on the mental health, well-being and academic performance of children in Scotland.

According to scientific literature, another risk factor is economic inequality, which brings various forms of disparity with it, including access to healthcare, cultural activities, and extracurricular educational and recreational services. Socio-economic vulnerability can also affect the relationship between parents and children, thus exposing children to a greater risk of domestic violence and developmental problems, i.e. late language acquisition, attention deficit or poor emotional regulation. This can also have consequences on the children's individual well-being, leading to anxiety disorders, depression and behavioural problems.

Literature also shows that some risk factors can arise in schools, turning them from places where differences can be annihilated, as Avci (2022) points out, into places where these same differences are amplified. The fact that students from privileged backgrounds tend to choose grammar schools, while those from disadvantaged families tend to choose technical or vocational schools, can limit the integration of groups, prevent the exchange of social and cultural capital, and promote discrimination and “different” and unequal access to educational resources, as observed by

Ebersöhn (2017). As highlighted by several studies on Anglo-Saxon contexts, in which public schools have often stood out for being underfunded and associated with an inexperienced teaching staff (*Flores, 2022 and Murrell, 2007*), schools can contribute to increasing inequalities. In contexts of this type, there is a risk of favouring low completion rates and limited access to many “quality” life opportunities, such as a good job, a good income, a rich network of social relationships, and the availability of free time and of cultural opportunities. That is not all. According to Ávila *Reyes, Navarro and Tapia-Ladino (2020)*, attending schools with a high concentration of students having learning difficulties,

from low-income families and belonging to ethnic minorities, not only increases the likelihood of academic failure and negatively affects the achievement of personal and professional goals, but it is also a factor that risks having negative repercussions on self-perception. As *Turcatti (2018)* points out, the teachers’ low expectations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds can have profound and lasting effects. In some cases, such expectations translate into a tendency to choose low-level educational pathways, even when the pupils’ abilities are good or even high.

Overall, this dynamic can generate a deep sense of inadequacy and insecurity in boys and girls. It

is not a matter of lacking skills, but rather a mismatch between individual potential and the school environment, which struggles to recognise or fully value the students’ resources.

This is not a matter of lacking skills, but rather a mismatch between individual potential and the school environment, which fails to recognise or fully value the students' resources



The mismatch between what students are capable of doing and what the school environment expects of them can become an obstacle, not so much because of objective reasons, but because of the lack of a space where those skills can be expressed and recognised.

A bit like in the so-called “*self-fulfilling prophecies*”, students tend to align themselves with what they perceive as their teachers’ implicit demands. They internalise a narrow image of themselves, which leads them to limit their commitment, lose confidence in their abilities and, as a result, perform worse at school.

In this way, the initial expectation is confirmed, because it has helped shape the behaviour, the expectations and the results of the students themselves, triggering a vicious circle that is difficult to break if not properly recognised and addressed.

As the literature references given so far show, different risk factors rarely occur in isolation. Nowadays these elements tend to be more and more intertwined and to add up, thus generating cumulative effects that amplify the conditions of disadvantage.

So, the literature tells us that when several risk factors occur simultaneously, the likelihood of finding oneself in a vulnerable situation increases exponentially. As Agasisti and Longobardi (2014), among others, point out, it is not just a sum of obstacles; actually, their interaction enhances individual and collective fragilities and makes it more difficult to access opportunities for growth and fulfilment.



“When several risk factors occur simultaneously, the likelihood of finding oneself in a vulnerable condition increases exponentially”

Fortunately there are also protective factors, which, if activated, can help break the spiral of disadvantage, promoting the recognition of one’s own potential.

These are the very factors that we shift our focus to, trying to understand how they work and under what conditions they can make a difference.



STORIES OF CHANGE

Protective factors

Where potential flourishes

The conditions that contribute to the flourishing of human potential

If what is decisive is the intertwining of a plurality of variables, often of different natures, it is legitimate to ask how we can intervene on the enabling levers to support the development of human potential and breaking the chain of inequality.

Protective factors include individual factors, highlighted among others by *Kundu (2017)* and *García-Vesca & Domínguez-*

de La Ossa (2013), such as good mental health and awareness of one's emotions, the drive to attain results, self-confidence, autonomy, and problem-solving skills.

Relational factors are also very important and have been the focus of attention of scholars such as *Banerjee and Lamb (2016)*: these include relationships with peers, teachers and family. In particular, as highlighted by

Borman and Rachuba (2001), peer relationships play a crucial role in promoting academic and life success among students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These findings are in line with those by *Turcatti and Wößmann (2003)*, who argue that emotional support from peers is essential in maintaining motivation to learn and creating a sense of belonging to the school community. However, the relationship between teacher

The intervention on one or more of these variables can hence exert a protective effect, i.e. supporting the development of human potential and breaking the chain of inequality

and pupil is also central. A study by Harris shows that in high-flying schools in the USA – i.e. schools enrolling students from disadvantaged environments showing excellent school performance – positive student-teacher relationships can help students achieve higher results. More generally, several studies confirm that, in all schools, strong student-teacher bonds create a supportive environment that fosters learning. The student-teacher relationship also remains central at university level. A study

conducted by *Ellis and Johnston (2020)* focused on the so-called “care leavers”, i.e. young people who have spent part of their lives under state care away from their families, and who leave the care system after the age of 18. In their case, a supportive and trusting relationship with their teachers can be crucial to complete university. A positive relationship with teachers helps overcome academic difficulties and promotes greater motivation and self-confidence, facilitating the achievement of educational goals.

The relationships with the family and between the family and the school system are also important, as highlighted, for example, by *Ebersöhn (2017) and Rezai (2015)*. Parental involvement in their children’s studies, particularly in terms of “academic socialisation”², improves school performance and influences the health and well-being of students from low class, as reported by *Westerlund (2013) and Mowat (2019)*. According to some research, such as that by *Banerjee and Lamb (2016)*,

children from disadvantaged backgrounds can produce higher performance if their parents are helped and provided with the best strategies to support their children’s school experience. These include creating opportunities for conversation with the children in order to promote their language development, setting up adequate spaces for studying at home, or maintaining open communication with the school and the teachers.

Among the most frequently highlighted protective factors in the literature there is also the parents’ level of education. We have already found it among the risk factors and, in fact, it can act in both ways, representing as much a resource when it is high as a limitation when lacking.

Several scholars, including *Karklina (2012)* and *Avci (2022)*, have pointed out that parents that have a higher educational level tend to invest more time and resources in their children’s education, providing cognitive stimulation, emotional support and academic guidance. In addition, the parents’ prestigious occupations can represent a motivational model for their children, helping strengthen their aspirations and confidence in their own abilities.

Wealthier families are also often able to provide highly qualified educational resources. From dedicated study spaces, to extracurricular activities and access to higher-quality schools, this all helps amplify the children’s learning opportunities and academic success.

2. Academic socialisation refers to the process through which parents convey study- and school-related attitudes, values and behaviours to their children, thereby promoting motivation, commitment and a sense of effectiveness in carrying out school activities.

There is no doubt, protective factors are manifold and often intertwined, generating effects that can help break the chain of social disadvantage.

In addition to what has already emerged, it is useful to mention a few other protective factors that emerged in literature or field experience:

- Attendance at nursery and/or preschool,
- Safe and stimulating school environments, where educators are able to value the pupils' experiences and identities, promoting participation and motivation,
- Extended school hours, in small classes and with the presence of support teachers,

- Highly performing classmates who are able to "drive" the class towards better results,
- Books and devices connected to the Internet at home, which can broaden learning opportunities and access to knowledge.

Drawing up a complete list of protective factors would be a complex and necessarily incomplete exercise. However, the time has come to take a step further; we now want to focus on the opinions of the experts we have involved in our research to understand which levers are the most effective nowadays in supporting the development of the human potential.

Parents that have a higher educational level tend to invest more time and resources in their children's education, providing cognitive stimulation, emotional support and academic guidance



FURTHER INSIGHT

Equity in education

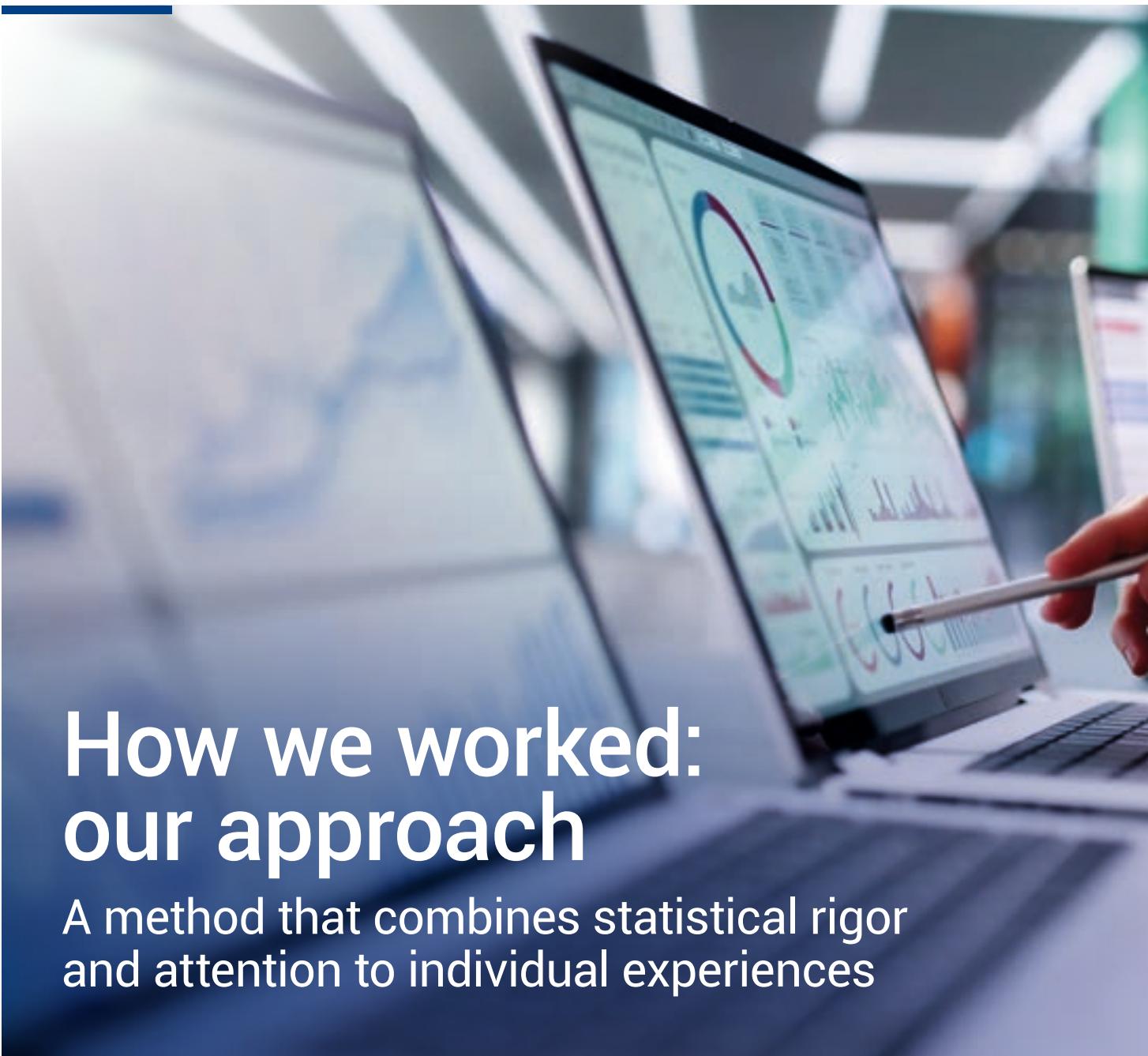
The literature describing the fight on social inequalities talks about a fundamental concept: "**equity in education**". According to Ferrari's definition, this is **the ability to guarantee** everyone's access to a **democratic and attentive education**, providing the resources and support to **develop their potential, talents, aptitudes and aspirations**. It is a guiding principle of national and international education policies that Countries are committed to safeguarding in order to create a more equitable society that guarantees equal learning opportunities, regardless of social factors such as gender, economic status or migrant origin.

The concept first appeared in an official document on **20th November 1989**, a few days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the UN General Assembly discussed and approved the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. Almost 30 years later, on **25th September 2015**, the same UN Assembly adopted **the 2030 Agenda**, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal no. 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and no. 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education).



Since then, the international community has noticeably **increased its efforts to achieve greater equity in access to education** for all children in the family, at school, in the community and throughout life (*Lifelong Learning Education*). However, to date, despite considerable variations, **no Country in the world** can claim to have **eradicated the socio-economic inequalities** that prevent access to education and training.





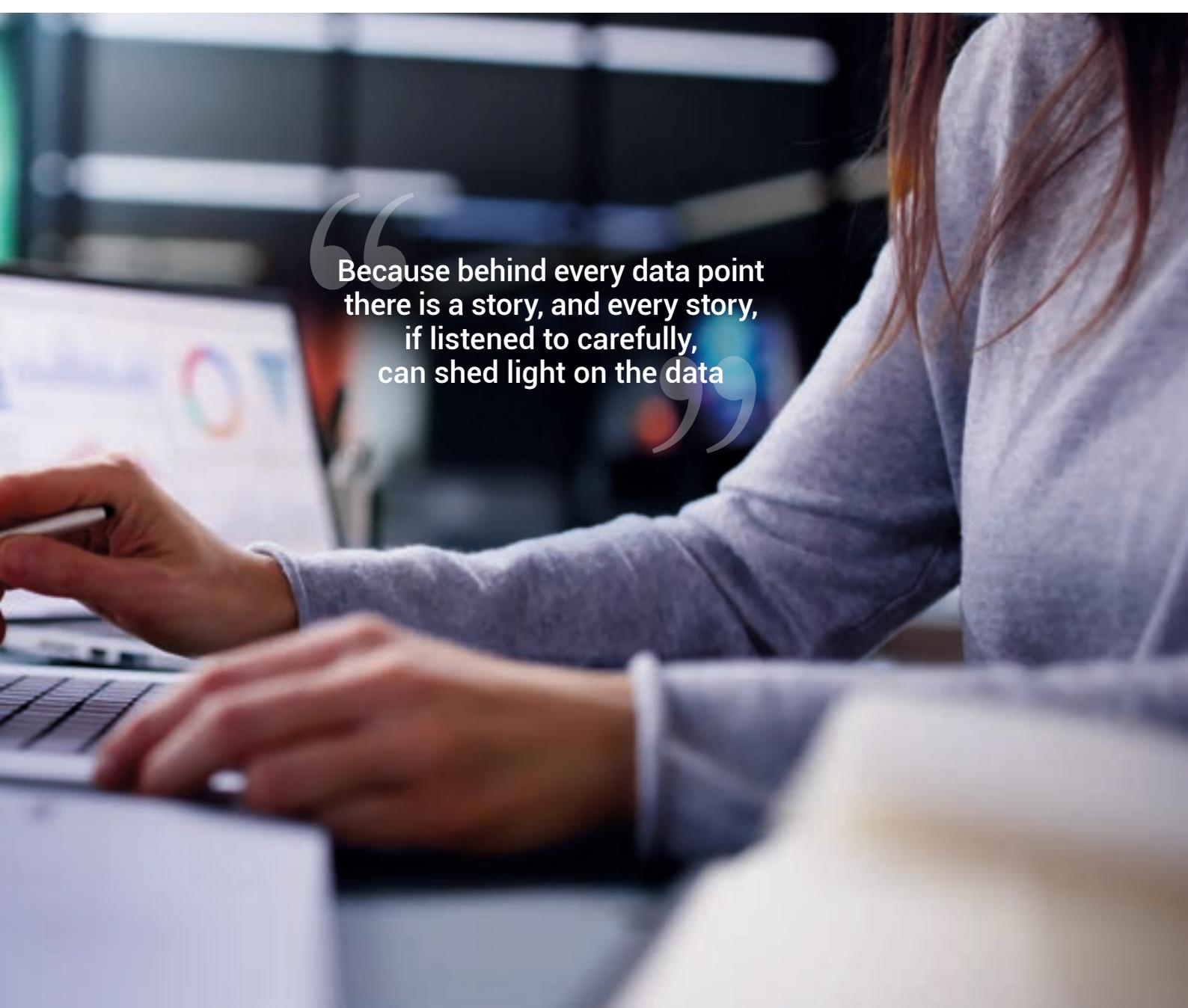
How we worked: our approach

A method that combines statistical rigor and attention to individual experiences

Before describing the results, we will briefly present the adopted methodological approach.

As mentioned at the beginning, our survey combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. This dual perspective – both statistical and narrative – is not merely a methodological exercise. It is a choice that

reflects the complexity of the topic and we hope that it has allowed us to capture common traits, nuances, ambivalences and discontinuities running through experiences. In fact, there is a story behind every piece of data, and every story – if carefully listened to – can clarify data, making it more readable and, at the same time, capable of picking the “human” aspect that is important to understand.



“Because behind every data point there is a story, and every story, if listened to carefully, can shed light on the data”

In order to combine the two perspectives—numbers and stories – we relied on a structured questionnaire, which allowed us to collect data on a large sample and to outline trends, perceptions and living conditions. At the same time, we listened to the people's voices through qualitative interviews, which gave us an insight into the complexity of individual journeys.

One final consideration: in the following sections, the two approaches will be considered in an integrated and complementary manner.

A rigid hierarchy was deliberately excluded, in favour of an approach that combines data and narratives with the sole aim of promoting understanding of the reality under investigation.

Conversations about growth and flourishing paths

The voices of the experts

Twenty-one interviews to discuss
what promotes or hinders individual
growth paths

*“What are the factors
that can promote
or hinder personal
fulfilment?”*





Within this broad research framework, we begin our story by listening to the voices of a small sample of experts³, namely people who, for professional reasons and due to their sensitivity, observe closely the processes of personal growth and fulfilment.

They are people coming from different sectors who all can boast a long experience on the field and who have agreed to answer an apparently simple question: in your opinion, what are the factors that can foster or hinder personal fulfilment?

The following pages will try to convey the richness of their answers aiming to **outline an initial frame of reference**. This will help us interpret the fieldwork we will present in the next chapter and identify some additional hints for reflection in the future.

3. Further information on the composition of our panel of experts and on the working method is available at the end of the chapter.



THE VOICE OF THE EXPERTS

The importance of context, which is never the same

Factors that matter

Between environment and identity: how young people grow up today

One of the first elements to emerge concerns the role of the environment in which young people grow up. According to the experts, context not only affects individual well-being, but can act as either a protective lever or a risk factor, helping to define opportunities for development and flourishing in a more or less favourable way. **Students in urban areas**, for example, can benefit from the proximity of libraries, museums and cultural spaces that can enrich their learning experience. Conversely,

communities that are more isolated may offer a narrow range of opportunities for growth, making targeted support necessary to enable everyone to express their own potential fully, regardless of their background. However, the impact of context is neither linear nor static; it depends on a **combination of factors that vary over time**. In recent years, for example, the pace of daily life has accelerated while, at the same time, the stages of life have lengthened, partly as a result of demographic change and rising

average life expectancy. This has caused a **delay in the transition to adulthood**. While connections and opportunities seem to have multiplied, access to real autonomy has become more complex. The **extended economic dependence** on the family of origin has created a **sense of suspension**, a limbo in which young people struggle to find their place. This phenomenon also explains why the transition to adulthood is often described as a **critical moment**, marked by waiting, uncertainty and a widespread sense of anxiety.

As an expert observed, “*this period of waiting is now giving rise to new forms of unease. We are not necessarily talking about pathological disorders, but rather the difficulty of living in a limbo that once characterised only adolescents and now affects young adults as well*”.

Two experts also spoke of a generation less hungry for change than in the past or than their peers in other countries, such as England or the Nordic countries. A “sedentary” generation, according to their expression, which struggles to mobilise itself. One of the risks the experts most frequently mention concerns the progressive de-empowerment of young people, which can translate into a sense of inadequacy and low self-esteem. When the initial social and economic conditions are disadvantaged, this risk is further amplified: inequality not only limits opportunities, but can also lead to a passive, defeatist attitude that **hinders the possibility of imagining and building a different future**.

This condition does not only concern material poverty, but also educational, relational and symbolic poverty. In this scenario, some experts suggested the importance of developing new policies to support the transition to adulthood that can foster the reactivation of motivation, the restoration of trust and the creation of contexts in which young people can feel recognised and valued. Creating the conditions for the potential talented young people growing up in our country **to feel entitled to decide what to do with their lives** means

promoting their autonomy and their ability to **make informed choices**. According to many interviewees, this type of context **activates a virtuous circle of accountability, trust and independence**, and thus fosters the development of a welcoming environment where skills and aspirations can blossom, reducing that feeling of being suspended, in which young people feel “in limbo” between a desire for stability and a reality marked by uncertainty in terms of work, relationships and housing.

widespread and underlying malaise that also affects young people living in apparently favourable contexts. “*The emergency no longer concerns only children born into a context of educational, family, cultural and social poverty. Today, the problem is with those who were born into well-off families, who have grown up in big cities, who have economic possibilities and opportunities, but who are not well from a psychological point of view. We are losing them all too.*”

The growing role of digital technology in the daily lives of young people has very often emerged in relation to these discussions. According to many voices we listened to, today’s boys and girls are **increasingly immersed in virtual environments** and they are **less and less committed to acting in real life**. It is a malaise that dramatically affects population groups with lower incomes. The latter struggle to offer their children structured activities – sports, language and music courses, summer camps – to fill in their free time. In these cases, smartphones often become the only accessible alternative. However, even affluent families are not immune to this condition: the form may change, but the substance remains the same.

The result is a growing prevalence of social withdrawal, sedentary lifestyles, anxiety, obesity and, in some cases, aggressive behaviours.

Creating the conditions for young people to feel entitled to decide what to do with their lives means promoting autonomy and awareness

Alongside a shared vision of the central role of context, some experts commented on the role of a series of aspects which we could define as individual such as temperament, personal inclinations and attitude towards life. Many of them emphasised that these factors alone are not sufficient to explain trajectories of development and achievement. This is not to deny their importance, but to recognise that the interplay with external – family, social and educational – conditions largely defines the possibilities for growth and flourishing. Two interviewees, moreover, highlighted the recent spread of a **more transversal**,

THE VOICE OF THE EXPERTS

The role of family and school

The educational alliance that can make a difference

The importance of origins and the challenge of transforming inequalities into possibilities

Among the most significant factors that emerged from the interviews, experts agreed on the importance of the social and economic status of the family of origin. As one of them observed, “*cultural starting conditions, and therefore not only socio-economic conditions, but also the parents' educational qualifications for example, highly contribute to determining the children's educational outcomes (80% or 90%)*”. Despite its significance, this figure is not to be interpreted as an inevitable life sentence: for many interviewees, it is rather the starting point on which other elements capable of influencing the development of individual potential can be developed.

The family can exert **both a positive and a negative influence**: “*If your mother is a housewife, you will more likely think that women should stay at home*”. Conversely, growing up in a stimulating family environment, where parents are present, educated and encourage reading – even complex or scientific books – can offer valuable opportunities for discussion, inspiration and growth. In this sense, the family is not only an emotional context, but also a place where worldviews, expectations and possibilities are shaped.

For young adults from other countries, balancing the culture of their country of origin with

Italian culture can be particularly challenging. According to experts, being a migrant during one's formative years is in itself a factor of inequality: the linguistic and cultural gap, the lack of family support and the loneliness of decoding a new world are key obstacles.

According to many experts, school can also play a decisive role. For some, it represents a fundamental weapon against inequality: “*It is a great tool for preventing initial fragilities from becoming a major factor of inequality. In Italian society, it allows people to express themselves. So that's where the game is played*”. However, some pointed out that it can also become

an **obstacle** to personal fulfilment today, due to certain characterising weaknesses: “*Currently, schools tend to focus heavily on education, neglecting the development of creativity. Little space is left for discussion and debate. Students and teachers are strictly bound to programmes that often end up repeating themselves throughout the different school cycles. As a result, the focus is on the quantity of things learned rather than on their quality.*”

According to some, schools are chained to **assessment criteria that belong to the past**: “*They should try to welcome these children and work with them to understand what their abilities might be. But at school, we assess children on the basis of criteria of the past... which allow little space for the skills required by today's world.*” And Italian schools also seem unprepared to embrace the diversity that characterises their students. According to experts, there is a lack of specific training, linguistic-cultural mediation and attention to individual stories. Yet data tells us that in 2025, over 930,000 students with non-Italian citizenship (CNI) will attend Italian schools, from nursery school to secondary school. This data, compiled by the Fondazione ISMU ETS from sources provided by the Ministry of Education and Merit, represents 11.6% of the total number of students enrolled: a percentage that reflects

a now structural reality of the Italian school system, where the presence of pupils with a migrant background is no longer an exception, but a significant and growing component.

The geographical distribution of these students shows a strong concentration in northern Italy, with the north-west accounting for almost 40%. Lombardy remains the region with the highest number of CNI pupils, accounting for 26% of the total (approximately 236,000 students), followed by Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Lazio and Piedmont.

Barriers to access and cultural barriers persist in schools, even with regard to the growing number of students with some form of disability. Experts tell us that, while there has been a cultural shift in the perception of disability, which is no longer hidden or treated in a paternalistic manner, schools often lack the resources to manage and support students in the best possible way. Thus, with the number of disabled students continuing to grow⁴, disability remains a factor of inequality, especially for those without financial resources or support networks.

Also **university** can represent an opportunity for redemption or, based on the conditions, a **tool** to deepen inequality. “*If a student – either a boy or a girl – attends a more competitive and qualified*

university, they will be surrounded by more talented colleagues. Hence, they will improve more than the students who attend less competitive universities or do not attend university at all. Therefore, an initial, possible small difference can be amplified exponentially.”

Only two of the 21 experts interviewed did not mention either school or family in their answers. **Family was mentioned in nine interviews, in five cases as a positive factor. School, on the other hand, was mentioned ten times, in four cases as a support for blossoming.**

Of course, school and family are not separate worlds. On the contrary, **these two dimensions** together can account for an additional factor to promote **the development of talents**. One expert compared the relationship between school and family to that between two parents: if they do not agree on their line of conduct, children will often be disoriented. Conversely, if their conducts are consistent, children will follow a clearer direction and will be less likely to engage in dysfunctional behaviours. The **old alliance between school and family, however, now seems to have broken**. In fact, many parents feel guilty since they are not spending enough time with their children, and therefore they have started **defending their children in any open conflict with the school system** today.

4. According to the Istat report “The inclusion of pupils with disabilities in schools - School year 2023-2024”, in recent years, the number of pupils with disabilities in Italian schools has grown significantly, reaching almost 359,000 in 2023/2024, an increase of 26% compared to 2018/2019. The presence is more marked in primary and lower secondary schools, and there are significant gender disparities (228 males for every 100 females) linked to neurodevelopmental disorders. The most common disabilities are intellectual (40%) and psychological (35%), followed by learning and attention disorders. Thirty-seven per cent of students have more than one disability, and 28% have autonomy issues, especially in communication and using the toilet. Lombardy remains the region with the highest number of pupils with disabilities, maintaining its lead in all school cycles.

THE VOICE OF THE EXPERTS

Mentors⁵ and the educational community: the oxygen that keeps fire burning

Investing in educational alliances to combat inequalities

Relationships that spark, networks that support

Discussions with experts have highlighted two elements that seem to play a crucial role in the path towards fulfilment: **mentors** and the **educational community**. A mentor enables young people to discover themselves, their potential and their aspirations.

The educational community, on the other hand, groups together all actors – from schools to social services and associations – who work together to create an environment conducive to the individual and social development of young people.

Focusing on the figure of the mentor, two main profiles emerged from the experts' accounts. In the first case, a mentor is a person who, like a **mirror**, **helps young people see themselves**, recognise/discover their skills, and spark their curiosity and desire to get

involved. “*Each of us has resources that we cannot see. You need someone in front of you to help you, a teacher, the one who used to teach skills, knowledge, but also passion in medieval times. (...) These resources need to be brought out, and to do this you need an adult, who cannot always be found in the family.*”

The second profile is that of the **aspirational role model, who demonstrates** that it is possible to change your initial conditions and to realise your potential even when starting from a position of fragility. “*Young people need a role model [...]. The encounter is fundamental: you meet a teacher, a priest, a coach, a trainer, an educator who knows how to win you over, who lights the flame inside you.*”

The educational community, on the other hand, plays a role, which is complementary to that of the mentor. Where the mentor ignites the spark, the **community is the network that supports it**. It is precisely in the most fragile contexts – where family, social and cultural references are often lacking – that the community can offer opportunities for inclusion, protection and learning. Scout groups, basketball teams and voluntary activities are just a few examples of places where young people can be recognised, empowered and enabled to contribute with their skills. These spaces are free from judgement, but characterised by acceptance. “*This is not a place to judge, but a place to welcome, so there is no need to be*

afraid to express freely everything you have inside.”

In these contexts, the dynamics and results can be very different from those in schools. “*Young people ask me if they can work because they see work as a real tool for integration and satisfaction. Many young people start from a school narrative of failure, of not being able to do things. But this is natural if we consider that school standards date back to the 20th century and require our young people to learn contents and skills that they probably no longer recognise as useful.*”

The educational community network can generate a **sense of belonging to the group** and this translates into a protective factor, according to many experts. This is both because it is essential for the **development of identity in adolescence** and because it acts as a **barrier to aggregation in negative groups**, where individual potential can be channelled into unconstructive or illegal activities.

Several experts considered the **combination** of mentor and educational community to be crucial. The mentor can light the flame, but the network keeps it alive. “*You need an engine to provide the thrust but ignition is not enough. You also need endurance, which is perhaps the most complex thing. (...) The way I see it, the group or a person helps you recognise yourself, and that ignites you. Then, you must keep it burning, and here a single person is no longer enough; you also need*

the network because that is when you can get lost. I may have seen the flame go out at a certain point. Then it reignites maybe, but there are no miracles in this dynamic.”

Furthermore, the educational community is not limited to boys and girls. It can also be a point of reference for parents who, like the school system, are often seen by experts as unprepared to deal with fragile situations. This is due to a lack of cultural, social and economic resources, but also because contemporary challenges have proven to be new and sometimes unexpected. Just think of the COVID-19 pandemic or the spread of artificial intelligence. And it is exactly in these discussions that the theme of **prevention frequently recurs in the collected interviews, that however remains in the background in current practices**, which are focused on managing **problems that have already emerged**. One example can be found in the presence of psychological counselling services in schools. In these cases, action is taken to remedy a problem that has already arisen. Prevention, on the other hand, could mean working on the educational aspect. Another expert provided one more example of an approach aimed at prevention with regard to parenting: “*Childbirth is nowadays exclusively accompanied by health support; however, if an educational programme were also provided, we would create the conditions for reducing the new parents’ anxiety.*”

5. The word “mentor”, in its English meaning, refers to a figure who offers guidance, support and inspiration to another person, usually less experienced, on a path of personal or professional growth. Unlike the Italian term mentore, which can sound more formal or linked to a defined role, mentor in English encompasses a wider range of relationships: it can refer to informal support, a role model, a person who listens, advises, encourages and shares experiences, even outside a hierarchical or structured relationship. In many contemporary contexts, mentor is used to describe a two-way relationship based on trust and exchange, in which even the guide can learn and grow. This term has also been adopted in our document because it better reflects the variety of experiences and approaches that emerged, and was used spontaneously by interviewers, interviewees and questionnaire respondents.

THE VOICE OF THE EXPERTS

Good practices and ideas for the future

Concrete actions to promote autonomy and belonging

Replicable experiences that strengthen bonds, stimulate responsibility and youth participation

What concrete actions can be taken to support the personal fulfilment of those starting from a disadvantaged position?

Interviews have identified a number of good practices – projects or interventions that can be replicated in different contexts –, that are able to accompany young people along paths of growth, well-being and belonging. There are numerous examples, and despite their variety, they offer valuable insights for the local administrations and the people responsible for defining public policies

The described cases also include the story of Filipino boys and girls in Milan who get together to dance to the music of their country. All students at Milanese schools, they have created an **informal community through word of mouth**, born from the grassroots, which identifies with dance as a form of pleasure and identity. A similar experience is that of the Gambian community in Milan, which gathers in Piazza Duca d'Aosta to play and dance to Gambian rap. Not just a form of music, but **a way to recognise each other, be together and feel**

part of something. Again, the case of the Giambellino cinema, which experimented with the creation of a real **cooperative of video-makers**.

Despite the variety of profiles and experiences, the interviewees agreed on a number of areas where action can yield the most significant results. These include work on the sense of community, the possibility of building relationships, and the **creation of meeting places** where people can share their experiences and knowledge. Additional **focus** is on the autonomy and responsibility



of young people: for many, these are not simply goals to be achieved, but processes to be supported. Young people must be able to experiment with active roles and take on real responsibilities, without institutions or adults always deciding for them.

Therefore, our survey seems to suggest that welfare for young people should not be limited to remedial or welfare measures but should invest in the **concrete possibility of building an independent life plan**.

Many interviews highlighted the urgent need for **accessible housing policies** – such as temporary housing or rent control – that encourage young people to leave their parents' homes and promote independence. At the

Young people must be able to experiment with active roles, take on real responsibilities, without institutions or adults always deciding for them

same time, the value of **supporting youth entrepreneurship** was emphasised, not only in economic terms, but also as a space for creative expression, a sense of responsibility and the building of peer support networks.

Another central aspect concerns the community dimension.

Many interventions referred to the value of sharing, collaboration and belonging to non-judgemental contexts. It is not enough to simply “welcome” people: we must recognise the potential and dignity of each individual, regardless of their origin or circumstances. In this perspective, the community is understood as a space where people can express themselves, make mistakes, find support and grow together, rather than a competitive arena in which to excel. Strengthening these social networks means **creating environments that stimulate initiative and participation and value diversities as resources**, without placing the burden of success or failure on individuals, but offering real opportunities for autonomy. ■

Focus, the panel of experts and the questionnaire

The panel of experts was selected to reflect the **five dimensions of flourishing** that we decided to consider for our report: social, health, economic, educational and existential. They are **21 people**, nominated by the *Advisory Board* that guided this research, who have or have had to do with young people living in fragile conditions in their work or through their own experiences. Over the years, they have observed or even contributed to the flourishing of their talents. The list includes psychologists, neuropsychiatrists, teachers, but also entrepreneurs, researchers, criminologists, magistrates, as well as foster families and people who run or work in NGOs or social cooperatives.

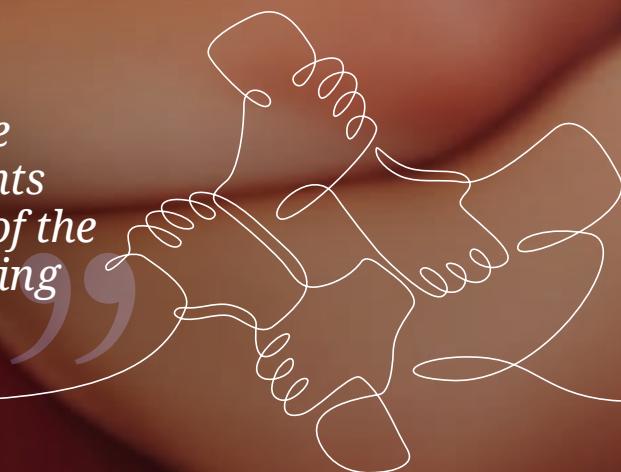
The experts were interviewed using a common questionnaire. We began by asking them for their general opinion on the **issue of inequality in our country**. We then explored the possible factors that hinder or promote personal fulfilment. Finally, after gathering the main good practices identified in their experience, we tried to reflect together on future scenarios for inequality.







“*The well-being of the community represents an essential aspect of the individual's flourishing*”





The results of the study
**At the roots
of individual
flourishing**

Between obstacles and resources:
understanding the conditions that foster
the fulfilment of the human potential

This chapter will focus on the meaning of “personal fulfilment”: what does it mean for the interviewees to feel fulfilled? In which areas of life does this perception show up? What conditions make it possible? How does the process of fulfilment take place, considered not only as a biographical outcome but also as an intrinsic process?

Let us start from the terminology. In fact, “**human flourishing**” can be defined in numerous ways: “flourishing” is often discussed in relation to or even interchangeably with the terms “fulfilment” and “well-being”, to the extent that these expressions tend to be considered synonymous. This has also been the case in this work. However, we feel it is appropriate to draw attention to an aspect highlighted in the recent research by *VanderWeele TJ et al. (2025)*, which emphasises that the term “flourishing” is characterised by a multidimensional approach and also includes the environment in which individuals grow up. In fact, the environment is a fundamental component of the “flourishing” process. In other words, the well-being of the community is an essential aspect of the flourishing of the individual, who actively contributes to the collective common good. While well-being – and, by analogy, the concept of personal fulfilment – can be defined as “*the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good*,”

as they pertain to that individual”, flourishing also includes the well-being of the community and environment. This has also emerged in our research. However, since the individual aspects of flourishing essentially constitute well-being/fulfilment, the two terms may be used interchangeably depending on the context in the following pages.

In order to build a fairer society, in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their full potential, we must start with knowledge.

Early on in our research, the first answers to the questions opening this chapter began to emerge. These answers are still partial, based on a number of recurring elements: structural obstacles, relational resources, and family and/or social contexts that support or limit growth.

These initial observations do not claim to provide all answers. On the contrary, they represent a starting point for a more systematic investigation, which we will explore in greater depth in the following chapters with a detailed analysis of the factors that hinder or promote the flourishing of human potential. However, let us say right away that one fact stands out among the many findings: in order to build a fairer society, in which everyone has the opportunity to develop their full potential, we must start with knowledge. Understanding



individual trajectories, listening to stories, getting closer to people, reading data carefully and respectfully: this is how we can rethink strategies, and direct actions and policies towards solutions that are more equitable and responsive to the people’s real needs.

6. Original text: While the terms “flourishing” and “well-being” are often used interchangeably, flourishing arguably has a connotation of also having the environment itself being conducive to growth and being a part of one’s flourishing. The community’s well-being is a part of one’s own flourishing—a person participates in the common good of the community. While well-being might be defined as “the relative attainment of a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good, as they pertain to that individual”, flourishing also includes the well-being of the community and environment. However, since individual aspects of flourishing effectively constitute well-being, the two terms will, in many contexts, often be used interchangeably (VanderWeele TJ et al. (2025): 637)



“ In order to build a fairer society,
in which everyone has the opportunity
to develop their full potential,
we must start with knowledge ”



AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING

The baseline of our investigation

A common starting point
to explore the flourishing
of human potential

Towards a shared understanding of personal fulfilment: among data, experiences and social context



Reality teaches us that **there is no single definition of personal fulfilment from a subjective point of view**. Each person attributes a different meaning to this concept, which is shaped by his or her own history, desires, opportunities and limitations along the way. There are no right or wrong answers, and it is not even possible to make value judgements; what matters the most is to become aware of the possible alternatives for building one's own path towards personal fulfilment.

This is precisely our first goal: to use data and testimonies to construct a **shared map for the meaning of the fulfilment process**, capable of restoring the richness of individual experiences very far from a single vision. In fact, in order to reflect systematically on the factors that influence flourishing – as this research project aims to do –, we felt the necessity to start from a common ground, from a shared meaning that allows us to observe, compare and understand. During the analysis, interesting dynamics will emerge, along with initial insights into the possible protective factors for the flourishing of the human potential.

To guide us in this exploration, we have referred to a series of studies that identify some key dimensions of fulfilment: a **perceived satisfactory economic condition** (*Triventi, 2014*), the **achievement of the desired level of education** (*Avci, 2022*), and a **fulfilling network of relationships** (*Turcatti, 2018*). These are complemented by the Italian BES Report (Equitable and Sustainable Well-being Report, ISTAT 2023), which proposes a comprehensive vision of well-being, divided into twelve domains. We have selected this reference for its recognised authority and its deep sensitivity to the Italian context, which allows us to capture the typical cultural and social specificities of our reality in an effective way. The twelve domains have been reorganised into five dimensions: **economic condition, family life, social relations, health and educational experience**. These dimensions represent the lenses with respect to which the process of investigating and listening to young people was structured, as well as the analysis of the results.

7. The BES (Equitable and Sustainable Well-being) Report has been published annually by ISTAT since 2013. It measures the well-being of the Italian population using a broad set of indicators beyond GDP. The report adopts a multidimensional approach, including economic, social, environmental and relational aspects, with the aim of offering a more comprehensive and inclusive view of the quality of life in the Country.

AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING

The quantitative analysis: who responded to our questionnaire?

A snapshot that covers age, territories, experiences and expectations

Profiles, living conditions and perceptions of the young people included in our survey

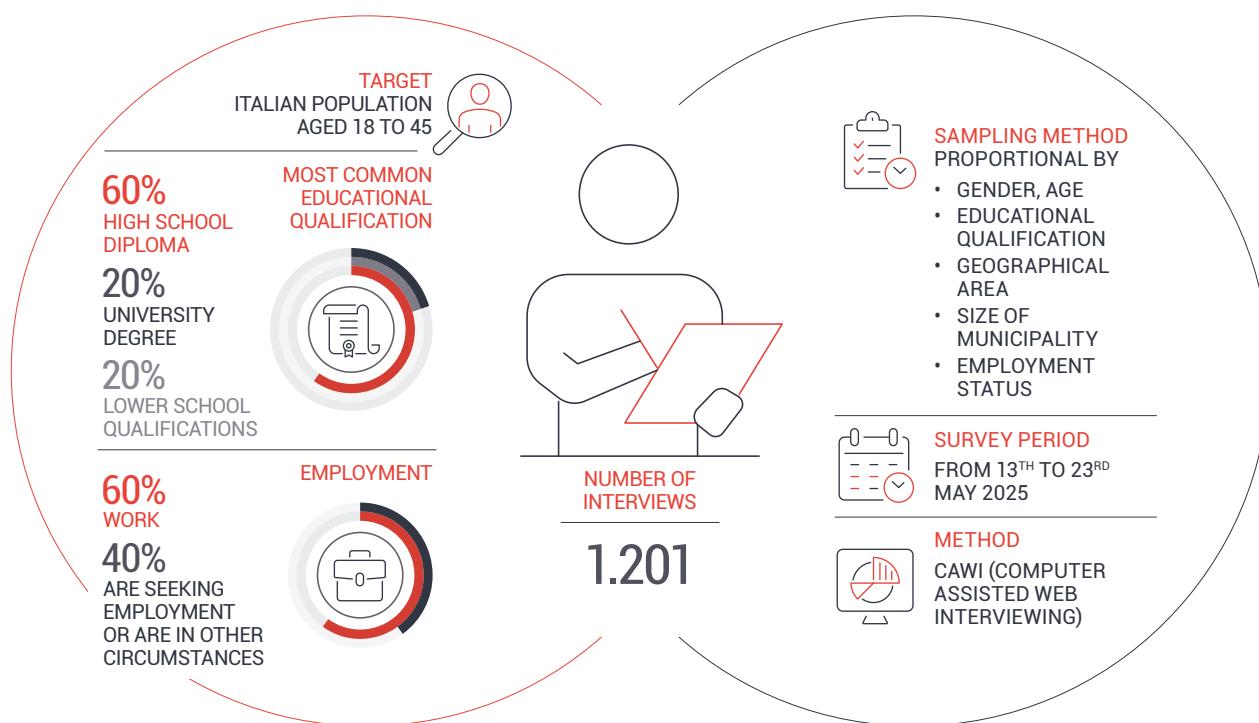
The questionnaire was administered to a **sample** of the Italian population aged between 18 and 45, constructed according to gender, age, level of education, geographical area of residence, size of the municipality of residence and employment status. The **most common educational qualification** is a high school **diploma**, followed by qualifications that are lower than the diploma and university degrees (in both cases around 20% of respondents). Approximately **6 out of 10 people work**, while the other are seeking employment or are in other circumstances.

To facilitate filling in the questionnaire, **1,201 interviews** were conducted online on 5,839 contacts using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) method between 13th and 23rd May 2025. Participants were asked to rethink their life trajectory, starting from **their initial conditions** – economic, family, social, and educational and health conditions – and to reflect on how these have changed over time. We explored their **current level of satisfaction**, their turning points, the **obstacles** they encountered and the **resources** that helped them. The questionnaire also

focused on **family background**, school experiences, cultural habits and social media use. The result was a rich and detailed picture, a mosaic of trajectories that allows to take a closer look at the process of “flourishing”.

Our analysis depicted a rich and detailed picture, a mosaic of trajectories that allows us to take a closer look at the process of flourishing

Profile of the quantitative sample



AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING

The qualitative analysis: the stories behind data

Voices and experiences that guide the life paths of young adults

Obstacles and growth experiences along the quest of personal fulfilment

In addition to collecting quantitative data, we felt it was necessary to listen to the voices of people. **We therefore interviewed 62 young adults** aged between 18 and 45, trying to represent a variety of ages, genders, educational levels and geographical areas. The participants were divided into three groups. The first included people who started from a disadvantaged situation but later improved their condition (Group A). The second included those who started from the same situation but did not improve their condition (Group B). The third was composed of young people aged

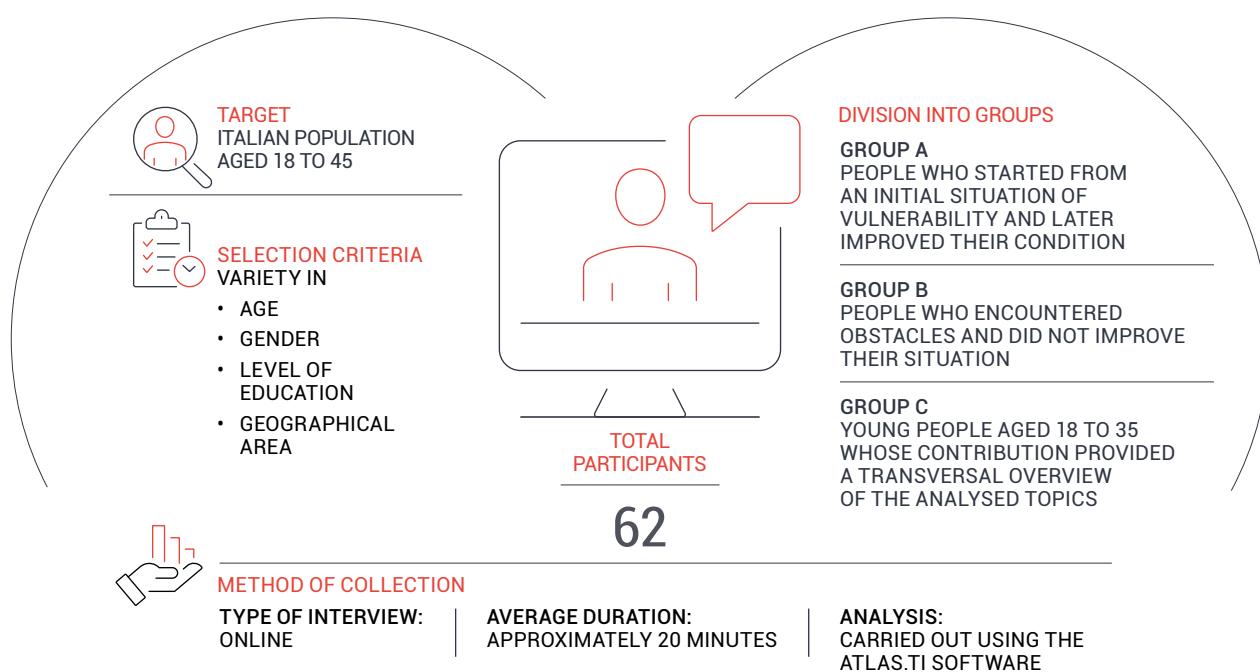
between 18 and 35 (Group C) whose contribution was used to collect the visions that young people have on the topics covered in our analysis.

The individual interviews were conducted online, lasted twenty minutes on average and were analysed using the Atlas. ti software. Each account was coded according to 23 codes and 34 sub-codes, organised into six broad themes. The questions were adapted slightly depending on the group. However, one key concept emerged as a common thread: that of “flourishing”, of full personal fulfilment in multiple areas of life. Everyone was asked to **rate**

their satisfaction in the five areas: family, work, health, relationships and education. Finally, young people in Groups A and B were asked to recount **significant episodes that had helped or hindered their life journey**.

One key concept emerged as a common thread: that of flourishing, of full personal fulfilment in multiple areas of life

Composition of the qualitative sample



AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING

Flourishing: a balance between opportunity and vulnerability

Between generational mismatch and the quest for fulfilment

The dimensions that nurture the well-being of young adults as pertains to relationships, work and aspirations

The results depict a composite picture, with some partial satisfaction and unresolved tensions. The interviews showed that **meaningful relationships, parenting, and good social integration** emerged among the elements that were most often linked to personal well-being. (*"I feel well integrated into the community where I live. Over time, I have been lucky enough to expand my circle of friends"*). Other factors included **housing stability**,

professional fulfilment (*"I have a job that makes me happy to get up in the morning"*), **improved economic conditions and the possibility to travel**: *"I have a job that makes me happy to get up in the morning"*. Some interviewees also emphasised the importance of having time for themselves to pursue their passions and interests. Alongside these resources, however, some weaknesses also emerge. The most common sources of dissatisfaction include the

difficulty in building stable relationships, the inability to complete their studies (Groups A and B), **frustration with an unrewarding job** or the difficulty in finding one. In addition, they reported **concerns about the possibility of starting a family**: *"If I think about my future, I would like to be a mother in 10 years from now. It's something I'm struggling with at the moment, because I'm afraid I'll never be able to do it"* (Group C).



To broaden our perspective further, we analysed the responses of 1,201 young people, asking them about their **overall** satisfaction and their level of satisfaction with **each of the different dimensions of “flourishing”**: economic condition, family life, social relationships, health and educational experience. The aim was to understand whether there is a hierarchy between the dimensions and what impact the presence or absence of each has on the overall perception of fulfilment.

The results depict a composite picture, with some partial satisfaction and unresolved tensions

Data tell us that **49% of the respondents say they are fully satisfied** or satisfied with their overall situation. Satisfaction increases among those with a

high level of education, good economic conditions and strong social integration. These three elements will be recurrent in the following pages.

It is interesting to note that those living on islands or in small towns (<10,000 inhabitants) express higher levels of satisfaction, suggesting that less hectic and more intimate contexts may foster a deep sense of well-being.

From a generational point of view, **young adults aged 33 to 45 are the least satisfied**. People in this age range are facing their **first disappointments**, coming to terms with **expectations that are not always fulfilled** and experiencing the weight and cost of adult responsibilities. A space of vulnerability seems to have opened up among Millennials at the intersection between the expectations inherited from the generations born in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – based on an idea of stability and linear progress – and the current scenario marked by economic uncertainty and widespread precariousness. In a sense, the comparison between what was promised and what was actually achieved seems to generate friction, a mismatch that fuels dissatisfaction and a sense of disorientation, particularly in this generation. Those under 33, on the other hand, are still in a

transitional phase, often protected by their families of origin.

The specific analysis of the various dimensions shows that young Italian adults under the age of 45 report higher levels of satisfaction in the **family sphere** (65% very or fairly satisfied) and with regard to their **state of health**. The **economic dimension, on the other hand, shows the lowest level of satisfaction**, with 49% of respondents saying they are satisfied or very satisfied.

Once again, in this context, certain social and generational groups seem to experience the tensions associated with personal fulfilment more intensely. Millennials (aged 35 to 45) are the least satisfied in almost all the dimensions, with the sole exception of the family sphere. Their economic situation is particularly critical, with significantly lower levels of satisfaction. Women also express

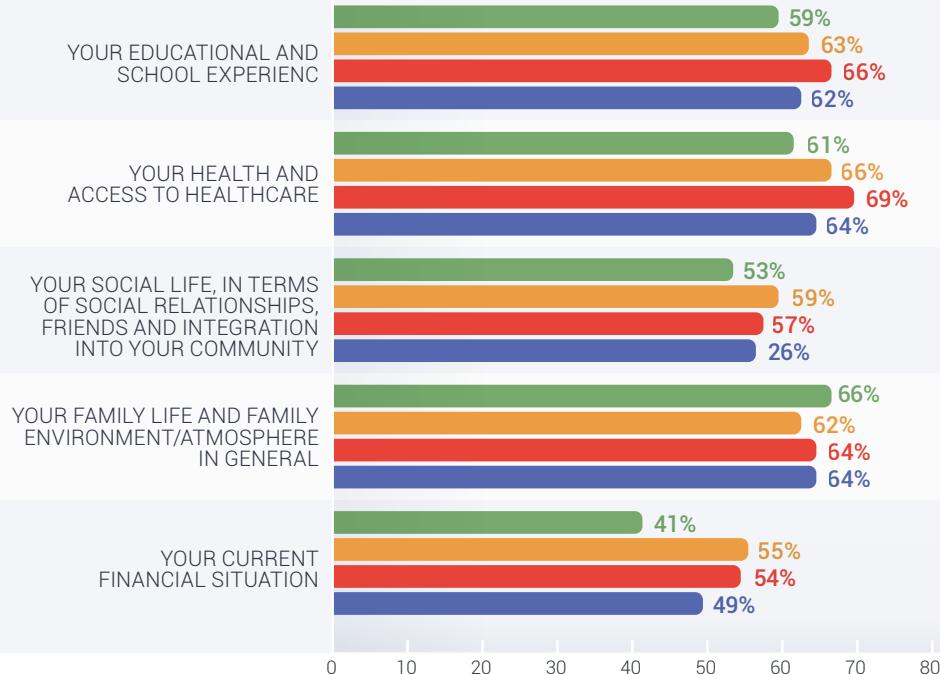
lower satisfaction, both with their economic situation and within the family, and those living in single-parent families tend to report lower levels in all dimensions. But that's not all: those who currently define their economic situation as satisfactory report higher levels of satisfaction in all dimensions, and the same is true for those who have fulfilling social relationships. At the same time, the attained level of education remains a significant factor: having a lower degree is more frequently associated with greater dissatisfaction, not only

Family and health are the dimensions most frequently cited as fundamental to personal fulfilment

Figure 1

Percentage of respondents who say they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with specific aspects of flourishing

- Age 35-45
- Age 25-34
- Age 18-24
- Total





in terms of education, but also in terms of economic and health-related aspects. However, higher education does not seem to have a positive impact on satisfaction in the family and social spheres, suggesting that, although valued, education can also entail relational costs. The **picture that emerges is thus articulated, inviting us to view education as a complex experience, rather than a univocal one.** This complexity calls for further exploration in qualitative interviews to understand why, for example, lower levels of satisfaction with education are more common among people with lower educational qualifications. The more in-depth interviews in the next chapter suggest that disappointment is not so much about the educational path itself as the impossibility of continuing it. In some cases, dissatisfaction stems from negative school experiences or forced interruptions, in others, from regret at not being able to continue their studies. Positive and negative experiences alternate at school, but **the perception of a missed opportunity** seems to weigh most heavily.

However, what lies behind this combination of factors? Do the five dimensions have the same

The quality of social relationships may be a crucial factor in the perception of well-being and self-fulfilment

weight? Do some exert greater influence? Is it possible to intervene on a single dimension and trigger a cascade effect? Can a vicious circle be broken and a virtuous one activated, which is capable of nurturing people and unleashing their talent? Is there a “lever” capable of untangling the knots and making the difference between feeling fulfilled and living with a sense of dissatisfaction? If so, what would it be? On which dimension does it make most sense to focus efforts, policies and interventions?

These questions open up scenarios of great interest. We are not yet able to offer a final answer. However, we can say that **the dimension in which action is taken seems to make a certain difference**, and recognising this difference is a first step towards building more conscious, equitable and effective pathways to support human development.

In an attempt to unravel this tangle and begin to provide some interpretations, albeit preliminary, we thought it would be interesting to focus on data collected using the quantitative questionnaire through a comparative analysis between overall satisfaction and satisfaction in the individual dimensions.

Let us start with the people who say they are satisfied or very satisfied overall. What happens in the single dimensions of fulfilment?

It is interesting to note that **among those who say they are satisfied or very satisfied with their overall life situation, 82% also express a high level of satisfaction with their family life, and 85% with their health.** These results also show up in the qualitative interviews, where family and health are the dimensions most frequently cited as fundamental to personal fulfilment.

What happens among **those who say they are not satisfied with their living conditions?**

In this case, only a minority express high levels of satisfaction in the social and educational dimensions. In particular, difficulties in building and maintaining social relationships appear to be a critical factor: **only 17% of those who are dissatisfied overall say they are satisfied with their social life.** This suggests that the quality of social relationships may be a crucial factor in the perception of well-being and self-fulfilment.

— AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING —

Pathways to improvement: what really matters in the perception of change

Economy, education and social networks are the guiding factors along the journey

What matters in the perception of improvement?

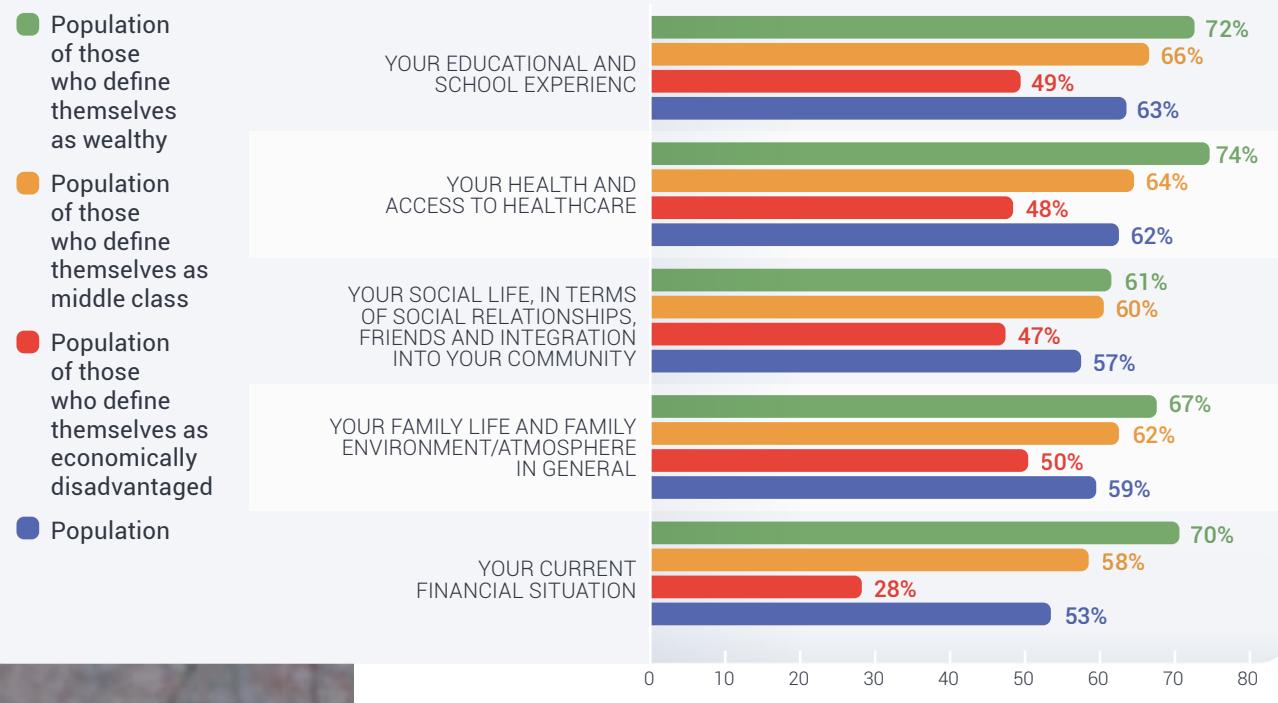
During the course of our lives, we all find ourselves coming to terms with our personal trajectory eventually, i.e. with what we received at birth and what we have managed to build. We asked participants to reflect on their

journey, asking them **whether they feel they have improved or worsened their starting position**. The answers, despite their variety, reveal some elements that are difficult to ignore.

Figure 2

Satisfaction rates: a comparison between general population and social class

Percentage of respondents who say they have "improved" or "greatly improved" their living conditions in specific areas.

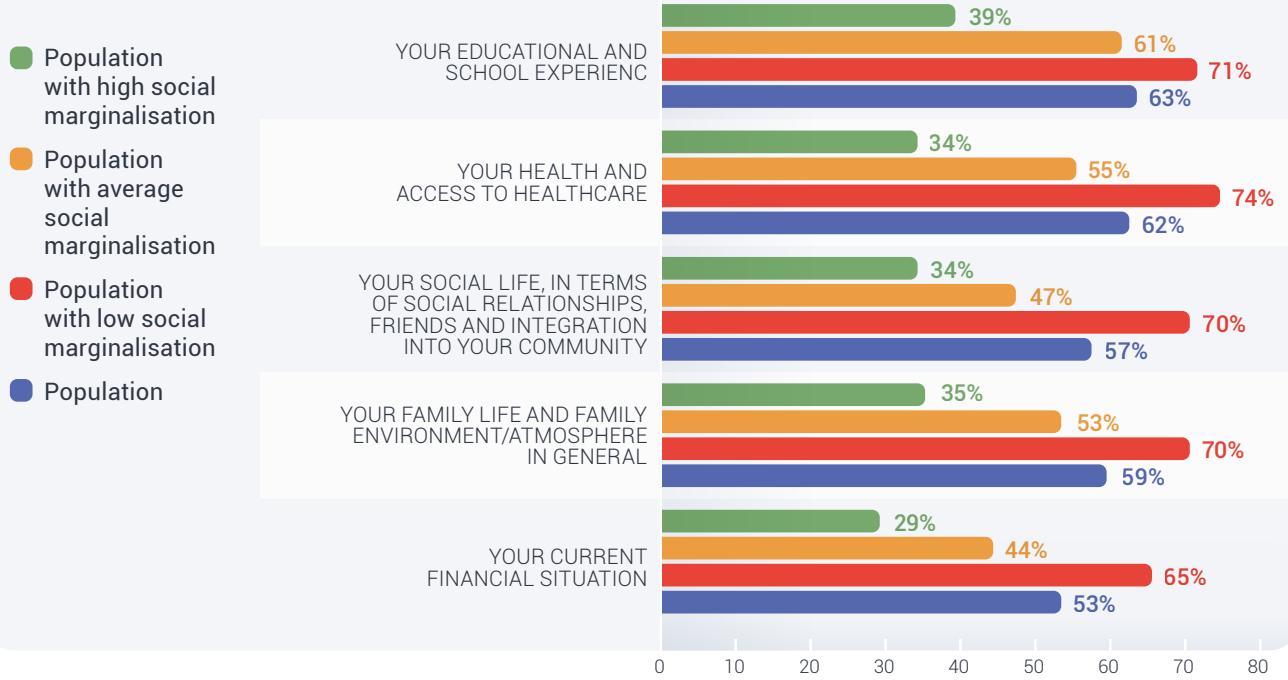


First, two elements emerge as particularly important: **the economic situation and the level of social integration**. Those who are currently experiencing economic hardship are more likely to perceive no improvement in their lives, confirming that material factors remain central to subjective assessments. Conversely,

those who feel part of a social network – who are integrated, recognised and involved – tend more to view their own trajectory in positive terms. The words of the experts also described this fact: **when they work well, communities can be powerful instruments of protection and trust**.

Figure 3

Satisfaction rates: a comparison between general population and different levels of social integration
Percentage of respondents who say they have "improved" or "greatly improved" their living conditions in specific areas



The people who have low educational qualifications tend to perceive a deterioration in their living conditions.

This may seem obvious, but it highlights the role that people attribute to education as a lever for emancipation.

In this sense, education does not seem to be just one factor among many, but rather the line that separates those who feel they have improved from those who see themselves trapped in a disadvantaged situation.

In this context, some demographic details to characterise our population may be useful. While there are no differences between the educational levels of women and men, some differences emerge between foreigners and/or young people with foreign mothers. In these cases, low educational qualifications are more common.

The stronger the social integration, the higher the satisfaction in all areas of life, from health to education, from family relations to the economic condition

Among those who say they are dissatisfied with their lives the feeling that one or more aspects have improved is less common compared to the average. In particular, economic conditions are less likely to show improvement. Conversely, among those who say they are satisfied, almost every aspect of life appears to be improving – most of all

education. It could be said that **education represents both the condition and the first sign of possible change for many**.

Certain biographical factors seem to influence this perception. Those who did not attend nursery school (most common characteristic among people who declare themselves socially inactive, foreign nationals and currently more concerned about the Italian economic situation), for example, tend not to recognise their school experience as a factor for improvement.

Those who have travelled, on the other hand, more often report a positive evolution in their educational path.

This finding invites us to reflect on the value of all those experiences – such as **travel, meeting with others, and the discovery of new**

places – that contribute to building a sense of growth and openness, and that are intertwined with the educational trajectory.

Finally, family structure also seems to play a role. People who grew up in single-parent families fall below the threshold for perceiving improvement. Separations and bereavements – as emerged in the qualitative interviews, too – are often experienced as turning points, capable of profoundly marking the perception of the own path.



AT THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL FLOURISHING

A combination of factors, with different weights and relevance

The respondents' perceptions convey the true meaning of economic conditions, education and social connections

What marks personal trajectories, among economic conditions, social networks and educational experiences

Trying to sum up, a first hint for reflection concerns the meaning that people attribute to personal fulfilment. The testimonies and the responses to the questionnaire provide a multifaceted picture of well-being, which varies significantly according to each person's experiences and trajectory.

The concept of "flourishing" cannot be reduced to a single formula; it is composed of five dimensions (at least): economic, social, educational, health and family. Quite importantly, these dimensions **do not seem to be separate compartments, but rather pieces of a mosaic that influence each other**,

linked by a common thread that runs through individual experiences. In this sense, any intervention calls for an approach that is as holistic and multidimensional as possible.

Trying to reflect on the importance of these dimensions and the positive or negative weight they



have on the perception of personal fulfilment, further hints for reflection have emerged that may also be useful in the following chapters. First, the family and health dimensions emerge as the foundations of the very concept of fulfilment and flourishing. They are often perceived as basic conditions, whose presence supports the entire process of flourishing, while the absence can generate profound ruptures and fragility.

Two further dimensions can be added: economic status and relationships. Economic status appears to be a cross-cutting factor in the individual perceptions of their life course. It is interesting to note that it often shows up through its absence in the stories analysed: those who live in less favourable economic conditions tend to express a more marked sense of dissatisfaction. There may be many reasons for this link. Material well-being does not only translate into

economic security, but also allows access to adequate healthcare, continuous participation in social life, the possibility of investing in education and greater freedom in everyday choices. As A. Sen argues, *“development is freedom”* (2001), i.e. **sufficient economic conditions allow access to a level of education that promotes the formation and enhancement of capabilities. These capabilities in turn generate other capabilities** (“skills beget skills”),

as Heckman taught us) and, in particular, the ability to choose, which in turn generates a better quality of life. Economic poverty is therefore a problem because it weakens the formation of capabilities, which allow us to choose *“among possible lives”*. Our research confirms that economic stability seems to act as a silent but pervasive force, capable of supporting – directly or indirectly – many of the dimensions that make up the idea of *“a life worth living”*. And economic conditions also affect the perceptions of progress: among those who say their situation has not improved compared to that of their family of origin, the idea of economic advancement is less common. Conversely, among those who say they are more satisfied

with their life, the achievement of economic well-being is more common.

A silent and transversal force also seems to be a common feature of social relationships. Belonging to an active and welcoming community is associated with high levels of satisfaction in many areas of life, highlighting the discreet but constant role of social relations. However, unlike economic stability, social relationships make

themselves felt in their presence, with a role that is beginning to emerge for its catalytic, enabling and protective value.

The presence of a network that guarantees access to information, emotional and practical support, and shared opportunities is a determining factor in individual trajectories. This leads us to view social integration as a multiplier of opportunities rather than simply one dimension among others.

Economic stability seems to act as a silent but pervasive force, capable of supporting many of the dimensions that make up the idea of a *life worth living*



“
Education is not only a tool for learning, but also a space for possibilities, recognition and the construction of self-meaning
”

School is certainly part of the dimensions that contribute to personal fulfilment.

Our analysis shows that the level of education achieved is not only an objective indicator, but also becomes a lens through which people re-read their own path and evaluate the possibilities that have opened up – or closed – over time. However, school does not always contribute positively to increasing the satisfaction of young people: in many stories, the topic of early dropout emerges as a critical issue, often experienced as a deep regret, a fracture that marks a sense of having lost an opportunity. This suggests that **the malaise is not so much about the school experience itself but the forced interruption of a path that one would have liked to continue**. In this sense, support for educational continuity appears to be a promising lever. Guaranteeing the possibility of continuing one's studies, especially for the people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, means acting on a dimension that directly affects self-perception and future trajectories. Education, therefore, is not only a tool for learning, but also a space for possibilities, recognition and the construction of self-meaning.



The clarification of all these dimensions contributes to defining the meaning that people attribute to fulfilment, and it is thus clear that they take on different relevance depending on individual contexts and experiences: sometimes they are felt mainly in their absence, other times in their presence. However, the question remains open as to which other dimensions contribute to shaping a full idea of self-fulfilment, beyond those considered above.

Furthermore, there is still a need to explore which factors contribute to or, conversely, hinder the possibility of reaching one's full potential and building a meaningful existence. This chapter

has begun to provide some initial evidence on this, although these are preliminary and unconfirmed observations. Starting from these considerations, in the next chapter we will give voice to the people and this will allow us space for further analysis. ■

The findings Between family and social network

Connections and context influence the opportunities for growth and the possibility to overcome obstacles

“There is no subject without relationships: we are, from the beginning, part of a web of connections”





BETWEEN FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORK

The respondents' starting conditions

Health, relationships, education and economy: how initial conditions affect the paths towards flourishing

Initial conditions influence the opportunities for growth, choice and fulfilment

In the 2023 Inequality Report, we emphasised that inequalities rarely show up in a single dimension. Due to their transversal nature, people in vulnerable situations experience different forms of inequalities simultaneously, from social and economic inequalities to education and access to healthcare.

This combination makes the phenomenon particularly complex and persistent. As a result, starting conditions – such as the parents' level of education, family income and housing conditions – exert even a deep influence on the opportunities for development of children and young people, whose effects spread over time.

To better understand the dynamics underlying this scenario and what happens when people manage to fulfil their potential despite initial vulnerabilities, we asked our 1,201 respondents to **reflect on their starting conditions during childhood**: the family's economic situation; family life and the family environment/atmosphere



in general; social life, in terms of social relationships, friendships and integration into the community; their state of health and access to healthcare; their educational and school experience in general. In particular, we asked them to assess the impact that these factors have had on their flourishing. The scale used to answer ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated a negative influence and 5 a positive one.

The responses reveal an interesting picture: health is perceived as a central element in personal growth, while initial economic conditions have had the least positive impact. Only 54% of respondents believe that their initial economic conditions had a positive or very positive impact on their development. Family life, social environment and education have more positive than negative influence. Over 60% of respondents rated each of these dimensions as positive or very positive.

Inequalities come into play since childhood; however, health, relationships and education remain crucial levers for personal flourishing



The overall satisfaction regarding one's own life changes in relation to people's starting conditions

Beyond the aggregate data, it may be useful to look at some specific aspects. At generational level, for example, **young adults aged 35 to 45 mainly report** that their initial economic condition somehow hindered their flourishing (only 51% of respondents in this age group indicated that their economic condition had a positive

or very positive impact on their flourishing). From a geographical point of view, the Northeast of Italy stands out for its more positive perception of the initial economic situation compared to the population as a whole.

People who say they are generally satisfied with their lives tend to

remember their initial conditions as factors that had a positive or very positive influence, with percentages higher than the population average (Fig. 4).

On the contrary, those who feel little or no satisfaction report a negative or very negative impact on all dimensions, from economic to social and family situations. The difference in the percentages of positive or very positive responses between satisfied and dissatisfied people exceeds 30% for all dimensions of flourishing.

Some interesting nuances emerge when we shift the focus of our analysis to **the relational sphere**.

Figure 4

Aspects that have positively influenced the start of people's lives; a comparison between total sample (1,201) and people satisfied or dissatisfied with their living conditions

● Satisfied or very satisfied with their living conditions ● Dissatisfied or only slightly satisfied with their living conditions ● Total sample

YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCE IN GENERAL

79%
27%
65%

YOUR HEALTH AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

84%
38%
70%

YOUR SOCIAL LIFE, IN TERMS OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, FRIENDSHIPS AND INTEGRATION INTO YOUR COMMUNITY

75%
27%
60%

YOUR FAMILY LIFE AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENT/ATMOSPHERE IN GENERAL

76%
33%
63%

YOUR FAMILY'S FINANCIAL CONDITION

71%
26%
54%

Data show that those who can now rely on a good social network tend to perceive their initial conditions as **favourable for their growth**.

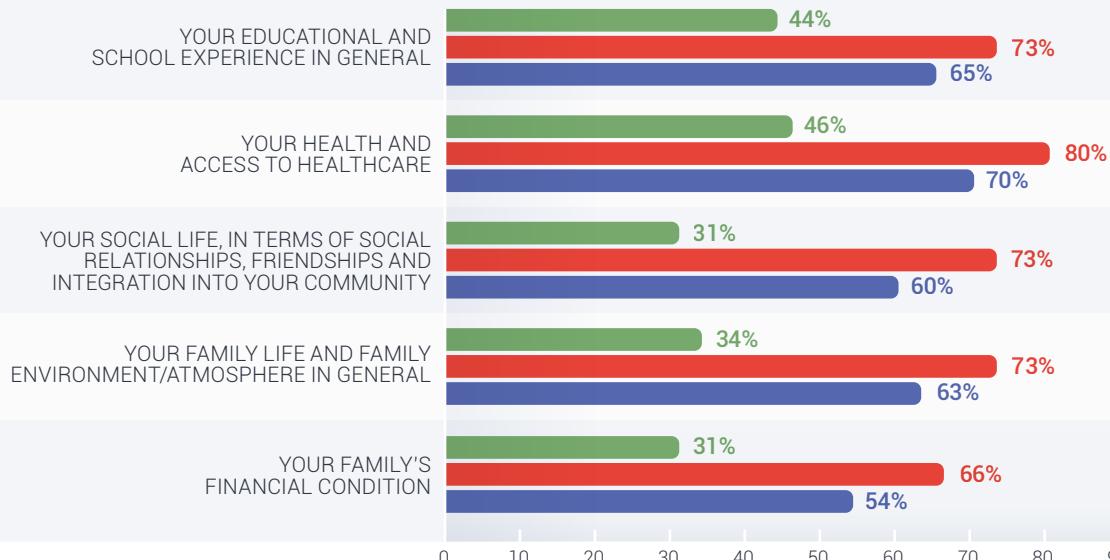
Conversely, those with a **more fragile network** remember the initial conditions of their journey for **their negative impact** (Fig. 5).

Again, the gap between these two groups exceeds 30% for each dimension of flourishing.

Figure 5

Aspects that have positively influenced the start of people's lives; a comparison between total sample (1,201) and people who express low and high levels of social marginalization

■ People who express high social marginalisation ■ People who express low social marginalisation ■ Total sample



Further food for thought emerges when **economic status** is the starting point. Among **wealthy people, family and economic status** are remembered for their positive impact. Among the **most economically vulnerable** groups, people consider **family and health** as factors with the most positive impact. Finally, the middle class attributes a positive role to health and education.

Furthermore, initial conditions tended to have a **less positive impact** for people with **lower educational qualifications**. In particular, health and education are significantly less influential in a positive sense than for the general population, with a

difference of -16% for health and -14% for education.

This data conveys a fairly clear picture, consisting of **multiple dimensions of flourishing but also a series of processes that develop over time**, often starting in childhood. These processes link the dimensions of flourishing themselves to the people's living conditions. This is a complex combination of different elements, whose dynamics deserve attention and cannot find a one-size-fits-all solution.

Those who can now rely on a good social network tend to perceive their initial conditions as favourable for their growth

BETWEEN FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORK

Development and hindering factors: an overview

The central role of family
and personal roots



Crosscutting factors that influence all the dimensions of flourishing

To understand which factors promote or hinder flourishing, we asked the 1,201 young adults in our sample to reflect on their current level of satisfaction in relation to the five dimensions of fulfilment that we presented in the previous chapter, which are:

- **Economic status**
- **Family life and home environment**
- **Social life**
- **Health**
- **Educational experience**

Based on these considerations, participants rated how much the following factors influenced their path, on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 means “*it did not matter at all*” and 5 means “*it mattered a lot*”):

- Initial economic situation
- Family of origin (including grandparents)
- Parents
- Schooling
- University education
- Social relationships during childhood (friends, schoolmates, etc.)
- Extracurricular experiences in groups or with the family (scouts, parish, trips, travel, museums)
- Physical and mental health over the years
- Place where they grew up
- Role models outside the family (teachers, educators, coaches)

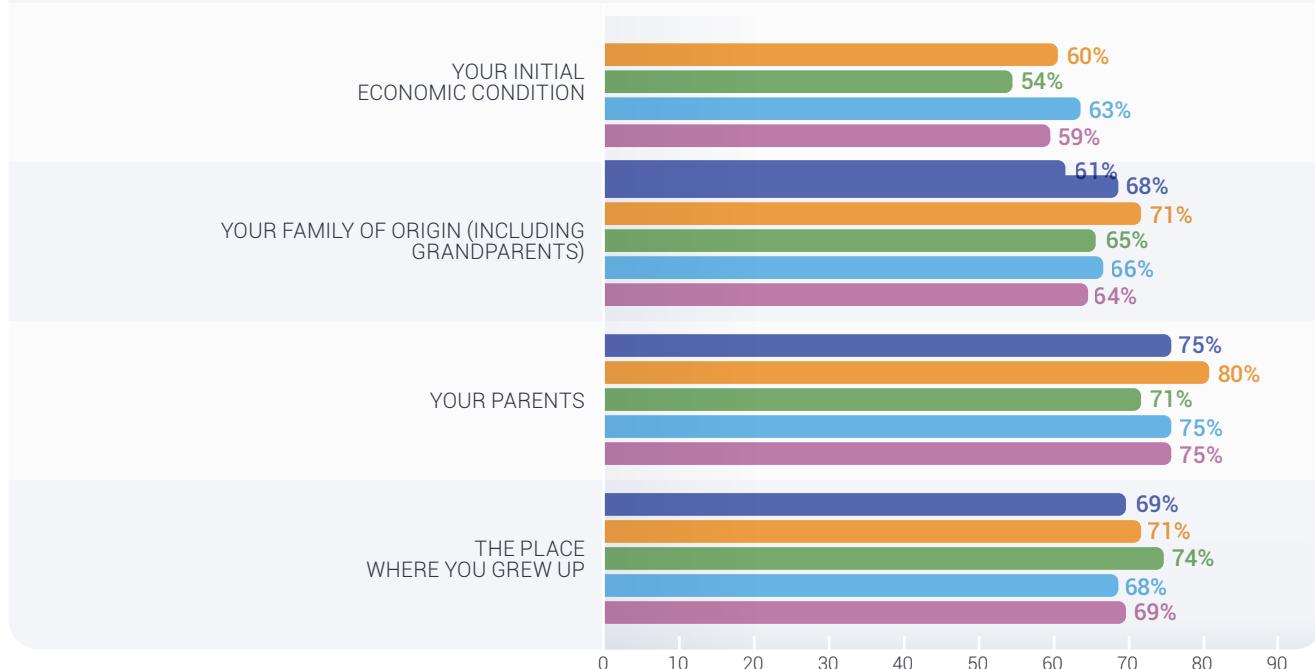
The data analysis clearly shows that **the family and personal spheres are perceived as the most influential factors** in shaping people's life trajectories. In particular, the family of origin, the place where the person grew up, and physical and mental health are central elements, capable of influencing the five dimensions of flourishing, either positively or negatively, but in any case, in a transversal way. For example, over **70% of respondents indicate that their parents were very important or important in their flourishing in relation to all dimensions** (Fig. 6).

The family and personal spheres are perceived as the most influential factors in shaping people's life trajectories

Figura 6

How much did your initial conditions (economic, family, social, health, and educational) influence your level of satisfaction with regard to...

- your current economic situation
- your family life and current living environment
- your social life, relationships, friendships, and integration within the community
- your health status and access to healthcare
- your educational and school experience



Despite being recognised as significant, the initial economic situation never has a marked positive impact, not even among young people from wealthy families. Even in these more affluent contexts, family relationships and the context of life matter the most: this set of relational and environmental/contextual elements contributes the most to personal fulfilment, rather than material well-being per se. This finding suggests that **subjective well-being and the development of human potential are deeply linked to the quality of relationships and**

the emotional and social context and the place in which a person grows up.

Another finding that seems to confirm this interpretation emerges when shifting the focus to a specific dimension of flourishing: education. Comparing the responses of those who say they are satisfied with their living conditions with those of the general population, a significant difference can be seen. **Among those who express dissatisfaction, the influence exerted by the main relational networks – family, friends,**

school – is generally weak or marginal. For example, in the case of social relations, these have an important or very important influence on the educational sphere for 49% of respondents, compared with 64% of the population as a whole. Conversely, when participants report satisfaction, all these relational factors seem to have played an important role, with effects that are not only significant but also synergistic. In this case, 77% of respondents indicated that social relations had a significant or very significant influence on educational flourishing. In other

words, even the educational path, recognised in literature as one of the fundamental factors for the development of the human potential, appears to be more successful when embedded in a solid and cohesive relational network. Is it therefore the quality of the support system, rather than the presence of a single factor, that substantially determines

the perceived quality of the educational experience?

So far, our analysis has allowed us to identify which elements contribute to personal flourishing the most and which, on the other hand, seem to play a more marginal role. The hindering factors are yet to be identified.

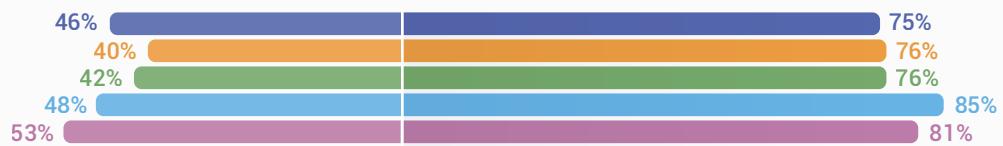
Subjective well-being and the development of human potential seem to be deeply connected to the quality of relationships and the affective and social context in which a person grows up

Figura 7

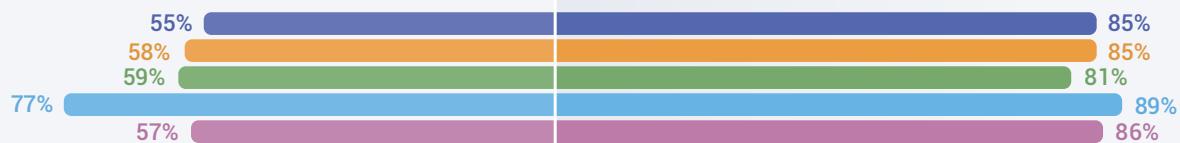
How much did the family and social dimensions influence the five dimensions of flourishing?

- Educational and school experience
- Health status and access to healthcare
- Social life, friendships, and integration within the community
- Family environment and relationships
- Economic condition

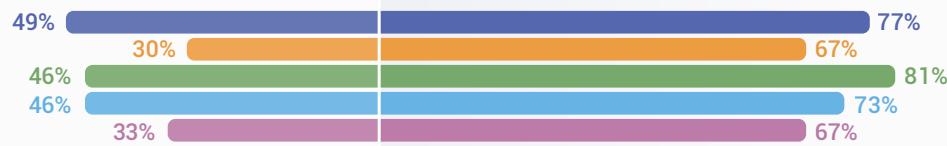
YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN
(INCLUDING GRANDPARENTS)



YOUR PARENTS



THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT ACCOMPANIED
YOUR GROWTH (FRIENDS, SCHOOLMATES, ETC.)



NOT SATISFIED

SATISFIED

90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

To understand the obstacles to the full expression of individual potential, we asked participants whether they had experienced events or situations perceived as limiting during their lives (Fig. 8).

The results provide a clear picture: 77% of the sample reported having faced with one or more significant difficulties

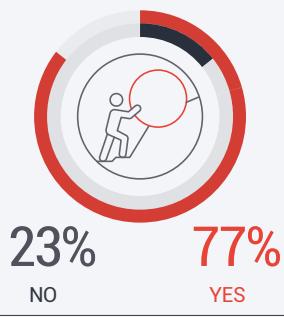
in their growth. The most frequently reported barriers are:

- **Economic conditions** (28%)
- **Relationship issues** (22%)
- **Events related to the COVID-19 pandemic** (21%)

Only 15% of respondents said they had not encountered any significant obstacles.

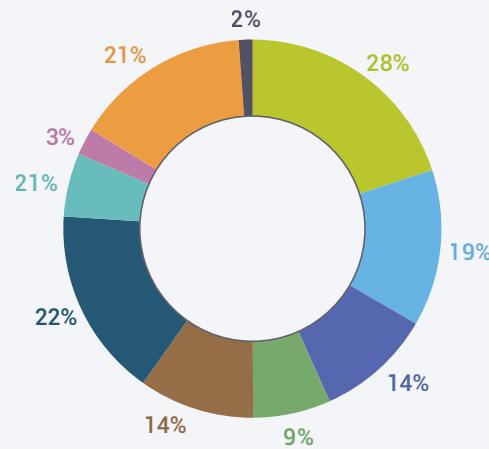
This percentage rises to 20% among people over 35, those living on islands or in small towns, those with higher education qualifications and those living in conditions of low social marginalisation. In contrast, only 8% of the people belonging to the lowest economic classes reported no obstacles.

Figure 8 | Have you ever encountered any events in your life that have hindered the fulfilment of your potential?



77% OF THE SAMPLE
REPORTED HAVING FACED
WITH ONE OR MORE
SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTIES
IN THEIR GROWTH

- Financial difficulties
- Bereavement
- Illness (my own and/or others')
- Relocation
- Difficulties at school
- Relationship difficulties
- Parental separation/divorce
- Substance abuse
- The COVID-19 pandemic
- Other



A particularly significant finding concerns **young people under the age of 24**: 83% of them report having encountered one or more difficulties. In this age group, **relationship issues** and **those related to the pandemic** emerge as the main obstacles, while economic difficulties account for 17%. Although open to different interpretations, this finding clearly points to a **widespread difficulty in building solid social relationships** among young people.

Among those who say they are dissatisfied with their living conditions, the percentage of those who have encountered obstacles rises to 93%. In this subgroup, the difficulties are attributed in particular to:

- **Unfavourable economic conditions** (51%)
- **Problematic social relationships** (41%)

The economic class also remains a discriminating factor: **88% of people in disadvantaged**

economic conditions reported obstacles in their life. Of these, more than half (53%) attribute their difficulties to economic problems.

The level of education is another major factor:

- **82% of those with a low level of education** reported encountering some kind of obstacles, compared to 72% of those with a high level of education.
- In particular, 21% of respondents with low educational qualifications

reported difficulties at school, while only 9% of those with high educational qualifications reported educational problems. Therefore, **school is the second most significant barrier – after economic difficulties – for those with low educational qualifications.**

An interesting element concerns **the perception of parental divorce**: only 8% of the sample consider it an obstacle to their personal development.

The percentage falls further to 4% among those under 24, signalling a generational change in the assessment of this type of event.

Finally, an analysis of **social marginalisation** highlights a further point for reflection.

- Among those who enjoy a good social support network, 73% report having encountered obstacles, a lower proportion than the population as a whole.
- In this subgroup, the weight of economic difficulties falls to 20%, compared to 28% in the general population.
- In situations of high marginalisation, however, the proportion of those who encountered obstacles rises to 85%, and in almost half of the cases (48%) these are economic problems.

No significant differences in school difficulties are observed among those who are more or less socially integrated. However, substance abuse is more frequent in highly marginalised contexts, rising from 3% to 6%.

Personal fulfilment does not seem to be the exclusive result of individual resources, but



Personal fulfilment does not seem to be the exclusive result of individual resources, but rather something that is built collaboratively with the people around us

rather something that is built collaboratively with the people around us

Data so far suggest that economic difficulties are the most significant barrier to the full realisation of individual potential. However, it seems that **social support networks can have a protective effect, mitigating the negative impact of disadvantaged conditions, particularly those of an economic nature.** The quality of relationships and the level of social integration, therefore, not only appear to influence perceived well-being and the educational sphere but may also contribute concretely to reducing the economic obstacles that arise along the

path of personal growth. It is therefore interesting to note certain demographic aspects of those who find themselves on the margins of society. This perception is more common among first- or second-generation immigrants, people with lower levels of education, those who are unemployed and those who live in precarious economic conditions.

To understand how people overcome obstacles in their lives, we asked those who reported having experienced significant difficulties whether they had been able to count **on the help of a significant other.** They could indicate up to two answers from a range of options.

The analysis shows that:

- 33% of the sample did not receive any kind of support
- **52% identified at least one person who provided concrete help**
- The remaining 15% did not express any opinion or expressed uncertainty
- Among those who reported having a support figure, friends were the most common (30%), followed by teachers and, to a lesser extent, people at work (8%)

Generational differences provide further food for thought:

- **Among the youngest** (under 24): 63% say someone helped them, and in this group **friends** account for 40% of responses, followed by teachers (14%)
- Among those **over 35**, only 42% say they received help, with friends accounting for the majority (25%) and teachers accounting for a smaller proportion (6%)

The level of education also has a significant impact. Among people with **low educational qualifications**:

- **58% received support**, mainly from friends (23%) and teachers (15%). This suggests that primary or secondary school teachers were an important point of reference for those who dropped out of school early.

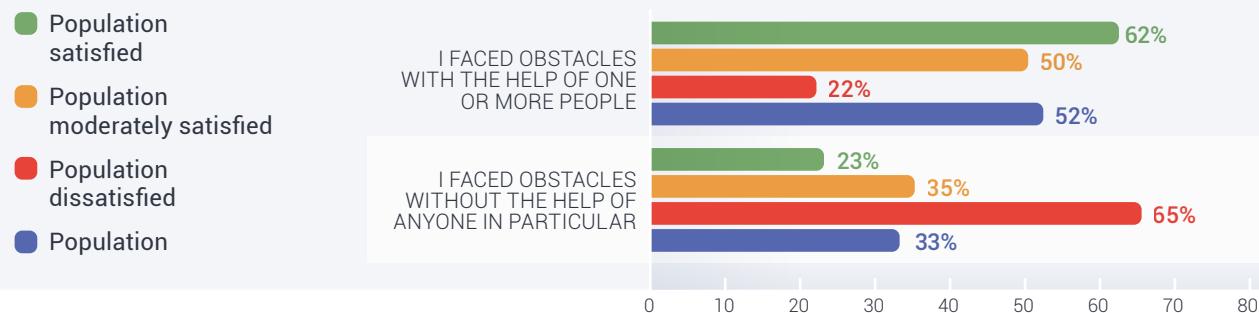
- Surprisingly, **only 9% of this group indicated a person at work as a support figure**, despite early entry into the labour world, which could have fostered significant ties in theory.

Looking at the responses in relation to **perceived satisfaction with their living conditions**, we noted the following (fig 9):

- **Among those who say they are satisfied**, 62% received help (slightly more than the average for the population surveyed), mainly from friends (36%) and teachers (11%).
- Conversely, **only 22% of dissatisfied people had a support figure**, while 65% reported not receiving any kind of help.

In other words, personal fulfilment does not seem to be the exclusive result of individual resources, but rather something that is built collaboratively with the people around us. **Friends, family and the school or work environment can serve as fundamental elements for the flourishing of the self and one's potential.** We are relational beings, not individuals, but co-individuals who, as Gallese argues, breathe only in a space generated by relationships and which generates relationships and development (Gallese, 2024). Therefore, our uniqueness, and our talents with it, are not autonomous, but something that is built over time through our interaction with others. There is no subject without relationships: we are, from the beginning, part of a web of connections. (Gallese, 2024).

Figure 9 Did the people who encountered obstacles receive help?
A comparison between general population and levels of satisfaction



The analysis of the results in relation to economic class further reinforces this interpretation (Fig. 10):

- **Among wealthy people**, 68% (16% more than the population average) **said they received**

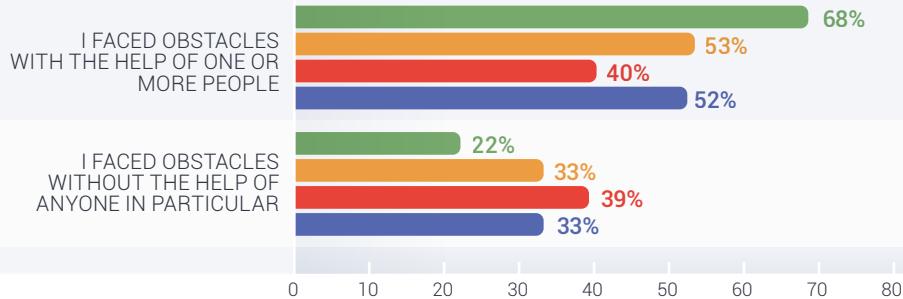
help, often from friends (41%) or teachers (14%).

- In contrast, among the people experiencing economic hardship, the percentage of those who received support fell to 40% (12% less than

the average), with a higher incidence of friends (20%) and a more marginal presence of teachers (8%), further demonstrating the pervasive effects of poverty on human development.

Figure 10 Did the people who encountered obstacles receive help?
A comparison between general population and socio-economic class

- Population wealthy
- Population middle class
- Population in economic difficulty
- Population



The factor of **social integration** completes the picture (fig. 11):

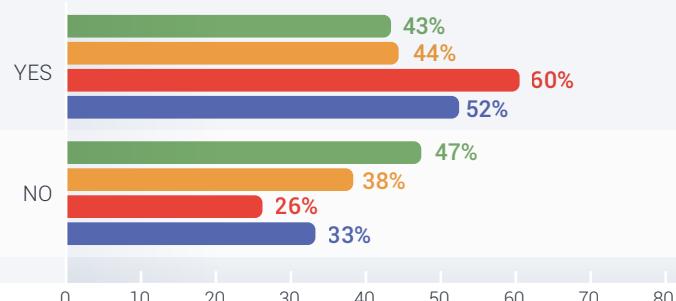
- **Well-integrated people report more often that they received support** (60%, mostly from friends and teachers),

- **Among those living in socially marginalised conditions, this percentage drops to 43%.** In the latter group, teachers are mentioned in only 4% of cases, while friends account for about 20% of responses.

- A particularly interesting element is the role of **figures belonging to religious communities**, who emerge as a significant reference point for 10% of marginalised people who received help.

Figure 11 Did the people who encountered obstacles receive help?
A comparison between general population and different levels of sociality

- Population high social marginalisation
- Population medium social marginalisation
- Population low social marginalisation
- Population



The presence of friends, teachers or other significant others seems to make the difference between a disrupted growth trajectory and a path of personal fulfilment. However, **this type of support is not distributed evenly**: it tends to be lacking among those with fewer economic resources, lower levels of education or who live in socially marginalised conditions.

In general, the qualitative interviews not only confirm the data collected so far. They have also allowed us to enrich it, adding different nuances and thus offering a deeper and more articulated interpretation of individual experiences. These stories will be the focus of the next chapter.

Significant relationships make the difference in the horizons of human flourishing

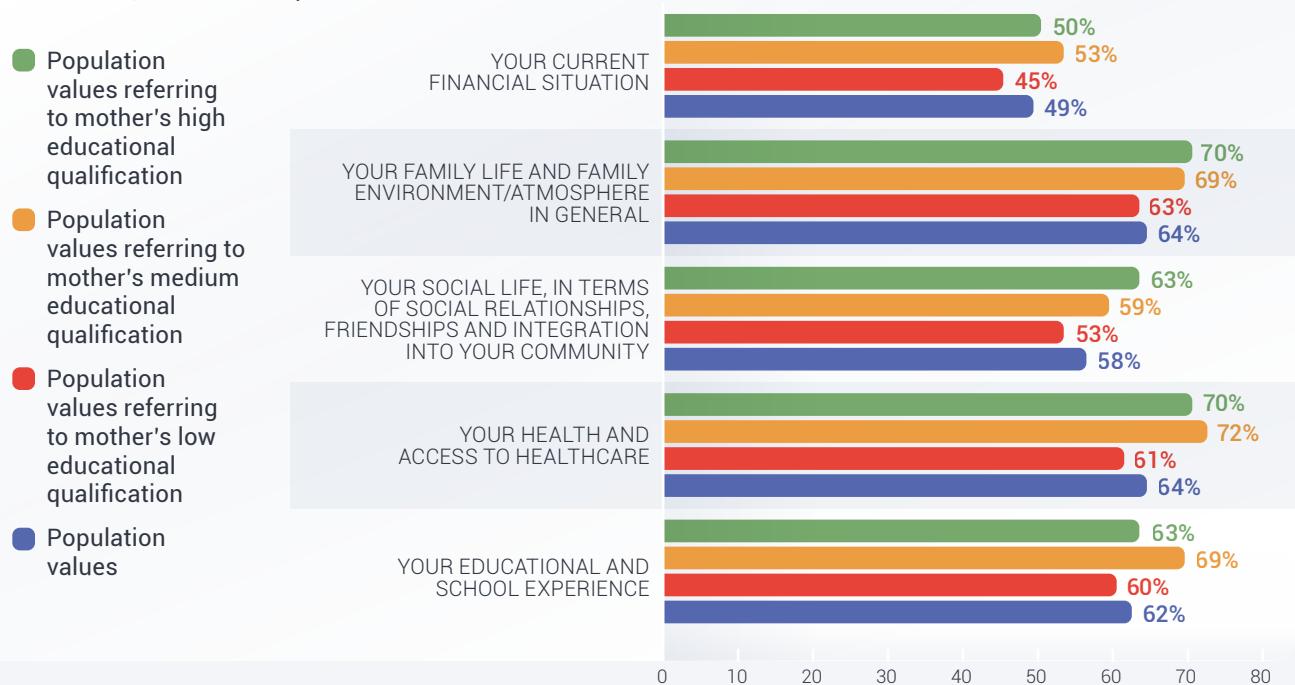
The role of the family: education, expectations and flourishing

Given the central role of the family in personal growth and fulfilment, we have tried to explore this dimension in greater depth, with a particular focus on the role of parents, and specifically of the mother.

The analysis reveals some key elements:

- **Having a mother who does not work is often associated with greater economic difficulties.** 32% of those with a mother who does not work report economic difficulties as an obstacle, compared to 25% of those with a working mother.
- **A high level of education among mothers is linked to higher levels of family, relationship and health satisfaction.** 66% of the respondents with a highly educated mother report being fully or very satisfied compared to 49% of the general population (Fig. 12).

Figure 12 | A comparison of specific satisfaction levels between general population and mother's educational qualification



Data show that among people with highly educated mothers, 70% say they are satisfied with their family life and home environment/atmosphere; 63% are satisfied with their social relationships (friendships, integration into the community); 70% are satisfied with their health and healthcare opportunities. For these same areas, satisfaction rates are lower in the general population: 64% for family life and the home environment/atmosphere, 56% for social relationships and 64%

for health and healthcare. In this regard, it may be interesting to note that among those who reported having a foreign mother, the mother's educational attainment appears to be lower. While this aspect does not seem to have much impact on perceptions of satisfaction with the family environment and atmosphere or in terms of social networks, it does appear to have some influence on perceptions of satisfaction with one's own health and access to healthcare.

Those from families where both parents have a high level of education tend to report:

- **Significant improvements in living conditions from childhood to present day, especially in education.** 69% of people report progress when the mother has a high level of education, compared to 60% when the mother has a lower level of education.
- **Greater overall satisfaction**, even when only one parent has a medium-high level of education.

In particular:

- **Having at least one parent with a high level of education is more common among those who report high school satisfaction;** for example, 69% of those whose mother has a medium level of education show high educational satisfaction compared to 62% among the general population.

An interesting aspect concerns the **relationship between the parents' educational attainment and economic barriers**:

- **Those with highly educated parents seem to have experienced fewer economic difficulties** (10% among those with highly educated mothers compared to 25% of the general population), but this does not automatically mean that they also had fewer difficulties at school.

Children of parents with a high level of education tend to achieve higher educational qualifications themselves. For example, among those with a highly educated mother, 40% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 24% of the population as a whole.

However, these life trajectories **are not always viewed positively**. There may be, often implicit, pressure on the children to maintain or even exceed the educational level achieved by their families. Education thus takes on the value of a **social status to be preserved**, especially for families with a high level of education. Conversely, in families with lower levels of education, expectations are often more modest, which may end up **reducing the motivation or confidence to continue studying**.

In this sense, the educational path could become a **constraint** rather than an opportunity. In general, it seems that, in light of their parents' educational qualifications, young people feel **directed towards pre-established paths**, confirming the existence of a "social genome" in each of us (*Dalton Conley, 2025*).

If this is the case, it may be worth wondering **how much room there is to cultivate individual talents and personal inclinations**. Family dynamics – and in particular the weight of expectations linked to education – seem to exert a profound influence on growth paths, both in terms of liberating and energising human potential and in terms of reproduction and social determinism. It is therefore crucial to ask **how we can build educational contexts that truly value the aspirations and potential of each individual from the earliest days of their lives**. There is no final answer to this question, but there seems to be a clear need to include an effort – among the actions to be taken – to **raise awareness and support parents**, known today in the literature as **parenting support** (*Milani, 2018*).

BETWEEN FAMILY AND SOCIAL NETWORK

Some reflections based on our findings

Relationships, initial conditions and a chance for personal change

Between obstacles and resources: factors that influence individual flourishing

In this chapter, we have explored the many dimensions that contribute to personal flourishing through data and testimonials. Before continuing, it is useful to pause and gather some preliminary observations that can be useful to understand the issues at stake: **the weight** and, at the same time, **the strength of origins, the interconnection between the different spheres of life and between the**

different dimensions of human development, the persistence of initial conditions, and the role of school and relationships, particularly for younger generations.

In this context, it should be recognised that economic circumstances rarely determine a predetermined destiny.

The interconnection between family, educational and social relationships makes more

difference than any single factor in the development of human potential. The starting point matters, but it can be transformed

First observation

The initial condition matters. Our analysis confirms that those who declare themselves satisfied today tend to remember their starting conditions as an element that had a positive impact on their path to flourishing. In other words, people clearly perceive



“ The different dimensions of existence are not isolated islands: they exert mutual influence, generating development trajectories that tend to consolidate over time ”

starting point matters, but it can be overcome, transformed and reworked.

Fourth observation

Encountering obstacles is common. It happens to those who have achieved fulfilment and those who have not. However, obstacles exist but they are not insurmountable: they can be faced and overcome, especially thanks to positive family and/or social relationships. All the results collected seem to converge on one crucial point: relational dynamics, both within and outside the family of origin – with particular attention to friendship – are a key factor in resilience and flourishing.

To gain a deeper understanding of the scope of these dynamics and give greater depth to the data collected, the next chapter will focus on the qualitative analysis of the interviews with the 62 young people in our sample. This step will lead us to revisit some of the trends that have emerged so far, but also to enrich them with further nuances, giving “colour” to the numbers, restoring further complexity and humanity to the life trajectories that underlie them.

that the starting point matters. This indication is consistent with the reference literature, as reported in the *OECD’s Starting Strong report (2001)*, which states: “*The early years form the basis for children’s development and learning pathways. Early inequalities can lead to different trajectories, while early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies can promote equal opportunities from the outset, with long-term economic and social impacts.*”

Second observation

The different dimensions of existence – health, education, economic status, family and

social relations – are not isolated from one another, but influence each other, generating trajectories of development that tend to consolidate over time. Present poverty has its roots in a personal history marked by early and persistent interconnected vulnerabilities that have limited opportunities for growth and participation.

Third observation

The initial condition, however important, is not destiny. Those who are satisfied today also report having experienced improvement in one or more dimensions of their lives. This suggests that the

A photograph of a man and a woman walking away from the camera. The man is on the left, wearing a blue denim jacket and dark trousers. The woman is on the right, wearing a green jacket and light-colored trousers. They are walking on a street with buildings in the background.

The stories behind
the numbers

The people's voices

Experiences and stories,
between difficult starts, turning
points and possible changes

*“Stories give voice
to numbers and witness
how strong experiences
can be”*



Before delving into the stories of the young adults we met, it is useful to start with a brief overview of some elements that emerged from the quantitative analysis, which may help us understand their life paths.

The survey showed that among those who overall declare

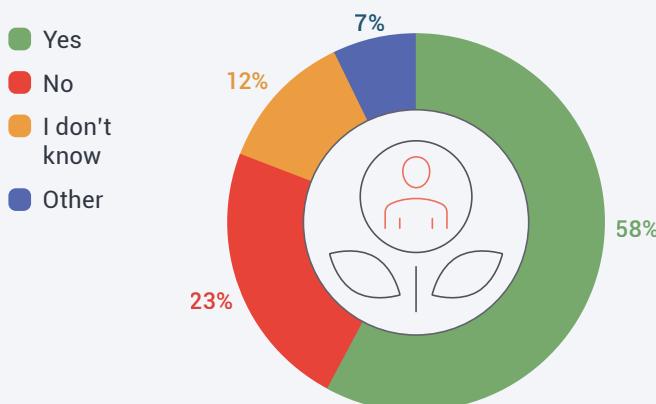
themselves satisfied with their path, as many as **85% are able to identify a specific moment that marked a significant turning point in their lives**. In 78% of cases, this moment occurred in adolescence or adulthood. Furthermore, **55% recognise the existence of an event or situation**

that played a decisive role in bringing about positive change.

We also find the data on relationships interesting: in **58% of cases, excluding their family of origin, people who consider themselves satisfied with their general condition identified a role model who had a concrete impact on bringing out their individual potential.**

These are, in particular, teachers (14%), people working in education (8%) or friends (27%) (fig.13).

Figure 13 Among those who were satisfied, were there one more people who encouraged their flourishing

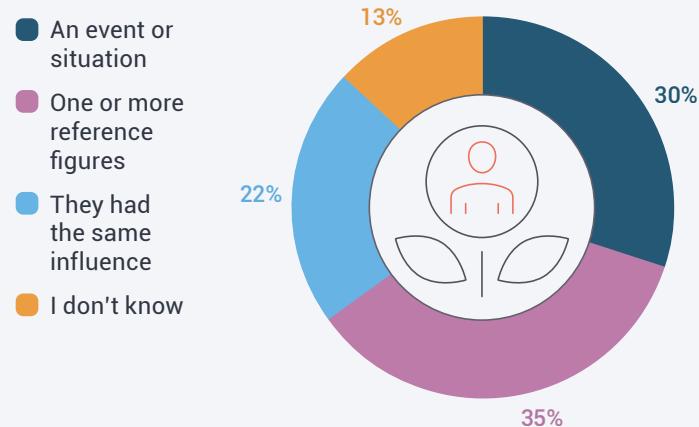


Finally, when asked who/what had the greatest influence on the growth of their potential, 35% of participants indicated one or more reference figures, 30% mentioned an event, while 22% attributed equal importance to both (fig. 13).

These numbers seem to point to **personal growth as a process that is nurtured by encounters, contexts and meaningful relationships.**

The initial condition is relevant; however, it does not irrevocably define their life

Figure 14 Among those who were satisfied, who or what contributed most to their success?



8. For further details on the sample, please refer to Chapter 3, which explains in detail the characteristics of the quantitative sample we constructed for this survey



Social relationships

At this point, let us try to go beyond the summary and take a closer look at how these elements intertwine. According to most of our interviewees, relationships with **family, friends and peer groups**, as well as with **mentors**, played a major role in their personal life journey, **both as a driving force and as an obstacle to their individual development**.

This finding is in line with international (*Banerjee and Lamb, 2016*) and national literature (*Amadini, Ferrari and Polenghi, 2019; Grasso, 2022; Frabboni, 1989*). These various contributions all recognise the role of significant adults – teachers, educators, and friends – and of learning environments as spaces for care and opportunity.

The profound role of relationships in the life and growth of each of us is evident

9. As described in Chapter 3, the sample for the qualitative interviews was divided into three groups:

- Group A: people who improved their social condition despite a fragile starting point. Maximum age: 45.
- Group B: people with fragile starting points who encountered obstacles along their path to growth. Maximum age: 45.
- Group C: people aged 18 to 35.



Family

The quantitative survey showed that **the importance of family is particularly felt among people who say they are satisfied** with all areas of their lives. For example, 81% and 86% of those who say they are satisfied overall say that their extended and immediate family has been very or extremely important in determining their level of satisfaction with their economic situation. **Among the most satisfied people, the impact of parents on social life and education is very high:** 85% of satisfied people say that their family – their parents in particular – have had a significant or very significant influence on their satisfaction with their education. Both the family of origin and the

current family (i.e. the one created in adulthood) are mentioned in about half of the narratives in the qualitative interviews.

Family can provide, for example, a **secure affection bond and a sense of belonging and mutual understanding**, and guarantee emotional encouragement, financial support and moral guidance in the different stages of life. *“My parents have always been there for me, no matter what,”* says one of the interviewees. This is not just about material support – family buys schoolbooks or pays the rent for those who study away from home. It is also about building the **self-esteem** that is essential for forging a healthy network of social relationships out of home.

The same applies also to the extended family. To this purpose, one young woman remembered the role of her grandmother in her life experience as follows: *“She gave me her presence and unconditional love. This allowed me to make all the mistakes I could, knowing that I was loved anyway”*. As suggested by *Lombardo and Nobile (2023)* in their recent book, our research also highlights the central role of family, friendship and group ties in identity formation, thanks to the opportunities for personal growth they provide. In general, **relationships with significant adults can be decisive**: those who have at least one adult role model feel they have more tools to deal with everyday difficulties, make independent decisions and imagine their future more concretely.



The family plays a significant role in an individual's life trajectory, but its impact is not necessarily positive, as it can represent both a source of support and growth and an obstacle to personal development

However, when there is a high level of conflict and financial and emotional support is lacking, the family - in this case, the family of origin only - becomes an obstacle to personal fulfilment, as highlighted by another interviewee: "It all started with a serious family crisis and a strong sense of loneliness, both financial and emotional." The family, therefore, plays an important role, and this does not necessarily imply a positive impact.

There is another perspective to observe the impact of the family of origin on an individual's life trajectory. This comes from the examination of the set of social and economic conditions that characterise it. These elements often appear in the life stories we collected, in most cases as an

obstacle to personal development. The literature confirms this finding: Crompton's study in the book *Class and Stratification* (2015) highlights the **key role of the economic, cultural and social resources of the family of origin in promoting the widening, or conversely narrowing, of the life, cultural and social horizons of boys and girls**.

In this regard, two passages from the interviews are particularly relevant. The first: *"One of the aspects I consider important is the need to be encouraged more, especially in the early stages, when it is not yet clear what you want to do, what you want to study or what direction you want to take for your future. I would have appreciated more support"*.

The second: *"Today, I would choose a grammar school. At the time, however, my parents were against it, preferring the security offered by a vocational diploma to the obligation to continue studying at the university after a grammar school"*.

Friends

While the family is deeply rooted both in the collective imagination for its key role in determining each person's destiny and in the biographical narratives of the research participants, we also learned from the questionnaire that **friends seem to be an important building block in the flourishing process**. Excluding family members, friends are indicated as reference figures who have contributed to fostering flourishing by 27% of the people who consider themselves satisfied with their life situation.

Here too, qualitative interviews help us better understand how and why. Although friends generally play a positive role in the collective imagination of younger people

(Group C), when we consider stories of success and failure (Groups A and B), their role can vary. This even happens several times in the course of a single story. However, **friends tend to play a positive role when there is growth**. In fact, friends in these stories are associated with strong bonds of trust and support, which have helped overcome obstacles and foster personal and emotional growth. We read this, for example, in the words of one of the interviewees: *"My best friend is wonderful, she is very thoughtful and supportive. This makes me feel a very lucky, but also stronger and more confident person"*. **If the story is about an unfulfilled talent, on the other hand, friends are associated with dynamics of exclusion, conflict, lack of support and negative**

relationships. Sometimes friends have also represented a negative role model or are associated with feelings of jealousy or envy: *"In that context, I perceived a lot of envy from some of my friends: perhaps they were used to be always under the spotlight; therefore, my rebirth made them feel they had been pushed into the background"*.

Although not comparable to friends, **peer groups** also emerge in the stories we heard, both as a resource and as an obstacle. In fact, peers can help create a sense of belonging, motivation, support and shared goals. If not, they can give rise to negative experiences, such as exclusion or bullying. This is particularly true when the starting point is more fragile or different. *"When I started wearing hearing aids, I was ashamed because they were not as common as glasses. In the end, I chose internal ones, which are very expensive, but luckily I could afford them. This changed my way of life: it changed my approach, the way I went out and did things. Over the years, I realised that my physical discomfort was also reflected in my private life, influencing my choices and the opportunities I could seize. Shyness and discomfort with my hearing were an obstacle, and perhaps it was precisely my physical problem that fuelled my shyness, because I didn't know how to relate to others. As children, at the age of 7-8, we can be cruel, and so I often felt excluded"*. In our research, **peers included the people with whom one shares life experiences, conditions and age, but with whom the bond is not as strong and lasting as with friends**.





School and university

Against the backdrop of theories such as those by *Piaget* (1970), *Vygotsky* (1978) and *Bronfenbrenner* (1979), it is clear that **education has a profound impact on individuals' life paths, influencing their choices and opportunities** from early childhood to adulthood. *Piaget* highlighted the importance of schooling in the different stages of cognitive development, *Vygotsky* emphasised the key role of the social and cultural environment, while *Bronfenbrenner* showed how family, school and society are intertwined in the development of each individual, demonstrating that educational choices shape the future and guide the possibilities of each individual from their very first steps.

The data and narratives we collected confirm the key role that access to and quality of education play in determining people's perceived and actual opportunities, influencing their development and their ability to bridge or widen existing gaps. This finding is in line with the ISTAT Report on Inequality, which highlights the deep link between education and quality of life. According to the data collected by *ISTAT* (2023), the poverty risk of Italian graduates has more than halved compared to the total population (*ISTAT 2023 and Inequality Report 2023*). Having a high level of education leads to higher levels of well-being and greater protection against vulnerabilities caused by a combination of several discriminatory factors. **Investing in education seems to be one**

Access to and quality of education deeply influence people's life opportunities, by acting either as a resource or an obstacle depending on the relational experiences at school and at the university

of the main factors protecting against economic hardship and, as we have seen above, this investment is made possible mainly by the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the family of origin.

The people we met often referred to their education. However, we must distinguish: school is

seen both as a resource and as an obstacle, and this is true both for the people who feel involved in a process of flourishing and for those who feel they have not realised their potential. The difference is – again – a matter of nuances. **Among those who feel they have flourished, three out of four consider school as a positive factor:** “*I think primary and middle school did a lot for my educational growth, enabling me to get into grammar school*”, one of the interviewees said. Sometimes, as the following quote shows, a narrative can be more problematic even within the scope of a success story, confirming that complexity and unpredictability are intertwining factors in human lives: “*I entered university with a strong sense of fatigue. My*

grammar school experience had been very difficult, not so much because of my results, but because of my relationships with others: some classmates had bullied me and, at the same time, the school had not provided adequate protection. This contributed to making me feel that I was in a rather complex situation”.

Where there was no blossoming, negative narratives predominate: ‘In my opinion, my school experience did not really allow me to become the person I hoped to be. Difficulties in relationships and the lack of a supportive environment held me back and made me put aside dreams and goals that were very important to me’. In these cases, the relational dimension of school becomes a space where negative relationships are formed with classmates or teachers.

A separate discussion is necessary for university. When university is mentioned, it is always with a positive connotation. In fact, despite the possible difficulties along the academic path, a university degree is perceived as a springboard to life and a form of redemption for those who started from disadvantaged backgrounds. Interestingly, university is described in terms of regret at not having been able to pursue an academic career in the stories of those who do not feel they have flourished.



The role of the mentor

Those who indicated school as a protective factor often referred to the presence of a “role model” or mentor. In this case, unlike what was discussed in the context of social relationships, the mentor is a teacher who stood out from the others: **going beyond their purely educational role, they played a key role in accompanying the students' growth**. Furthermore, the positive effects associated with this teacher transcend the moment and end up echoing in the interviewees' stories in the long term, especially those who feel they have achieved personal fulfilment. In their stories, **the role models they encountered at school acted as catalysts**

for positive and educational experiences. Those who decided to enrol in university often report having had a good experience in secondary school, associating it with positive relationships with teachers in a peaceful environment. Although indirectly, therefore, mentors can play a key role in “encouraging” young people to continue their studies. Completing academic studies is in itself a good level of achievement, as well as often paving the way to get a job and therefore a more stable and fulfilling future.

The quantitative survey showed that role models outside the family (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.) often come from the school/educational environment. have a particularly important influence in the school environment.

According to 55% of respondents, these people had a significant or very significant influence on their development, thanks to the dynamic role of positive educational relationships.

As mentioned by about half of the respondents, mentors also play an important role in social relationships. Moreover, However, the stories say that this figure is not only to be found among teachers. The qualitative interviews help us explore the nature of this mentor figure. They can be, for example,



a member of the extended family, but also a manager at work, a doctor, a psychologist, etc.: *"I felt like I was falling apart inside, I was really struggling psychologically. No one believed what I was going through, and that made it even harder, like fighting windmills. It was only when a doctor decided to listen to me and believed what I was saying that I finally began to feel understood and got real help. For me, he was a real role model".*

It is interesting to note that, **when mentors are mentioned, their role is positive and inspiring**. Many quotes come from people who have managed to flourish despite starting from a challenging position. In the stories of the 20 young people in Group B – those who did not feel they had flourished – only four mentioned their mentor. Four participants in the Group C (youth) also referred to this topic. Therefore, life and success stories tell us that **the presence of a mentor can really make a difference**. This finding is widely confirmed in the literature on resilience, in which mentors are often identified as *"resilience guardians"*, i.e. people who may

be part of the extended family, neighbourhood, network of friends or professional contacts, etc., and who provide free and stable support, rebuilding trust in others and in oneself.

They are 'soul breathers' in that they effectively bring back to life people who are discouraged and oppressed by adversity (Cyrulnik, 2009). In this sense, mentors, whose role appears to be key in many fragile situations, become even more central among first- and second-generation young Italian immigrants. As emerged from the analyses conducted in the first Inequality Report, these young people express low levels of trust in others, even in their early years. Restoring trust in others in these situations can become an important turning point, creating a fertile climate for building relationships and integration at the community level.

The presence of a mentor – often a teacher or another reference figure – fosters personal flourishing by offering support, trust and motivation, particularly when initial conditions are unfavourable



The place of origin

The quantitative interviews showed that the place of origin, together with the family, was one of the elements that had the greatest influence on people's development. With regard to all dimensions of flourishing, **the high or very high influence of the place of origin is mentioned by about 70% of respondents.**

The key role of the context of origin also recurs in many stories we collected, both for those who consider themselves flourished and for those who do not. About half of the respondents indicate their place of origin as a factor that has influenced their personal growth. However, **most stories mention the place of origin in a negative way:** you are never just different; you are "geographically different" (Putnam, 2015).

Even the stories of young adults who believe they have flourished are mostly memories of small villages, characterised by limited access to education and cultural activities such as concerts, cinema and travel. The main obstacle, as one of the interviewees sums up, is that 'living in a small village gives you fewer opportunities compared to a big or even a medium-sized city. Access to education and to many other things, to culture with a capital C, is difficult'. The tone of the young people who do not feel they have blossomed is slightly different, however still negative. In this case, the main regret is associated with the lack of support from the social context and the lack of job opportunities: *"You can be determined, believe you can do it, be resilient and face even the toughest challenges. But if the context around you continues to be hostile or discouraging, it is inevitable: you will feel overwhelmed and give up in the long run".*

The place of origin greatly affects personal growth: it often limits educational and cultural opportunities; however, it can be positive if it offers strong social networks and efficient services

Sometimes the place of origin is mentioned in a positive light and, in these cases, **it tends to be associated mainly with the opportunities offered by developed and modern countries:** an efficient welfare system, accessible public healthcare and an effective education system. Finally, the place of origin is indicated as a positive factor when it is associated with the presence of a solid social and relational network.

Initial and current economic status

We know from the questionnaire that economic status is perceived as **the main obstacle to the fulfilment of one's potential**.

Among those who report having encountered one or more obstacles in their lives, in fact, about one in three refer to economic status.

The stories we collected confirm this feeling. A more precarious starting point is often associated with the need to start working early. As soon as they finished compulsory education, many interviewees had to start contributing to the upkeep of their families. Hence, they had to abandon their studies or to face the many difficulties of balancing work and study. In other cases,

economic precariousness meant fewer opportunities to build “possible futures” (UNESCO, 2023) and a focus on the concrete present and immediate, real earning opportunities, as one of the interviewees told us: “*I would have liked to attend university or a master's degree after school, but I couldn't for essentially economic reasons*”. In many cases, the young people we met (groups A and B) **could not freely choose their university path**. It was not a decision dictated by their inclinations and talents but rather a consequence of the need to secure a safe job. These accounts are consistent with the findings of Vryonides and Lamprianou (2013). In their analysis of the relationship between education and social stratification, conducted using data from the 2008 European

Social Survey, they showed that universities in many EU countries struggle to create the conditions necessary to ensure equitable access to higher education, and that access to university is often still strongly linked to the social class of origin. If the focus shifts from economic background to current economic status, the negative connotation remains. Many stories reveal the difficulties and frustration associated with completing one's education, buying a house or ensuring good educational opportunities for one's children. It should be noted that this data represents a huge vulnerability in the Italian context: Italy ranks third to last in Europe in terms of the number of university graduates.

The economic condition – particularly if precarious – is often the main obstacle to flourishing, limiting studies, free choices and opportunities, with negative effects on the current situation as well



Individual factors

The quantitative questionnaire showed that the issue of individual factors emerged only partially. In many stories, however, reference was made to personal characteristics and the role they played in promoting or limiting personal fulfilment. The literature on this point is extensive because the intertwining of personal, social, contextual and family factors clearly has an impact on what we generically refer to here as "*personal characteristics*", too. These factors accompany the individual from birth, based on "intrinsic" characteristics, which the environment can later encourage or hinder during growth (Bandura, 1997).

The positive elements include "**strength/resilience/personal determination**", but also, albeit less frequently, "**resourcefulness**" or "**mental and/or physical health**". When well balanced, these elements help the person have meaningful and growth-enhancing experiences, preparatory to personal fulfilment. These factors emerge most frequently in the group of people who perceive themselves as most fulfilled. For example, success stories are full of "*determination/struggle*", but also resilience, in two out of three stories.

Health problems, low self-esteem and a sense of duty and sacrifice for oneself or others (usually the family) are some of the obstacles that limit full flourishing, as one of our interviewees tells us when she refers to the fact that "*Ever since*



I was little, I have made sacrifices. I started working early to help my family. They certainly taught me to make sacrifices. However, there is also a character trait to consider. If I had been more inclined to spend my savings on travel or experiences, I would probably have gained more social skills today because I would have been exposed to different realities and cultures". These elements emerge most frequently among those who do not feel fulfilled. As one young woman says, referring to her decision not to move abroad, for example, the feeling of not being good enough led her to narrow her

field of opportunities: "*I preferred not to go. I am a rather insecure person, and that played a part in my decision. I didn't feel ready to face something like that*".

It is interesting to note that **initiative** is not an individual characteristic that is mentioned frequently, **but it is only in a positive way when mentioned**. The only time it appears in a negative light is because the interviewee regrets not having been sufficiently enterprising. The same applies to **optimism** and **proactivity**: there are few mentions, never negative, and



“ Personal characteristics – i.e. resilience and determination – foster fulfilment, while insecurity, health issues or traumatic events can limit it ”

mostly associated with the concepts of determination and resilience.

While recognising that not all the elements above are considered in the current academic debate as individual factors – which certainly include mental and/or physical health, but do not always integrate aspects such as self-esteem, sense of duty or other similar elements – and could instead be assimilated to the non-cognitive skills identified by Heckman and Kautz (2012), our interviews seemed to show that there is a starting point, probably

of individual origin, on which we can build, and which we cannot ignore.

Sudden events such as **bereavements and diseases**, whether personal or affecting family members or close friends, deserve a separate mention. When they are mentioned in the accounts of those who feel fulfilled, **the event is associated with a key or turning point**. Moreover, these things usually belong to the past: “*It gave dignity to everything*” says one of the interviewees. When, on the other hand, these events characterise

the stories of those who do not feel fulfilled, the structure of the story changes. In most cases, it is an episode – regardless of when it happened – that still has a strong impact in the present: “*It still weighs heavily on me*”. Poor health is something that 10 out of 20 interviewees in the second group mention, while in the first group only three refer to physical health. Of course, these figures are not statistically significant, but we find it interesting to note that health is something that is felt more in its absence than in its presence.

However, the theme of health is not entirely new to us as we also encountered it in the quantitative questionnaire, where we saw how important it is for the flourishing of human potential, comparable only to the family. We also gathered some important observations on bereavement in the quantitative questionnaire. In this sense, to complete our analysis, we must say that **bereavement appears as the third main obstacle to personal flourishing**.

Preliminary conclusions

Thanks to the qualitative interviews, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities that characterise the path to flourishing. This has led us to a better understanding of the dynamics that characterise it. In general, we can conclude

that **blossoming is rarely the result of a solitary journey**. Very often, it is a process that is co-constructed and co-created in our relationships with others, in the contexts we inhabit, and in the opportunities we are offered or manage to generate. There is no single way, there is no right or wrong, **the same factors can play a protective or negative role in**

human development, depending on the context and circumstances, and it is not possible to trace a precise path that leads to the full realisation of the human person. For this reason, we invite those working in this field to recognise and value the plurality of paths. In this context, albeit with due caution, it seems that the data collected in this work has clearly



highlighted the transformative power of authentic relationships. In particular, it has highlighted the ability of these relationships to overcome existing difficulties and obstacles that life often presents, whether they are economic in nature, linked to precarious family contexts or associated with traumatic events such as a disease or the loss of a loved one.

Another key point regards the fact that relational development seems to be fostered by **higher-quality interconnections between the different relational contexts in which the individual is immersed**. When family, school, peer groups and other living environments are able to communicate and coordinate harmoniously, the conditions are

created for a more fluid, consistent and potentially richer path of growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bove, 2020). Conversely, when this does not happen, or when one of these systems encounters obstacles in its natural evolution or takes an unfavourable direction, personal fulfilment is at risk of being compromised.

At this point all we have left to do is to draw together all the stories, life experiences, data and suggestions gathered in these pages from the many people who participated in our research. ■

Blossoming is rarely the result of a solitary journey: it is a process that is co-constructed and co-created in our relationships with others and in the contexts we inhabit



Preliminary conclusions

Flourishing despite all inequalities

| Relationships, community and mentors
as levers to break a vicious circle

“Authentic relationships
have the power
to change the people’s
life trajectories”



In our Country, inequalities are not an exception but a silent and persistent thread that runs through territories, generations and individual stories. They do not manifest themselves as isolated events, rather as systemic outcomes of social, economic and cultural processes that feed on themselves over time.

Our research stems from a deep conviction: **inequalities are not a problem limited to those who experience them directly, but an issue that affects the entire community**. They undermine social cohesion, slow down development and jeopardise collective trust. The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI¹¹) confirms this: in 2021, Italy recorded a loss by 11.6% in relation to its human development potential. Every percentage point lost brings with it different stories held together by common threads: unfulfilled potential, unexpressed talent and less resilient communities.

Inequalities take root early, often in the first years of life. The data collected in the Foundation's first Inequality Report in 2023, together with the most recent data from ISTAT, show how **the socio-economic context of origin significantly influences people's growth trajectories**. This phenomenon is commonly defined as 'social determinism' in the literature, and it acts as a silent force capable of replicating conditions of disadvantage from one generation to the next.



However, as we pointed out in the first Report, not everything is carved in stone at birth.

There are paths that escape this mechanism, biographies in which people build full, satisfying, generative lives despite starting from adverse initial conditions. Our investigation actually stems from this awareness. Since outset, we have asked ourselves what makes it possible to break the vicious circle of inequality and instead activate the virtuous circle of human flourishing. In other words, what are the factors that hinder and foster the development

of human potential? Although this question is wide-ranging and has many implications that cannot be resolved in a Report, it has formed the basis of the research project presented in these pages. The main objective was not to provide final answers, but rather to try to **identify useful elements for generating a broader and more shared understanding of the phenomenon, from which to initiate collective reflection, stimulate future empirical studies on the same topics, and contribute to the development of appropriate policies**.

11. The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) assesses a country's level of human development while taking into account internal inequalities. While the Human Development Index (HDI) considers aspects such as health, education and income, the IHDI adds a level of depth: it adjusts this data according to disparities between social groups.



Inequality is not a problem limited to those who experience it directly, but an issue that affects the entire community

preconceptions and base action on in-depth knowledge.

Analysing individual paths, collecting testimonies, interacting with people and interpreting data accurately are essential steps to review intervention strategies and direct actions towards solutions that respond to the identified needs.

In our case, we referred to the concept of 'well-being' as outlined in the BES Report. This analysis suggested an affinity with the concept of 'human flourishing', which is multidimensional and includes economic, social, educational, health and relational aspects. This brings us to a third observation. From our research, we have learned that **these dimensions are not separate compartments but communicating vessels that influence each other**. In this intertwined context, the different dimensions take on different weights and nuances. Health and family seem to represent the foundations of well-being, while economic status has its relevance and very often represents a limit to fulfilment. emerges as a crosscutting force that tends to limit individual possibilities above all. **The quality of human relationships** stands out as a

Starting from this question, we interviewed 21 experts and listened to the stories of young adults who started from vulnerable conditions but managed to flourish, and others who do not feel fully realised. We asked everyone what they believed were the factors that hinder or promote the flourishing of human potential. We combined quantitative and qualitative approaches, integrating numerical data with personal narratives.

The first observation – or focus of attention – of this survey concerns the complementary value of statistical and narrative data, since the dialogue between these two voices generates a unique and profound type of knowledge, that well adapts to the

complexity of the discussed topic.

At the beginning of our empirical work, we immediately realised that a fundamental piece was missing, i.e. a shared meaning of the terms "fulfilment" and "flourishing". People attribute different meanings to these concepts. However, are there any common traits? To understand this, we decided to start from a simple, however crucial question: what does it mean to feel fully fulfilled?

In co-constructing this meaning, we came to a second observation: to promote a more equitable society, in which every person has the opportunity to develop their full human potential, it is essential to avoid any

crucial element: not only as an autonomous dimension of well-being, but as a transversal factor and a multiplier of opportunities and capabilities. Finally, school education is seen as a space of possibilities and recognition, that, when lacking, can contribute to reducing the perception of one's own fulfilment, but also as an area where fractures and regrets are concentrated, especially for those who had to interrupt their education at an early age. In this context, personal fulfilment appears as a dynamic balance between presence and absence, between opportunities seized and missed.

Once defined the concept of 'flourishing', we continued our

analysis by looking in greater depth at how it manifests itself in people's lives. In line with international literature, our survey confirms that **initial socio-family conditions play a significant role** in Italy too (fourth observation). Our data shows that those who today declare themselves satisfied tend to recognise their starting conditions as a factor that positively influenced their personal flourishing. However, despite its significant impact, the initial condition is not an inevitable destiny. Individuals who express satisfaction often report having experienced an improvement in one or more dimensions of their lives. This suggests that the

starting point is neither inevitable nor static. It is important to emphasise that encountering obstacles is a common experience, both for those who have succeeded in their path to fulfilment and for those who have not or not yet. Despite their presence, these obstacles are not necessarily insurmountable; on the contrary, they can be addressed and overcome by using protective and developmental factors to balance them.

This brings us to the key point of our research, which concerns the factors that hinder and promote the development of human potential. Data shows that, despite the diversity of the analysed Italian context, **some**



factors can make a difference (fifth observation). These include economic status, place of origin, school, family, friendships, the presence of role models (mentors), health and certain aspects related to individual temperament. Some of these factors act more frequently as obstacles (economic condition and place of origin), others as levers for development (mentors and community/relationships),

Personal fulfilment appears as a dynamic balance between presence and absence, between opportunities seized and missed

while others (family and school) can have ambivalent effects: they can play both a liberating and a hindering role in a person's development potential. Let us look at this in more detail.

Let us start with **the initial economic condition, which is also one of the most explored factors in literature**. Our survey shows that the economic-material dimension is a relevant aspect in the perception of personal flourishing. According to ISTAT data, in 2024, 23.1% of the Italian population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion and our work shows that economic difficulties are considered one of the main barriers to flourishing. Their impact is not limited to **reducing access to educational and cultural opportunities: it also limits the possibility of building meaningful relationships**.

Place of origin – understood as the territorial and social context – can also be a constraint. Our analysis shows that while living in small towns can help reduce daily stress, it also limits access to educational, employment and cultural opportunities. A small municipality, however welcoming it may be, does not offer the same density of stimuli, networks and opportunities as urban contexts. In the short and long term, this translates into a more local self-image and a narrower view of possible futures. Among our respondents, this condition, for example, appears to be more common among first- or second-generation immigrants. In these contexts, personal flourishing

risks being hampered not so much by a lack of talent, but by a lack of opportunities to express and develop it. In line with Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda, public policies could consider investing in the creation of territorial educational ecosystems: coordinated sets of resources, actors and initiatives that work together to support the educational and social development of people, especially in the most fragile contexts.¹²

School and family are ambivalent and deeply connected factors. Our research has shown that meaningful relationships play a central role among the protective factors that appear most clearly in growth trajectories. In particular, **family relationships are a pillar for building self-esteem and a sense of security in children and adolescents, when responsive and characterised by stability and affection. However, these relationships are not always a resource.** From what we have learned in these pages, when family relationships become **conflictual, fragile or absent**, they can turn into an obstacle, **limiting people's ability to face developmental challenges and school difficulties.** This is an issue that is particularly felt among young people of foreign origin who find themselves having to reconcile the culture of their country of birth, or that of their parents, with the context in which they live. Often, these different and unique worlds come into conflict with each other, causing a certain amount of stress for young people.

11. Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda aims to: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The INVALSI 2025 Report confirms that educational inequalities in Italy remain strongly linked to socio-economic background, i.e. to a set of factors that combine family of origin and living environment/place of origin. As also mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the most significant risk factors concerns the parents' living conditions – according to many researchers, including *Carriero, Filandri and Parisi (2014)*. This complex set of social, economic, cultural and individual factors characterises the family environment and significantly influences the life trajectories of sons and daughters. For example, there is a significant correlation between the parents' educational attainment and that of their children, as confirmed in this study. A longitudinal study conducted in Baltimore (*Alexander, Doris and Olson (2014)*) to further support this observation showed that differences in learning levels between children from families with different socio-economic status are already apparent in the early years of school and widen during the summer months, when the influence of school is lost. Children from more disadvantaged families tend to fall behind during the summer, while those from affluent families continue to progress, thanks to the stimuli and opportunities available in their living environments. This gap appears marginal in a single year but it accumulates and contributes to determining the level of skills achieved at the start of high school. According to the researchers, over half of the difference in school scores between high- and low-status students in the first year of high school is largely attributable

to these differences in summer learning in the early years of school. It is not just a matter of numbers: these differences are then reflected in the likelihood of accessing more selective educational pathways, completing their studies and attending university. In other words, **the family environment in which a person grows up** – and not just school – **plays a crucial role in determining their academic and educational success**. Hence, while it is true that school can help compensate for initial inequalities in part, particularly in the first '0-6' leg (nursery school and kindergarten), it is equally true that it cannot do so alone. Experiences outside school – those offered by the family of origin

– contribute substantially to consolidating or widening the gap between boys and girls especially during periods when formal education is interrupted, such as the summer. For this reason too, as international literature suggests, investing early in the most fragile educational contexts with cross-sectoral interventions in a collaboration between educational, school and social services and families, can be an effective strategy for combating the intergenerational reproduction of inequalities (*Milano, Tamburlini and Milani, 2025*).

The relationship between school and family seems to be another crucial issue. Its role emerges strongly both from the data



collected in this research and from numerous studies on educational inequalities. Starting with the early studies by *Bronfenbrenner* (1979), international literature has repeatedly emphasised **the importance of supporting the parents' educational role, especially in the most vulnerable contexts**. As stated in the works of *Westerlund* (2013) and *Mowat* (2019), **intervening in – and with – the family context and in the relationships between family and school contexts can be a decisive lever in combating educational inequalities**.

According to some research, including that of *Banerjee and Lamb* (2016), it is useful to 'support' parents in order to improve

the school performance of disadvantaged children, by offering them concrete strategies to accompany their children's school experience. These include:

- creating opportunities for daily conversations to stimulate language development;
- providing adequate study spaces at home that promote concentration and autonomy;
- maintaining open communication with the school and the teachers to build strong educational alliances.

The experts involved in our research also emphasised **the urgent need to provide parents with appropriate educational tools** to respond to the challenges – both new and old – that parenting imposes today.

Our research has revealed a further issue to consider, which is specific to the school-family relationship. According to the experts we met, this relationship appears to be characterised by a gradual distancing between parents and teachers. **This rift risks compromising educational continuity**, at a stage in life when **collaboration between these two worlds is crucial for the well-being and growth of boys and girls**.

Fortunately, the Italian context already offers some good practices in this field. These include, for example:

- "Arcipelago Educativo", promoted by Save the Children and the Agnelli Foundation
- "Futuro Prossimo", promoted by Save the Children
- P.I.P.P.I., a programme developed in 2011 by the University of Padua, which, thanks to a partnership with the Ministry of Labour, was recognised in the 2022 Budget Law (Law no. 234 of 30th December 2021) as one of the first six Italian Essential Levels of Social Services (LEPS), which guarantees comprehensive parenting support for families in vulnerable situations

These concrete experiences demonstrate that it is possible to build local educational ecosystems capable of supporting educational continuity, valuing the plurality of paths to success and combating exclusion, promoting more direct and constructive interaction between schools and families and, in some cases, such as P.I.P.P.I., between the social welfare, educational-school and health systems.

At this point, it is worth exploring the role of schools in developing human potential. Schools are the ideal setting for nurturing the potential of every individual, regardless of their starting point. The available data confirms that higher educational attainment is a protective factor against inequality, as it is associated with better employment and income prospects. However, the benefits of education go beyond the

The family where a child grows up plays a crucial role in defining the person's school and educational performance



economic sphere: successful completion of education leads to better job opportunities, and work is a space for social inclusion, personal fulfilment and the building of self-esteem. In the first Inequality Report, we observed how higher levels of education are linked to better health, greater cultural participation, wider access to information and even greater confidence in the future and awareness of global issues such as climate change. Ensuring quality education for all is therefore crucial.

Our work confirms that **school is perceived as a space for recognition** through which people construct and then evaluate their own path and the opportunities that have or have not presented themselves over time. However, that is not all: **school is also a place that opens up possibilities**, as the young people and experts involved tell us. However, **it can also become a place of exclusion and marginalisation**. As discussed in Chapter 1, the choice of schools based on the “social profile” of those enrolled generates parallel school systems that reproduce and amplify inequalities. In many Italian contexts, the distribution of students across different streams – academic, technical and vocational – often reflects their starting conditions rather than their personal inclinations or acquired skills. This seemingly neutral dynamic has at least three consequences. As *Gambetta (1987)* and *Schizzerotto (2006)* point out, the family also has a significant impact on educational choices, from the selection of a secondary school to the decision whether or not to continue studying after

graduation. According to *Breen and Goldthorpe (1997)*, families with a high socioeconomic status tend to favour grammar school courses with the aim of maintaining their acquired status, while those with a lower status more often opt for shorter courses that facilitate rapid entry into the labour market. The extent to which these courses reflect the aspirations of boys and girls is still an open question. Educating parents about the importance of respecting and valuing the skills and talents of their sons and daughters – whatever these may be – and suspending preconceptions about the value of one educational path over another could be a further step towards promoting the full realisation of each individual. In the long term, this could also help to break the vicious circle of reproducing inequalities and create more satisfied, less frustrated individuals who are capable of building more balanced and stimulating living environments. Moreover, misalignments between skills and educational expectations can be generated and also the development of significant obstacles to the social and cultural integration of boys and girls can be fuelled. According to INVALSI, schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged students tend to have lower results, not because of a lack of potential, but because of a lack of resources, expectations and support networks. This affects not only performance but also the students’ self-perception. Our survey essentially confirms these observations. Low- explicit or implicit – expectations projected by adults onto those from fragile backgrounds can trigger a vicious



Promoting mixed-class composition and investing in the quality of schools across all areas means creating environments capable of embracing a diversity of experiences and breaking the cycle of inequality reproduction

circle: young people internalise a narrow image of themselves, lower their commitment, lose confidence and see their performance deteriorate. The problem, therefore, is not a lack of skills, but the absence of a space that recognises them. The mismatch between potential and school context is the product of a dynamic that ends up widening the gap, instead of bridging it. In this sense, the INVALSI 2025 Report highlights how the



variety of experiences, family languages, expectations and starting conditions in school contexts is not an obstacle, but rather a resource. Pupils in schools with greater social diversity – in terms of income, cultural capital and origin – tend to achieve better results than those in more homogeneous schools. This data challenges the still widespread idea that a “good school” is one that selects its target audience and protects itself from complexity. In primary and lower secondary schools, the presence of students from different backgrounds activates more inclusive learning dynamics. Peer comparison, when enhanced by an appropriate educational environment, becomes an opportunity for growth for everyone. Promoting mixed-ability classes – also through fairer enrolment criteria – could be both the right choice and an effective educational lever as well. Investing in the quality of schools in all areas, and not just in a few

“centres of excellence”, would help create environments capable of welcoming a plurality of experiences and valuing talent in all its forms. This is not a matter of asserting a definitive truth, but of opening up a space for reflection on the principle of ‘giving more and better to those who have less’, which is put into practice, for example, in the French ZEPs (Priority Education Zones). We know that if school recognises and cultivates diversity, and teachers have specific training, materials, equipment and appropriate time, everyone can find favourable conditions to develop their potential, starting from their own uniqueness and in relation to others. As demonstrated by the studies of *Cunha and Heckman (2008)*, this represents a medium- and long-term advantage for both individuals and the community.

The stories of the boys and girls we listened to speak of a school that often works and

this is also true for foreign citizens, who tend to report a positive school experience, despite lack of preparation of Italian schools to welcome them. The most common regret is the inability to continue their studies. This finding, if listened to carefully, offers valuable insights for policy makers, particularly in promoting integrated policies to support educational continuity, involving schools, welfare, housing and youth policies. Some universities are already moving in this direction, activating support measures for young people from socio-economically and/or culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, such as scholarships, financial aid or distance learning degree courses, which are more accessible to all. Joint action between public institutions and private entities could further amplify the impact of these initiatives, generating more inclusive and resilient educational ecosystems.

The role of the mentor is one of the most innovative elements that emerged from our research. The literature has already addressed this issue, particularly in the school context, where the mentor often coincides with a teacher. Our work has also confirmed the importance of teachers in supporting young people in their choice to continue their studies and access university courses.

Our research also shows that **the role of mentors is not limited to the school environment.** In fact, a mentor can also be a family member, a friend, a colleague, a boss, a coach or someone you have never met directly, but who represents an inspiration. Inside and outside school, mentors are figures who go beyond their formal role and manage to establish meaningful

relationships, capable of guiding, inspiring and igniting a spark. They are often **the ones who 'see' – and make visible – a person's potential before they themselves are aware of it.** Therefore, whether it is a teacher, a coach, a friend, a colleague or even a distant but inspiring figure, mentors seem to play a key role in helping people flourish: **they spark the flame of talent and help take the first step towards self-fulfilment.**

Qualitative data showed that the presence of a mentor is recurrent in stories of flourishing, while it is almost absent in the stories of those who do not feel fulfilled. The recent report *"Come stai?" (How are you?)* promoted by Ashoka and *Fondazione con i Bambini* highlighted that Italian teenagers feel the need for adults who listen to them, recognise them

and accompany them in building their future. In this sense, mentors represent a concrete way to meet this need.

In addition to mentors, **the wider community** – made up of friends, educators, coaches and colleagues – **represents a fundamental support network.** This network comes into play after the spark of talent has been ignited, and plays a key role in fuelling it and keeping it alive, especially in the most fragile contexts. Keeping it alive makes all the difference in the world, as it is often what truly guarantees that potential will flourish. Igniting is not enough to flourish; **flourishing is a process that requires time, care and attention.** The community, in its many forms, has the power to fill the gaps left by families in difficulty or in disadvantaged economic



conditions, offering access to opportunities, scholarships and inclusion projects. However, our survey highlighted a critical issue: oftentimes, existing projects do not reach the people who need them most. Access is mediated by networks: those who do not have connections can be excluded. Access is mediated by networks: those who do not have connections can be excluded. In this regard, from what we have seen, very often people of foreign origin and/or people with disabilities

Mentors are the ones who see – and make visible – a person's potential before they themselves are aware of it



are those who find themselves living in conditions of high social marginalisation. The reasons for this can be varied and include, among other things, language barriers, fear of judgement by others, but also logistical difficulties in accessing meeting places. In this sense, there is considerable room for action, which may be useful to reflect on. The recent Oxfam report *“Disugualità”* (2025) highlighted how inequalities are fuelled by a lack of access to information and opportunities, emphasising the importance of inclusive and proactive networks. If these considerations proved well founded, this would have significant operational implications. It might be appropriate to stir reflection aimed primarily at ensuring fair and widespread access to existing initiatives for all. Committing to bringing services and initiatives to excluded and marginalised people means directing part of our efforts towards thinking or rethinking how to reach foreigners, people with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged, and the many psychologically fragile young people who have closed themselves off from society. It means studying, researching and working to understand how to overcome linguistic, cultural, physical, logistical and psychological barriers in order to create fertile ground for talents to flourish.

Alongside relational and contextual factors, structural conditions – such as housing policies, the labour market and the welfare system – also play a decisive role. Individual factors are no less important: determination,

resilience and resourcefulness. These qualities are not just innate; they are resources that can be cultivated or hindered by the environment. In this context, health deserves special attention. Many young people mentioned it as a key element, a sort of fundamental prerequisite without which any path to fulfilment is likely to collapse. Like the foundations of a house, health supports and enables the construction of subsequent levels of well-being and flourishing. Without it, every upper floor – educational, relational, and professional – loses stability and meaning.

Literature reminds us, and this research confirms, that all the factors we have mentioned – economic status, place of origin, school, family, relationships, community and mentors – do not act in isolation, but they are intertwined and reinforce each other. This often results in a legacy of disadvantage that is passed on and amplified from one generation to the next.

However, our research has shown that disadvantage is not an inevitable fate. It can be combated and identifying the most appropriate areas for intervention is crucial. The findings presented in this Report highlight how **the relational and social dimension is central to promoting change** (sixth observation). In particular, the activation of support networks and the presence of solid relational contexts, the integration of parenting support, economic, employment and training support make it possible to offer concrete alternatives: these conditions facilitate overcoming initial

fragilities and promote the full expression of individual potential. By supporting the building of relationships, rather than providing people with ready-made solutions and pre-written paths to success, it will be possible to create a space where everyone has the opportunity to see themselves, choose and unleash their own talent. If the hypotheses formulated in this study were confirmed, the observations that have emerged could prove to be of practical use, providing valuable input for public policies, social cohesion measures and resource allocation.

In summary, our research confirms some already known evidence, but enriches it with data, which highlights the point of view and voice of those involved in the phenomenon under investigation in the context of our Country. Interpersonal relationships are confirmed as the foundation for flourishing, and mentors emerge as key figures. The invitation is twofold: on the one hand, recognising the value of diverse pathways; on the other, investing with determination in supporting

people in their contexts and relationships, so that everyone has the tools they need to achieve autonomy.

Working on inequalities, after all, means accepting that profound processes of change need time. As we have seen, these cultural, social and systemic transformations cannot be exhausted in a project cycle or a political season. They require time. Time to observe, to understand, to build trust, particularly between families and institutions. Time to change entrenched attitudes, to generate new expectations, to show possibilities that seemed inaccessible once. It is a long, often cumbersome process, which manifests itself more in changes of perspective than in immediate results. However, the possibility of making a real impact lies in this very duration.

We could therefore try to give ourselves the time to work together for a new alliance between citizens, families, schools, public and private institutions, particularly in the area of welfare.

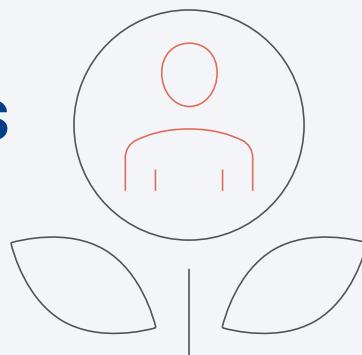
An alliance that promotes systemic, cross-sectoral approaches, that prioritises joint action to achieve shared change, including with families themselves, who are considered active subjects and not objects of these projects. An alliance starts with listening and includes all actors from the outset, overcoming fragmentation and building common and sustainable visions, in terms of effective pathways for participation and co-construction of better conditions to success for and with every child, too.

For every person to have the chance to flourish, no matter where they start from. We have seen this happen when young children are placed in virtuous circles of care, education and recognition. When families, schools and communities work together to offer opportunities and nurture trust and motivation. In these cases, **an evolutionary dynamic is set in motion that transforms difficulties into resources**, helps people rewrite a new story within their own history, and flourish through, and not just despite, adversity. ■



“**For every person to have the chance to flourish, no matter where they start from**

Where flourishing begins: six observations for a more just and inclusive society



The value of dialogue between statistical and narrative data



The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches – numbers and stories – generates a form of deep knowledge. This is particularly useful when observing complex phenomena such as inequality and human flourishing.

The importance of situational and shared knowledge



To promote a more equitable society, it is essential to avoid preconceptions and base actions on a thorough understanding of reality that starts with people and relies on listening, testimonies and data analysis.

Interconnection between the dimensions of flourishing



The different dimensions contributing to human flourishing do not act separately, but influence each other. In this intertwining, the quality of human relationships emerges as a crosscutting factor and a multiplier of opportunities.

The initial socio-family condition matters, but it is not destiny



Initial conditions matter and influence the paths to flourishing significantly. However, obstacles and improvements can coexist, and change is always possible.

Factors hindering and promoting human potential



Key factors include economic status, place of origin, school, family, relationships, mentors, health and individual traits. Some act more often as brakes, others as levers, and still others in an ambivalent manner. However, there is no single rule; stories can also change depending on context and circumstances.

The centrality of relational networks and the community



The presence of solid relational contexts and support networks (family, school, mentors, community) is crucial for overcoming fragilities. Disadvantage is not an inevitable fate: relationships have a transformative power and open up opportunities that are sometimes unexpected.

Inequalities: facts & figures

A quantitative analysis to substantiate our conclusions



Scan the QR code to download the Excel file containing all the tables and data from our study

The following tables refer to the questionnaire administered to 1,201 young Italian adults, systematically presenting the responses to the questions discussed across the different chapters of the Report. In addition, by scanning the included QR code, it is possible to access the full set of questionnaire results, which provide responses to all administered questions for comprehensive and detailed consultation.

If you were to express your overall satisfaction considering economic, family, health, social and relational aspects, as well as your educational experience, what rating would you give?

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
1 - Fully dissatisfied	3	2	5	1	3	4	1	2	4	3	7	3	3	3	4	3
2 - Moderately satisfied	7	9	5	7	5	9	7	8	7	8	4	8	6	6	12	7
3 - Satisfied	41	40	43	41	42	40	45	42	42	40	32	35	49	42	34	42
4 - Very satisfied	38	38	39	40	38	38	40	36	35	40	41	39	38	39	39	36
5 - Fully satisfied	11	13	8	11	13	9	6	13	12	9	16	15	5	10	10	12
(NET) Bottom 2	10	10	10	8	7	13	8	10	11	11	11	11	9	9	16	10
(NET) Top 2	49	50	48	51	50	46	46	48	47	50	57	54	42	49	50	48
Base	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
Average	3,46	3,51	3,42	3,52	3,53	3,38	3,43	3,50	3,45	3,45	3,54	3,56	3,36	3,47	3,39	3,46
Std. dev.	0,89	0,88	0,89	0,82	0,87	0,92	0,78	0,88	0,94	0,89	1,04	0,94	0,77	0,87	0,98	0,91



EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
7	2	1	30	-	-	11	1	1	0	2	21
9	7	4	70	-	-	14	5	3	3	11	12
44	40	39	-	100	-	46	44	23	35	49	42
28	41	43	-	-	78	20	42	53	46	35	18
11	9	12	-	-	22	9	8	20	16	4	6
16	9	6	100	-	-	25	6	4	4	13	33
40	50	55	-	-	100	29	50	73	62	38	25
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
3,29	3,48	3,60	1,70	3,00	4,22	3,02	3,52	3,88	3,73	3,27	2,78
1,01	0,85	0,81	0,46	-	0,41	1,06	0,76	0,79	0,77	0,77	1,16

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with...

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA					SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +	
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184	
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201	
Your current financial situation	49	51	46	54	55	41	43	51	49	53	48	49	47	48	46	51	
Your family life and family environment/atmosphere in general	64	68	61	64	62	66	61	64	64	66	70	70	59	66	62	60	
Your social life, in terms of social relationships, friendships and integration into your community	56	56	56	57	59	53	48	61	65	53	57	56	55	56	53	60	
Your health and access to healthcare	64	66	62	69	66	61	60	62	70	70	58	67	63	67	55	62	
Your educational and school experience	62	61	63	66	63	59	54	59	68	66	64	59	60	71	57	61	

Now, think about how your growth and personal fulfilment have developed; do you feel that you have managed to improve or worsen your initial situation?

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA					SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +	
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184	
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201	
Your family's financial situation	52	54	49	53	53	50	49	51	54	51	57	50	50	55	49	55	
Your family life and family environment/atmosphere in general	60	62	58	63	59	59	54	64	59	60	65	62	59	58	58	58	
Your social life, in terms of social relationships, friendships and integration into your community	57	58	56	60	59	53	54	54	65	55	60	60	56	59	45	54	
Your health and access to healthcare	61	66	57	59	65	59	59	60	66	60	65	64	58	64	52	62	
Your educational and school experience in general	62	62	62	65	65	59	55	66	67	61	69	58	63	67	59	63	

Which of the following aspects have positively or negatively influenced the beginning of your personal growth?

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA					SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +	
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184	
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201	
Your family's financial situation	52	54	56	51	58	54	52	60	56	53	44	56	49	54	46	59	
Your family life and family environment/atmosphere in general	60	63	66	60	65	63	65	65	62	62	62	65	59	66	58	66	
Your social life, in terms of social relationships, friendships and integration into your community	57	60	60	60	62	61	56	55	68	62	60	64	57	62	52	60	
Your health and access to healthcare	61	70	72	68	70	71	63	73	75	73	68	67	71	75	67	71	
Your educational and school experience in general	65	64	65	63	65	66	58	66	72	65	64	60	67	71	56	66	

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
42	50	51	18	34	67	21	52	73	60	40	26
64	65	63	29	52	82	57	68	67	75	59	40
51	59	54	16	45	74	46	58	65	69	45	37
55	67	68	33	48	84	47	68	80	77	60	29
51	63	71	23	49	80	48	65	74	71	59	37

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
38	55	59	19	42	67	26	58	68	64	42	28
59	59	61	31	46	77	50	62	66	70	53	34
55	57	58	25	45	73	48	60	58	69	47	34
52	65	64	27	51	77	47	65	71	74	54	34
45	65	73	28	53	77	48	66	71	70	61	36

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
47	56	56	26	39	71	31	58	73	66	44	31
57	64	68	33	56	76	53	66	70	73	59	34
56	62	60	27	50	75	48	63	64	73	52	31
54	76	75	38	62	84	57	75	73	80	64	46
51	69	69	27	56	79	49	70	67	73	60	44

Thinking about your current financial situation, indicate how much each of the following factors has contributed to determining the level of satisfaction you have just expressed.

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
Your initial financial situation	26	26	27	23	28	26	24	26	18	31	36	28	21	29	24	29
Your family of origin (including grandparents)	33	33	34	30	38	32	29	37	28	38	39	37	30	40	28	24
Your parents	44	43	44	48	44	41	35	49	38	50	48	43	44	47	42	40
Your educational background to date	27	27	26	25	31	24	20	28	22	31	38	30	22	27	27	27
Your university career	26	26	26	30	30	20	21	24	26	31	28	26	25	26	20	29
The social relationships that have accompanied your growth (friends, schoolmates, etc.)	18	20	16	18	20	16	8	23	19	22	21	21	16	20	19	12
Extracurricular group experiences (Scouts, parish) or family experiences such as trips, travel, visits to museums, etc.	15	15	15	13	19	12	10	18	13	18	18	18	13	13	15	14
Your physical health over the years	27	28	26	26	30	25	20	26	29	33	30	29	26	30	16	25
Your mental health over the years	31	32	30	33	33	28	26	30	29	36	38	31	29	34	26	31
The place where you grew up	35	36	35	37	36	34	25	40	32	39	47	36	36	37	30	33
Significant figures outside the family over the years (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.)	13	13	13	11	16	12	8	13	11	15	27	13	11	14	12	17

Thinking about your family life and current family environment/atmosphere, indicate how much each of the following factors has contributed to your level of satisfaction.

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
Your initial financial situation	59	59	60	66	57	58	53	66	57	61	63	55	66	57	59	61
Your family of origin (including grandparents)	71	68	73	72	71	70	66	68	73	74	74	69	70	75	66	71
Your parents	80	82	78	84	80	79	80	81	79	80	79	80	82	81	76	79
Your educational background to date	60	59	61	68	61	56	56	58	60	64	66	58	61	66	52	58
Your university career	50	50	50	64	50	43	44	47	52	56	52	49	51	52	39	50
The social relationships that have accompanied your growth (friends, schoolmates, etc.)	60	61	59	62	59	60	53	58	70	59	66	61	57	66	54	58
Extracurricular group experiences (Scouts, parish) or family experiences such as trips, travel, visits to museums, etc.	47	49	45	46	51	46	45	56	44	46	50	49	45	43	52	51
Your physical health over the years	66	65	67	68	66	64	60	63	68	69	71	66	65	67	62	65
Your mental health over the years	69	69	69	68	68	70	64	66	71	75	71	68	70	71	63	71
The place where you grew up	71	72	70	76	69	70	65	74	69	76	72	72	71	73	68	67
Significant figures outside the family over the years (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.)	48	49	48	43	52	47	42	52	50	49	49	54	42	46	54	45

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
23	27	27	28	18	33	28	24	31	28	25	23
32	35	32	23	23	45	34	32	38	38	28	27
44	46	39	27	33	56	44	40	57	46	43	36
24	26	30	16	17	37	26	25	37	31	23	18
25	22	35	12	19	34	20	24	43	31	23	12
15	20	16	12	7	28	19	16	22	20	14	18
17	13	15	4	9	22	17	12	18	17	10	14
29	28	23	15	21	35	25	27	32	32	22	23
32	31	29	29	21	39	30	29	41	33	28	35
36	36	31	27	29	42	39	32	44	36	36	34
7	15	15	7	6	20	13	11	19	16	10	8

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
57	59	61	54	49	70	57	59	69	66	55	47
72	70	71	48	59	85	65	72	76	80	65	57
85	77	81	77	71	89	76	83	79	87	77	69
58	58	67	45	50	72	51	62	69	66	55	50
41	46	67	27	45	59	34	53	66	57	47	31
58	60	63	46	48	73	56	61	65	70	53	43
48	47	48	24	37	61	43	48	53	55	41	39
60	68	66	51	52	80	56	68	75	72	66	42
64	70	73	66	56	81	56	73	76	77	66	50
71	72	68	55	66	78	73	71	70	76	71	60
43	49	52	40	36	60	49	49	43	53	44	39

Thinking about your social life, in terms of social relationships, friendships and integration into your community, indicate how much each of the following factors has contributed to your level of satisfaction.

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
Your initial financial situation	54	55	53	53	57	52	46	51	58	58	59	51	53	55	59	56
Your family of origin (including grandparents)	65	67	62	60	65	66	61	70	61	67	66	65	60	73	64	60
Your parents	70	72	68	68	70	71	66	70	68	74	74	66	72	74	72	69
Your educational background to date	65	68	62	65	69	62	55	70	68	69	67	65	62	68	62	67
Your university career	50	49	51	66	53	40	45	51	54	55	44	49	50	55	45	48
The social relationships that have accompanied your growth (friends, schoolmates, etc.)	66	66	67	66	66	66	64	67	68	67	64	65	63	72	59	68
Extracurricular group experiences (Scouts, parish) or family experiences such as trips, travel, visits to museums, etc.	50	50	49	47	51	50	42	51	56	51	52	52	49	47	49	50
Your physical health over the years	64	63	65	64	68	61	60	66	67	64	64	64	64	66	58	65
Your mental health over the years	70	69	71	69	74	66	65	75	62	77	69	67	69	71	68	73
The place where you grew up	73	76	71	75	75	71	68	79	79	70	71	72	74	75	77	71
Significant figures outside the family over the years (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.)	48	48	47	37	49	52	46	50	53	41	53	46	44	53	51	48

Thinking about your health and access to healthcare, please indicate how much each of the following factors has contributed to the level of satisfaction you have just expressed.

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
Your initial financial situation	62	63	60	68	63	58	60	62	61	67	57	66	56	65	61	59
Your family of origin (including grandparents)	65	68	63	64	68	64	62	68	70	64	63	67	57	71	65	67
Your parents	75	78	71	77	75	73	69	76	75	76	80	76	69	78	77	75
Your educational background to date	55	59	51	54	57	54	51	54	55	60	56	53	54	57	60	56
Your university career	45	49	41	51	49	40	41	41	53	49	40	48	42	46	38	48
The social relationships that have accompanied your growth (friends, schoolmates, etc.)	52	54	50	51	51	53	48	55	55	50	58	55	50	55	50	45
Extracurricular group experiences (Scouts, parish) or family experiences such as trips, travel, visits to museums, etc.	41	42	39	43	41	39	35	43	42	41	47	42	37	41	49	40
Your physical health over the years	70	71	70	75	72	67	66	71	74	71	71	68	67	75	65	77
Your mental health over the years	70	72	69	70	71	70	70	68	74	70	71	70	66	76	70	72
The place where you grew up	68	70	66	67	72	66	69	69	70	65	72	68	65	73	68	68
Significant figures outside the family over the years (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.)	43	44	41	39	47	42	35	43	50	45	45	38	42	48	46	46

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
45	55	59	41	44	65	44	57	59	60	51	36
60	67	65	42	56	76	61	67	65	72	62	47
71	70	70	59	60	81	62	73	76	75	67	63
60	66	68	49	53	79	56	69	69	70	66	47
41	48	65	23	44	62	35	52	63	56	47	30
58	69	68	46	53	81	58	69	70	73	66	45
39	52	55	27	39	63	45	51	55	54	50	34
59	66	64	34	54	78	54	68	67	73	56	48
66	70	73	54	60	81	67	71	71	76	67	55
76	73	72	62	68	80	69	76	74	78	71	66
41	49	52	26	38	60	40	51	48	54	44	27

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
50	65	67	50	52	73	57	62	73	68	63	40
63	66	66	40	59	76	61	67	67	75	56	52
70	76	77	58	66	85	71	75	82	80	74	59
44	58	59	38	46	66	40	58	64	62	49	40
36	42	60	25	39	55	34	48	47	52	38	33
50	53	52	30	40	67	46	54	56	60	46	40
31	45	43	23	31	53	32	43	45	47	35	32
62	73	73	49	59	84	58	74	79	77	67	56
70	70	72	58	60	81	62	75	71	77	68	55
64	70	68	56	61	77	66	70	72	74	68	54
30	47	47	22	36	53	38	43	51	50	36	31

Thinking about your educational and school experience, indicate how much each of the following factors has contributed to the level of satisfaction you have just expressed.

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
Your initial financial situation	59	58	60	64	59	56	50	59	61	68	54	56	60	60	54	61
Your family of origin (including grandparents)	64	62	65	60	64	65	60	61	68	65	66	60	64	70	65	60
Your parents	75	75	76	76	75	76	70	80	76	74	82	73	77	74	81	77
Your educational background to date	68	64	73	77	71	62	60	69	70	73	72	60	68	79	65	72
Your university career	54	54	55	68	57	45	49	54	55	62	48	54	49	55	50	64
The social relationships that have accompanied your growth (friends, schoolmates, etc.)	64	65	63	63	65	64	55	67	66	69	66	59	68	69	56	65
Extracurricular group experiences (Scouts, parish) or family experiences such as trips, travel, visits to museums, etc.	48	49	47	46	50	47	38	58	47	52	49	50	48	46	46	47
Your physical health over the years	65	64	66	69	67	61	56	65	70	68	67	64	63	71	56	65
Your mental health over the years	67	68	66	67	71	64	62	68	71	70	66	64	65	73	62	70
The place where you grew up	69	70	67	76	70	64	62	70	73	72	69	66	70	70	68	70
Significant figures outside the family over the years (e.g. teachers, educators, coaches, etc.)	55	54	55	50	57	55	53	57	60	51	52	52	49	59	63	56

Have you encountered any events in your life that have hindered the fulfilment of your potential?

Base: total sample	Total	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					
		Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	1.201	612	589	265	405	531	314	229	233	291	134	358	299	265	95	184
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	566	635	223	421	557	312	200	240	296	153	335	273	282	110	201
YES (NET)	59	58	60	64	59	56	50	59	61	68	54	56	60	60	54	61
Yes, financial difficulties	64	62	65	60	64	65	60	61	68	65	66	60	64	70	65	60
Yes, bereavement	75	75	76	76	75	76	70	80	76	74	82	73	77	74	81	77
Yes, illness (my own and/or others')	68	64	73	77	71	62	60	69	70	73	72	60	68	79	65	72
Yes, relocation	54	54	55	68	57	45	49	54	55	62	48	54	49	55	50	64
Yes, difficulties at school	64	65	63	63	65	64	55	67	66	69	66	59	68	69	56	65
Yes, relationship difficulties	48	49	47	46	50	47	38	58	47	52	49	50	48	46	46	47
Yes, parental separation/divorce	65	64	66	69	67	61	56	65	70	68	67	64	63	71	56	65
Yes, substance abuse	67	68	66	67	71	64	62	68	71	70	66	64	65	73	62	70
Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic	69	70	67	76	70	64	62	70	73	72	69	66	70	70	68	70
Other	69	70	67	76	70	64	62	70	73	72	69	66	70	70	68	70
No	69	70	67	76	70	64	62	70	73	72	69	66	70	70	68	70
I don't know	69	70	67	76	70	64	62	70	73	72	69	66	70	70	68	70
<i>No. of responses</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Average number of responses</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>56</i>

No/Don't know' answers were excluded from the average number of responses

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
53	59	64	44	52	68	51	59	74	65	56	43
55	66	68	46	54	75	58	66	65	70	62	45
74	74	80	55	69	85	68	78	84	81	73	65
58	70	76	49	59	80	59	70	76	72	68	51
43	49	76	38	45	65	36	57	69	60	50	41
62	63	67	49	52	77	55	67	74	74	61	39
36	52	51	22	38	62	42	50	52	54	43	33
57	66	69	38	53	80	57	67	71	73	61	46
59	68	74	50	54	81	57	71	70	77	60	50
63	72	68	49	64	77	63	69	79	73	67	60
52	55	57	30	47	66	53	57	51	59	53	39

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
295	612	294	121	493	586	252	723	176	617	391	131
118	600	483	152	477	572	266	692	203	597	381	170
53	59	64	44	52	68	51	59	74	65	56	43
55	66	68	46	54	75	58	66	65	70	62	45
74	74	80	55	69	85	68	78	84	81	73	65
58	70	76	49	59	80	59	70	76	72	68	51
43	49	76	38	45	65	36	57	69	60	50	41
62	63	67	49	52	77	55	67	74	74	61	39
36	52	51	22	38	62	42	50	52	54	43	33
57	66	69	38	53	80	57	67	71	73	61	46
59	68	74	50	54	81	57	71	70	77	60	50
63	72	68	49	64	77	63	69	79	73	67	60
63	72	68	49	64	77	63	69	79	73	67	60
63	72	68	49	64	77	63	69	79	73	67	60
52	55	57	30	47	66	53	57	51	59	53	39

Have you met any people who helped you overcome these obstacles?

Base: total sample	GENDER		AGE			AREA					SCOPE (inhabitants)					
	Total	Male	Female	18/24	25/34	35/45	N/W	N/E	Centre	South	Islands	0-10k	10k-30k	30k-100k	100k-250k	250k +
Total	940	481	458	221	318	401	251	177	179	230	103	293	215	216	69	145
v.a. (not weighted)	957	448	509	187	339	431	257	157	188	238	117	286	209	229	80	153
No	33	32	34	27	31	39	35	33	25	35	38	30	31	34	41	38
YES (NET)	52	56	48	63	57	42	51	53	58	53	41	54	51	52	45	53
Yes, a teacher	10	11	8	14	11	6	12	11	5	11	5	13	6	11	5	9
Yes, a friend	30	29	31	40	29	25	29	29	34	29	28	28	34	30	32	26
Yes, an educator (outside school)	4	5	4	6	5	3	5	4	5	4	4	7	4	4	2	4
Yes, someone from sports	4	5	3	5	5	4	4	5	5	3	4	5	6	2	3	3
Yes, a religious figure	5	7	3	5	7	4	7	3	5	6	3	4	5	7	4	6
Yes, someone at work	8	11	4	8	8	7	6	8	14	5	5	7	5	7	10	12
Other	12	9	14	6	11	15	13	13	11	7	20	14	15	11	7	6
I don't know	4	4	5	5	3	5	3	4	7	6	1	3	4	5	10	5
No. of responses	683	372	311	185	243	255	190	128	142	153	70	228	159	157	43	95
Average number of responses	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,1

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with...

Base: total sample	Total	EMPLOYMENT STATUS							
		FATHER 1		FATHER 2		MOTHER 1		MOTHER 2	
Total	1.201	805	325	15	25	524	607	2	12
v.a. (not weighted)	1.201	785	351	9	13	554	600	3	11
Your current financial situation	49	49	49	22	65	46	51	36	55
Your family life and family environment/atmosphere in general	64	68	60	49	49	61	70	36	73
Your social life, in terms of social relationships,friendships and integration into your community	56	60	50	72	57	56	56	63	55
Your health and access to healthcare:	64	66	65	24	74	66	66	36	62
Your educational and school experience	62	66	57	46	44	63	64	36	62

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			GENERAL SATISFACTION			SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Low	Medium	High	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Middle class	Wealthy	Benestanti	Low	Average	High
244	481	215	114	398	428	226	564	132	459	339	114
103	477	377	142	389	426	238	545	156	449	326	154
22	38	34	65	35	23	39	33	22	26	38	47
58	49	52	22	50	62	40	53	68	60	44	43
15	8	7	5	9	11	8	9	14	12	7	4
23	33	30	8	29	36	20	31	41	36	24	25
7	2	7	2	3	6	6	4	3	4	5	4
3	4	7	2	5	4	3	4	9	5	5	3
10	4	3	2	5	6	4	6	6	5	4	10
9	7	7	5	8	8	4	10	5	9	7	5
17	9	12	12	10	14	17	11	9	11	14	8
3	5	6	2	6	3	5	4	4	4	6	3
205	321	157	41	275	367	139	417	115	375	222	66
1,1	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION											
FATHER 1			FATHER 2			MOTHER 2			MOTHER 2		
Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
604	369	119	18	12	9	584	390	128	8	6	0
573	370	163	12	5	5	559	412	158	5	6	3
46	53	48	43	94	-	45	53	50	50	57	-
62	70	67	21	79	63	63	69	70	79	57	-
54	60	62	60	79	47	53	59	63	50	70	-
61	72	67	32	94	51	61	72	70	50	73	-
61	65	68	55	24	53	60	69	63	60	60	-

Excluding your family of origin, were there one or more significant figures in your life who helped you flourish?

Base: IF SODD_ GEN > 3	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			WORKING OR NOT		GENERAL SATISFACTION			ATTENDED: NURSERY		ATTENDED: KINDERGARTEN					
	Total	Male	Female	18/ 24	25/ 34	35/ 45	N/W	N/E	Centre	Sud	Islands	0- 10k	10k- 30k	30k- 100k	100k- 250k	250k +	Low	Medium	High	Working	Not working	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember
Total	586	307	280	135	204	247	145	111	110	144	76	194	126	131	47	88	117	307	163	344	242	-	-	586	251	322	13	527	49	10
v.a. (not weighted)	572	293	279	128	187	257	145	100	116	130	81	170	107	141	53	101	38	275	259	381	191	-	-	572	252	309	11	518	47	7
No	23	24	21	17	24	24	20	21	24	22	29	24	19	27	20	21	22	24	20	22	24	-	-	23	20	24	40	23	24	-
YES (NET)	58	61	54	70	59	50	52	64	61	59	52	62	52	53	53	64	58	56	60	58	57	-	-	58	61	55	53	57	63	75
Yes, a teacher	14	16	13	21	16	9	9	16	12	18	18	16	11	14	15	16	14	12	19	12	17	-	-	14	12	16	13	14	13	33
Yes, a friend	27	25	28	39	27	20	29	27	28	26	20	32	23	28	21	20	26	28	24	22	32	-	-	27	32	23	18	27	19	30
Yes, a person in the field of extracur- ricular education	7	8	7	6	8	7	7	3	9	9	9	6	5	7	8	13	5	5	13	9	5	-	-	7	8	6	16	7	11	12
Yes, someone from sports	4	8	1	5	5	3	5	8	3	2	5	4	4	1	7	10	0	6	5	5	3	-	-	4	5	4	-	4	5	-
Yes, a religious figure	4	5	3	1	8	3	1	4	5	7	5	8	2	3	3	2	5	4	4	4	5	-	-	4	5	4	-	5	3	-
Yes, someone at work	12	14	11	7	12	16	13	23	14	6	4	11	13	9	12	18	13	11	14	18	5	-	-	12	11	13	22	12	19	12
Other	8	5	12	2	5	14	9	7	4	9	12	5	15	8	5	8	9	7	11	10	6	-	-	8	7	10	-	9	3	-
I don't know	12	10	14	11	11	13	20	10	11	10	7	10	15	12	22	8	11	13	10	11	13	-	-	12	12	13	7	12	11	25
No. of responses	455	248	207	110	167	178	106	98	84	111	55	161	92	93	34	76	84	225	146	275	180	-	-	455	200	246	9	410	36	9
Average number of responses	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,1	1,3	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,2	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,2	1,2	-	-	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,3	1,2	1,1	1,2

If you could say which of these two elements had the greatest influence on the blossoming of your potential, would you say it was more...

Base: IF SODD_ GEN > 3	GENDER		AGE			AREA				SCOPE (inhabitants)					EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION			WORKING OR NOT		GENERAL SATISFACTION			ATTENDED: NURSERY		ATTENDED: KINDERGARTEN					
	Total	Male	Female	18/ 24	25/ 34	35/ 45	N/W	N/E	Centre	Sud	Islands	0- 10k	10k- 30k	30k- 100k	100k- 250k	250k +	Low	Medium	High	Working	Not working	Not satisfied	3	Satisfied	Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember
Total	586	307	280	135	204	247	145	111	110	144	76	194	126	131	47	88	117	307	163	344	242	-	-	586	251	322	13	527	49	10
v.a. (not weighted)	572	293	279	128	187	257	145	100	116	130	81	170	107	141	53	101	38	275	259	381	191	-	-	572	252	309	11	518	47	7
An event or situation	23	30	31	29	31	35	25	29	36	38	23	25	31	22	35	23	29	32	28	30	30	-	-	30	31	29	36	30	37	12
One or more reference figures	58	35	40	30	44	31	34	35	27	31	43	39	40	31	32	36	43	33	34	35	35	-	-	35	39	31	58	36	23	56
They had the same influence	14	22	18	27	18	19	27	23	28	21	17	24	19	27	20	33	14	24	26	22	22	-	-	22	20	25	-	22	25	7
I don't know	1,2	12	11	14	7	15	14	12	10	10	16	13	10	21	13	8	15	12	12	12	13	-	-	12	10	14	7	12	15	25

RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIP			STUDY PERIODS OR HOLIDAYS ABROAD			TOOK A BREAK OR INTERRUPTED THEIR STUDIES			SOCIALLY ACTIVE		CONCERN ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ITALY				CONCERN ABOUT PERSONAL/FAMILY FINANCIAL SITUATION				PARENTS				SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember	Socially active	Not socially active	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased	I don't know	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased	I don't know	Man and woman	Same sex	Single parent	No response	In financial difficulty	Middle class	Wealthy	Low	Average	High
178	399	10	162	422	3	162	421	4	204	383	288	236	36	26	188	303	71	24	552	22	11	2	73	364	128	380	149	32
204	359	9	187	380	5	149	418	5	204	368	280	232	41	19	190	299	67	16	542	15	13	2	65	340	148	376	139	35
16	25	31	19	24	54	20	24	52	14	27	19	27	21	23	23	24	14	20	24	-	-	-	24	21	26	24	19	23
70	52	55	68	54	40	57	58	16	69	52	60	55	68	36	56	57	71	37	56	100	81	42	51	61	56	56	61	74
14	14	15	22	12	-	15	14	-	18	13	15	14	12	11	12	14	25	-	15	15	1	-	10	15	16	15	17	2
34	23	30	25	27	-	22	28	-	27	27	27	30	13	11	28	27	23	20	26	39	50	-	23	27	29	26	27	32
10	6	10	10	6	20	10	6	16	13	5	8	6	13	9	7	8	6	7	7	15	23	42	5	8	8	7	10	8
5	4	-	8	3	-	4	5	-	6	4	4	5	4	-	4	5	4	-	4	9	-	-	1	6	4	4	5	4
4	4	-	7	3	19	9	3	-	9	2	6	3	7	-	5	4	6	-	4	4	-	-	9	4	4	4	3	12
15	11	8	13	12	-	9	14	-	12	12	14	8	27	16	11	11	19	17	12	32	13	-	4	16	6	14	8	15
7	9	12	6	9	-	10	7	-	11	7	11	6	2	9	10	7	10	-	8	-	26	-	17	7	8	7	13	4
7	14	2	8	14	6	14	11	32	7	15	10	13	9	31	11	12	5	43	13	-	-	58	8	12	11	13	8	2
158	289	7	148	306	1	127	328	1	194	261	244	168	28	15	146	232	66	11	417	25	13	1	50	302	95	295	124	25
1,2	1,2	1,1	1,3	1,2	1,0	1,2	1,2	1,0	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,1	1,0	1,0	1,2	1,2	1,2	1,1	1,0

RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIP			STUDY PERIODS OR HOLIDAYS ABROAD			TOOK A BREAK OR INTERRUPTED THEIR STUDIES			SOCIALLY ACTIVE		CONCERN ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ITALY				CONCERN ABOUT PERSONAL/FAMILY FINANCIAL SITUATION				PARENTS				SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION			SOCIAL MARGINALISATION		
Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember	Yes	No	I don't remember	Socially active	Not socially active	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased	I don't know	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased	I don't know	Man and woman	Same sex	Single parent	No response	In financial difficulty	Middle class	Wealthy	Low	Average	High
178	399	10	162	422	3	162	421	4	204	383	288	236	36	26	188	303	71	24	552	22	11	2	73	364	128	380	149	32
204	359	9	187	380	5	149	418	5	204	368	280	232	41	19	190	299	67	16	542	15	13	2	65	340	148	376	139	35
35	28	20	36	28	-	31	30	-	32	29	32	33	13	11	30	35	17	9	29	52	42	42	27	33	27	32	29	36
39	33	59	42	32	48	34	36	40	40	32	33	36	64	16	29	36	59	4	36	33	15	-	37	33	44	35	40	26
21	23	19	18	24	-	18	24	28	20	24	27	20	10	14	28	19	20	25	22	12	43	-	25	23	20	23	20	26
5	16	2	4	15	52	17	10	32	7	15	9	12	13	59	13	10	5	62	13	3	-	58	11	11	9	10	11	12

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