



YOUTH MEANINGFULNESS INDEX

**Kenya : Nivishe
Foundation**

Youth Meaningfulness Index

The **Youth Meaningfulness Index (YMI)** aims to explore how children and youth experience **meaning** in their lives.

By conducting **surveys** with **young people** in schools across multiple geographies...



...we aim to **measure and compare** how **meaningfulness** is experienced by children and youth around the world and...

... provide **policymakers** with the **tools to help young people** lead more meaningful lives.



Methodology



Phase 1: Identifying drivers of YMI

The first step in the creation of the YMI focused on collecting data in schools across different geographies.

We collected data from children aged 8-15 in schools in Denmark, India, and Norway in collaboration with UNICEF Denmark and Gleding.

Responses were analyzed using natural language processing in content and sentiment analysis for the identification of drivers of meaning.



Phase 2: Developing the YMI Tool

After identifying the main drivers of meaningfulness, we developed the YMI tool. The tool measures each driver through sets of statements answered on a Likert Scale.

A second round of data collection will be conducted throughout 2024 to test the tool, validate it, and measure the specific drivers.

The YMI will provide an overall measure of meaningfulness.



Creating YMI Score

The statement scores from the survey are converted into 10-point scores. Furthermore, we average the converted statement scores to determine the overall YMI Score.

Similarly, the statements corresponding to each driver are averaged to arrive at the driver score.

The scores are further disaggregated based on gender and age to derive more nuanced insights.



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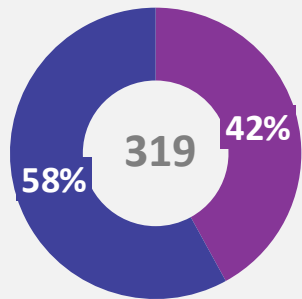
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Interpretation of Results

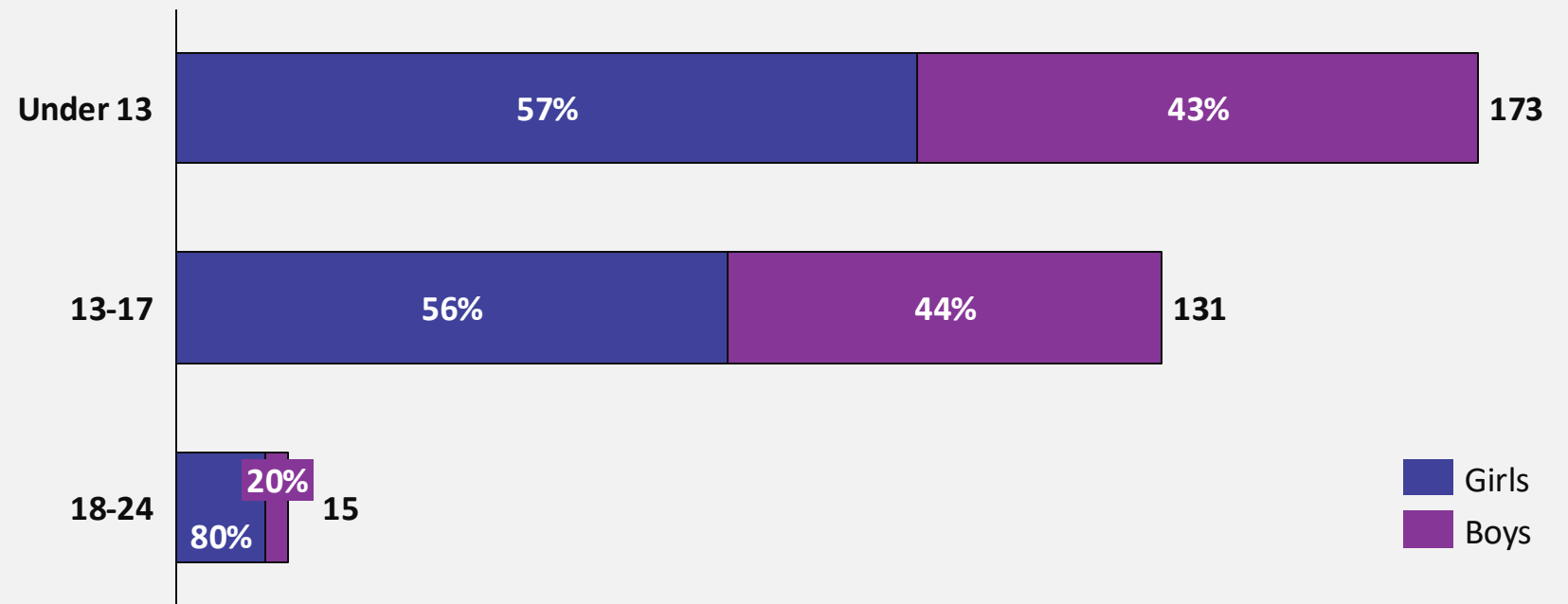
Score Range	Label	Interpretation	Recommended Action
Above 9.0	 Exceptional Engagement	Youth feel deeply connected, inspired, and valued. This is a standout program area.	Celebrate and showcase success stories. Consider scaling or mentoring other programs.
8.0 – 8.99	 Strong & Consistent	Youth feel consistently engaged and supported. The program is working well.	Continue the current approach. Fine-tune delivery based on specific feedback.
7.30 – 7.99	 Generally Positive	Most youth find the program meaningful, with some room for deeper connection.	Identify areas for enhancement through focus groups or youth-led feedback.
6.80 – 7.29	 Moderate Concerns	Mixed experiences. Some youth may feel less connected or unsure of program value.	Revisit parts of the program — such as mentorship, relevance of content, or access.
6.00 – 6.79	 Low Engagement	A significant number of youth are disengaged or feel underserved.	Conduct rapid feedback loops; adjust structure, facilitation, or delivery methods.
Below 6.0	 Critical Disconnect	Indicates major gaps in youth connection, purpose, or inclusion.	Immediate intervention needed. Redesign with youth input and re-evaluate goals.

YMI Kenya: Survey Demographic

The YMI survey in Kenya was conducted in collaboration with the Nivishe Foundation, in Nairobi. A total of 319 children and youth participated in the survey. Girls made up 58% of respondents, while boys accounted for 42%. The majority of participants (173) were under the age of 13, followed by 131 respondents aged 13 to 17, and a smaller group of 15 participants aged 18 to 24.



Gender Distribution



YMI Kenya: Score Overall

- Overall YMI Score for YMI Kenya is **8.3/10**
- The four drivers of meaningfulness, defined for the scope of YMI, are detailed below. Each driver is accompanied by its driver score, as observed in organization overall.

Quality and depth of relationships that adolescents cultivate with peers, family members, community and other individuals within their social networks. Meaningful social connections go beyond mere social interactions and involve a sense of emotional closeness, trust, and mutual understanding.

Social Connectivity
8.32

Sense of direction, significance, and meaning that adolescents derive from their actions, goals, and aspirations. It involves understanding one's values, interests, and strengths and its alignment with the aspirations and goals.

Purpose
8.34

Intentional actions and practices that adolescents engage in to nurture their physical, emotional, and mental well-being and promote overall health and vitality. It involves prioritizing one's needs, happiness and satisfaction - including physical, emotional, social, and psychological dimensions.

Self-Care
8.04

Physical and Cognitive Engagement
8.48

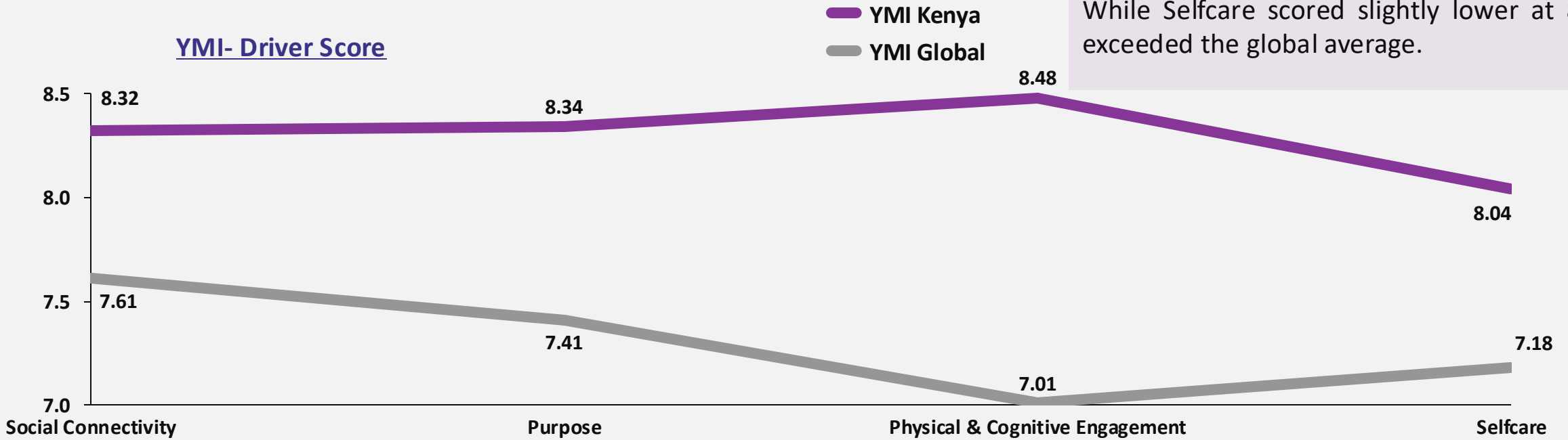
The degree to which adolescents are intellectually and physically engaged in activities that challenge and stimulate their minds and bodies. It fosters personal growth, skill development and sense of accomplishment.

YMI Kenya: Driver Scores

YMI- Overall Score

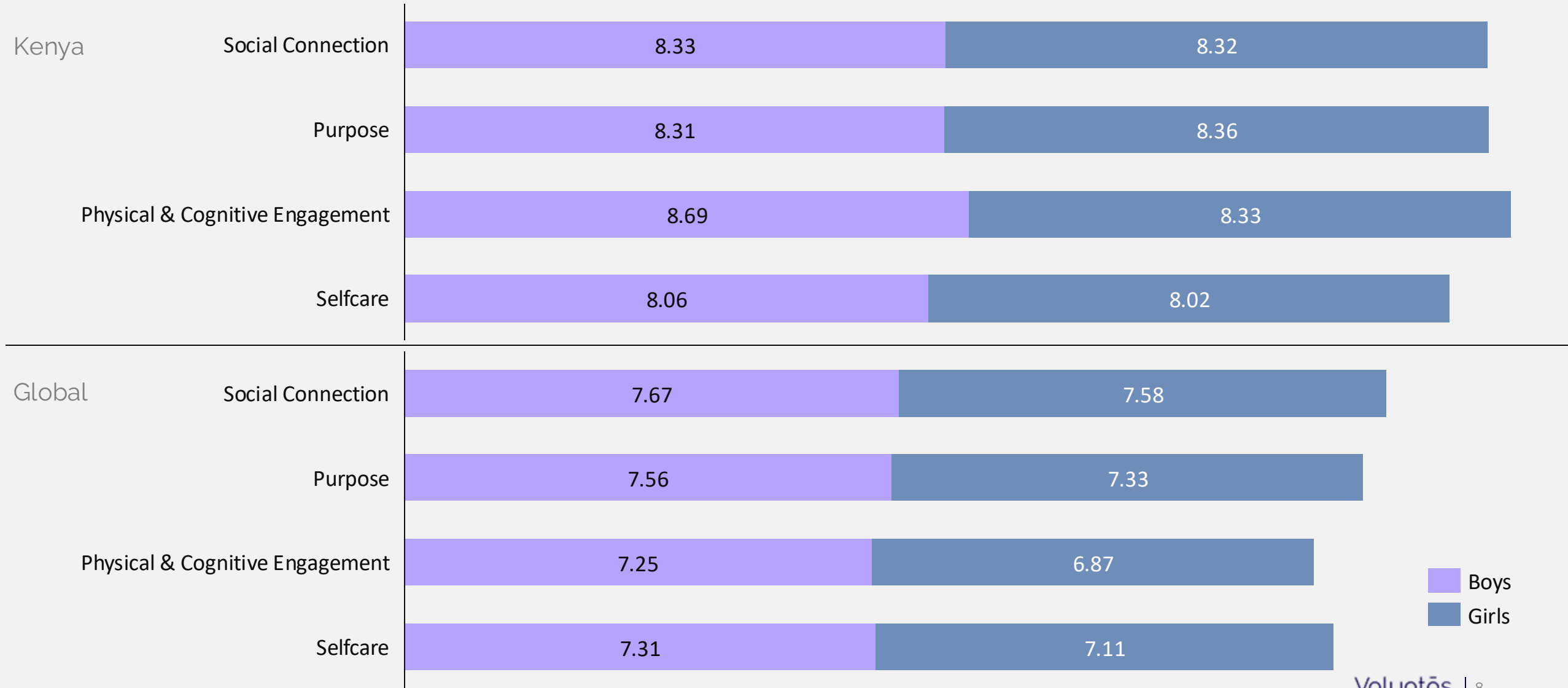


YMI- Driver Score



Children in Kenya reported a strong overall YMI score of 8.3, significantly higher than the global average of 7.29. Across all four YMI drivers viz: Social Connectivity, Purpose, Physical & Cognitive Engagement, and Selfcare, Kenyan children consistently scored above global benchmarks. The highest score was in Physical & Cognitive Engagement (8.48), indicating high levels of activity, curiosity, and involvement. This was followed closely by Purpose (8.34) and Social Connectivity (8.32), reflecting a strong sense of meaning and community. While Selfcare scored slightly lower at 8.04, it still exceeded the global average.

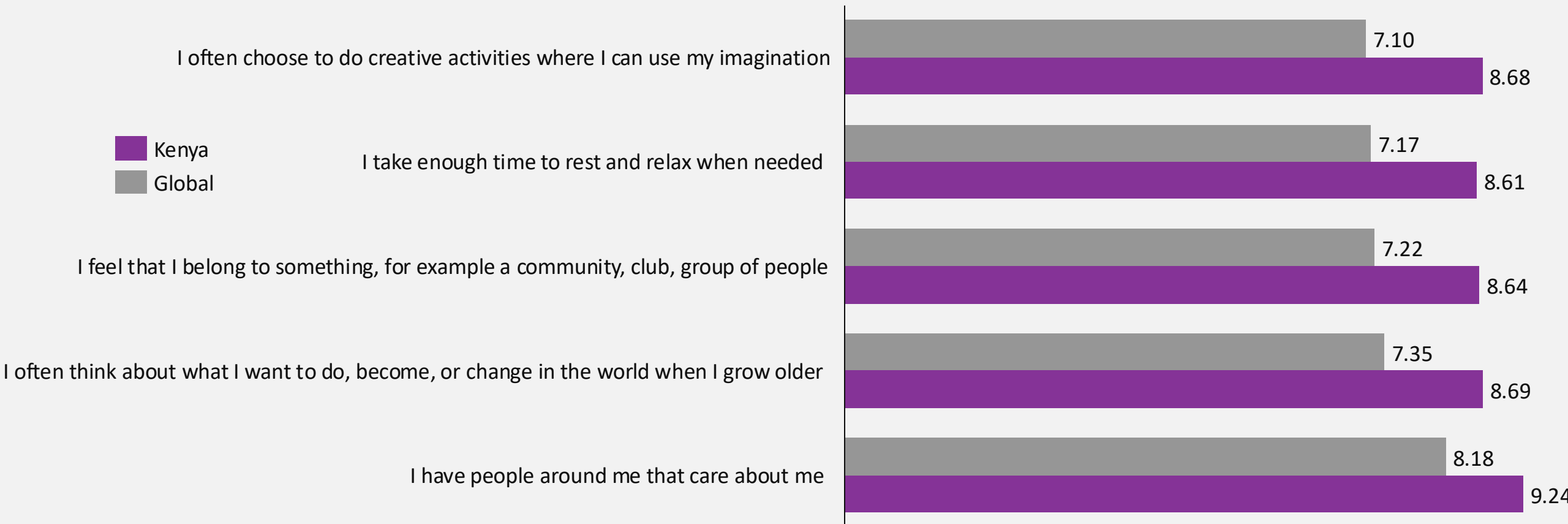
YMI Kenya: Driver – Gender Disaggregation



Boys
Girls

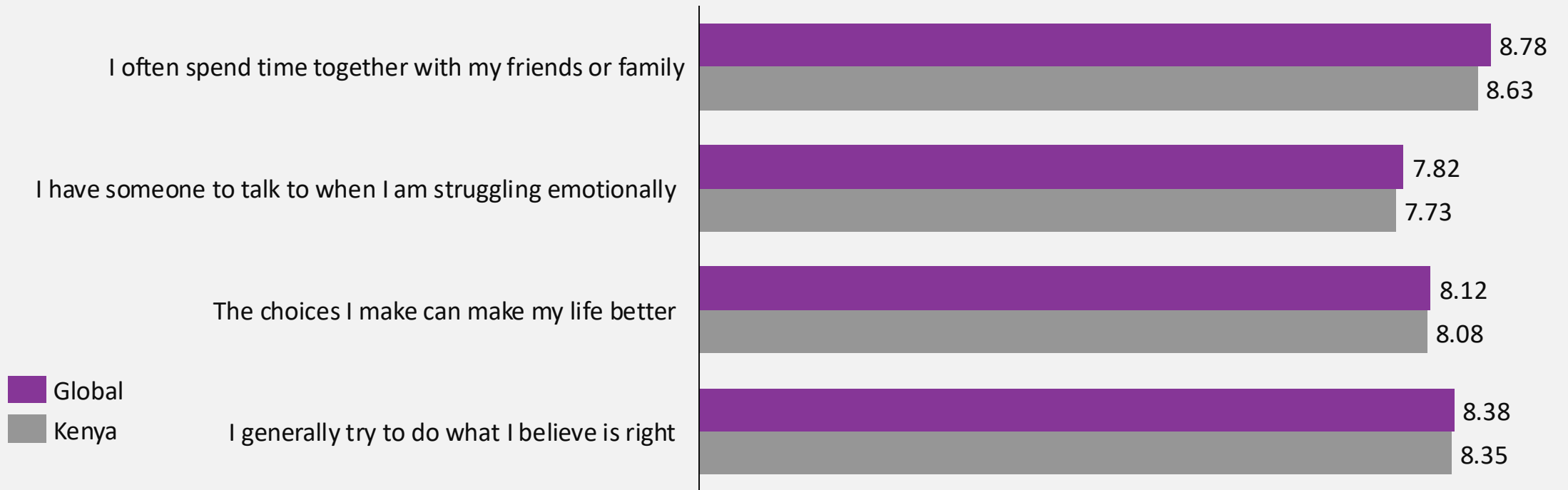
YMI Kenya: Statements with Kenya leading the scores

Notably, the children and youth in Kenya expressed strong engagement in creative activities (8.68 vs. 7.10), a high sense of belonging (8.64 vs. 7.22), and greater clarity about their future aspirations (8.69 vs. 7.35). They also felt well-supported with the feeling of people caring about them, where they scored a full point above the global scores..



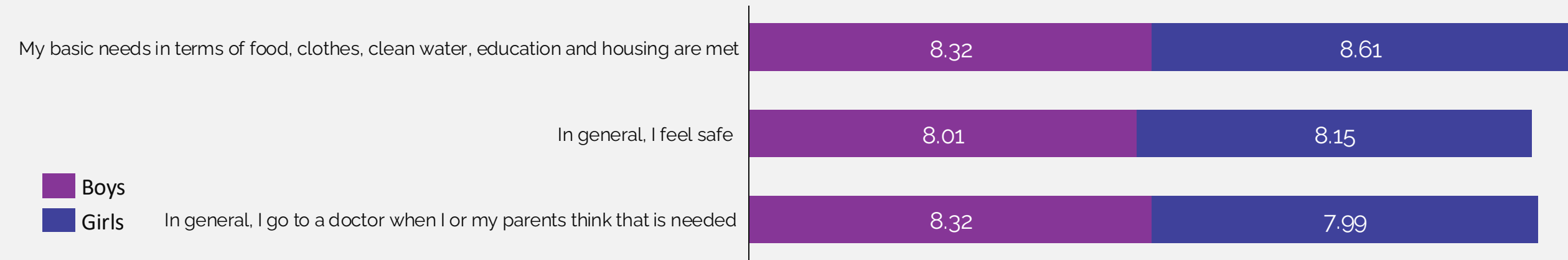
YMI Kenya: Statements with global participants leading the scores

While Kenyan children outperformed global averages across most areas, global participants led marginally on a few indicators. These included spending time with friends or family (8.78 global vs. 8.63 Kenya), emotional support access (7.82 vs. 7.73), and believing their choices impact their lives (8.12 vs. 8.08).



YMI Kenya – Fundamental Needs

- Apart from defining the drivers of meaningfulness, YMI contains an assessment of fundamental needs. These include food, shelter, clean water, safety, and healthcare.
- Despite not being drivers, the lack of fulfillment of these fundamental needs limits the realization of meaningfulness.



YMI Kenya– Qualitative Assessment

“What is important to you?”

Education

Education was seen as a critical tool for success. Children spoke of the importance of school, learning, and having a good future. It is seen as the foundation for achieving dreams and improving their quality of life.

Sample statements:

"School is important in my life."

"Having education"

Basic Needs

Children mentioned food, water, shelter, and clothing as essential. These reflect practical survival needs and a desire for physical security and comfort.

Sample statements:

"Eating is important to me because it will keep me healthy"

"Having a better life eg food , clothes. It makes me feel good"

Family and Parents

Family was by far the most mentioned theme. Children frequently highlighted their love for parents, siblings, and extended family, often pairing family with feelings of love, security, and support. Many also connected family with their future well-being.

Sample statements:

"My. Family myself and my future"

"My parents, siblings, and family are most important to me."

Talents and Hobbies

This theme shows children’s dreams and passions. Football, dance, reading, and other talents emerged as important sources of joy and future ambitions.

Sample statements:

"To be a good singer in the world"

"I feel good when I play"

YMI Kenya: Key Recommendations

Strengthen Self-Care Support Systems for Young Participants

Although self-care scored higher than global averages, it remains the lowest among the four YMI drivers for Kenyan children. Strengthening self-care through integrated well-being programs with focus on emotional regulation and health awareness can enhance overall meaningfulness. These efforts should be tailored for younger children who made up the majority of respondents.

Address Gaps in Emotional Support and Choice Perception

Kenyan children scored slightly lower than global peers in feeling emotionally supported and believing their choices impact their lives. Introducing child-friendly spaces for open dialogue and decision-making can help strengthen autonomy and trust.

Leverage Strong Social Connectivity to Foster Inclusion

The high score in social connectivity suggests a strong culture of belonging and trust among peers and family. Programs can reinforce this strength by designing peer-support groups, intergenerational mentorship, and community storytelling to further deepen social ties.

