

Within-age-group Maturity Differences Effects on Adolescents' Wellbeing

Fumarco, L.^{1,*}

¹ STATEC Research

Abstract. This the first study to investigate whether maturity differences between classmates cause gaps in life-satisfaction. We use data from the three most recent publicly available waves of the international standardized survey Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (2001/2, 2005/6 and 2009/10) and find substantial evidence that maturity gaps between classmates negatively impact European adolescents' life-satisfaction. This result is robust when controlling for absolute age and for country-specific season-of-birth confounders; moreover, it is common to most European countries. Additionally, we find that these differences in life-satisfaction decrease with age; therefore, the decrease in life-satisfaction between 10 and 16 years of age that is found by the previous literature is prevalently due to a worsening life-satisfaction for the oldest students in a class. Finally, similarly to previous literature, we find evidence that an increase in age at school entry could decrease the impact of within-class maturity gaps on life-satisfaction.

Keywords: Relative age, adolescents, education, Europe, wellbeing, life-satisfaction

JEL-Classification: I21, I31

* Corresponding author at Research division RED, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, L-1468, Luxembourg, Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg.
Email address: luca.fumarco@statec.etat.lu.

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to the HBSC advisor for this study, that is, Alessio Vieno. The HBSC study is an international study carried out in collaboration with WHO Europe; a complete list of coordinators, databank managers, researchers and participating countries is available on <http://www.hbsc.org>. We are grateful to Kelsey O'Konnor for suggestions on the life-satisfaction literature review. Luca Fumarco gratefully acknowledges the support of the Observatoire de la Compétitivité, Ministère de l'Economie, DG Compétitivité, Luxembourg and STATEC. Views and opinions expressed in this article are ours and do not reflect those of STATEC and funding partners.