



# TOY STORIES

EUROPE-WIDE SURVEY ON  
#TOYSANDDIVERSITY



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And a very big thanks to all the 2000+ respondents who completed the survey.

COFACE Families Europe is a pluralistic network of civil society associations representing the interests of all families without discrimination. With 58 member organisations in 23 Member States of the EU, COFACE Families Europe represents more than 25 million families in Europe. It advocates at the European level for policies of non-discrimination and equal opportunities between persons and between family forms, and specifically supports policies aimed at increasing equality between women and men, with a special focus on reconciliation between work, care and family life.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I used to have "Action man", my sister Barbie dolls. I had the blue toy, she had the pink toy. I had the castle, she had the princess castle. That didn't stop us from swapping toys and playing with them by mixing them, and I had more «girlie» toys myself, but the split was real and became more pronounced with age. Concerning the ethnicity of the toys, the playmobils were far too all white.

(France, male, aged 18-25)

Our children must be what they want, including the so-called stereotypical views on girls or boys, if they want to.

(Finland, female, aged 36-45)

Each child is born without stereotypes and predefined (gender) roles. But early in life, cultural and societal norms play an important role in the assignment of stereotypes. Since 2016, when COFACE Families Europe published a European study on toy catalogues "Making or breaking stereotypes?", COFACE Families Europe runs an annual social media campaign on Toys and Diversity to **promote equal opportunities and to highlight gender, disability and ethnic stereotypes in toy production, marketing and shops**. This successful campaign has raised awareness among toy producers, advertisers, retailers and consumers about the need for toy diversity as a reflection of the pluralism of society.

On the basis of our 2016 study of Toy catalogues, COFACE Families Europe developed six key principles with a view to raising awareness of our key concerns in relation to toys and diversity.

The headline principles are the following:

1. **Let children decide what they want to play with: No more division into boys and girls sections.**
2. **Do not channel children into stereotyped professions and life patterns: Let them play to be whomever they want to be.**
3. **Join your voice to end gender-based violence and bullying: promote non-violent images and behaviours.**
4. **Represent families in their diversity.**
5. **Children with disabilities play too: stop their invisibility and include them in the toy world.**
6. **Children with a diverse racial background: let's move to a fair representation.**

In 2019, COFACE Families Europe decided to collect the stories of families and beyond in Europe, to explore what determines and influences their choices when they buy toys. On the 20th of November 2019, Universal Children's Day, **we symbolically launched "Toy Stories"**, the first Europe-wide survey on Toys and Diversity, developed and translated by COFACE members into 13 languages. The data collection took place until Christmas Day.

The survey gathered more than 2,000 answers from all EU Member States and beyond. However, this representation is unequally shared, as almost 90% of respondents come from ten countries. A large majority of respondents were women (85%) and, in terms of age, 60% of respondents were between 26 and 45 years old.

The survey, which contains some 20 questions, aims to analyse specific issues pertaining to the world of toys such as how consumers/buyers are confronted when purchasing toys, the way toy shops are organised and how this is perceived by consumers, and the role of media and marketing on toys. Last but not least, the survey included questions on potential solutions and remaining challenges in relation to toys.

This report is not and does not pretend to be a scientific one. COFACE Families Europe aims through this report to keep its finger on the pulse of society, and to give respondents the chance to express their beliefs, even if they do not match COFACE ones. The broad range of countries and age range means that the responses are very diverse and rich in nature with a pluralism of opinions as in any democratic society.

Some specific findings of the survey include the following:

- Toy consumption is mainly for and linked to the family environment (parents, grandparents, relatives, friends). Half of the respondents declare themselves parents of the children they mostly buy toys for. The second most chosen option in the survey regarding the relationship is the relative (sibling, uncle, cousin) with almost 30% of the respondents. Furthermore, some respondents also use toys in a professional setting (teachers, physiotherapists, psychologists, etc.);
- A fourth of the respondents declare buying toys either often or very often. The trend is the same by gender but not by age: younger generations tend to buy more often toys than older ones. Almost 30% of the respondents below 46 years old declare to often or very often buy toys while only a fifth of the respondents who are above 46 years old declare to do so;
- When buying a toy, few respondents think in terms of the gender, that is, people do not buy toys for boys or toys for girls: less than 5% of the respondents considered this option as an influence when buying a toy. For respondents, their first influence when buying a toy, is the child's preference (80%), followed by the price (40%);
- However, the results of the survey indicate that some stereotypes still prevail regarding the gender of the child. In other words, some toys are still considered more "suitable" depending on the gender of the child (eg: a tractor for boys and a Barbie doll for girls), and that, irrespective of the gender and the age of the respondents. However, the answers of the survey indicate that stereotypes linked to toys seem to prevail more for boys than for girls: the results indicate a tendency towards thinking it is more "acceptable" seeing a girl wanting a toy from a "boy section" than a boy wanting a toy from a "girl section";

- The survey reveals the potential of toys to promote respect of disability and ethnic diversity in society. First of all, more than four-fifths of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the idea that making children with disabilities visible in toy adverts and producing more toys adapted to their needs could change the way society looks at them. Then, almost 95% of the respondents of the survey declared not having whatsoever inconvenience if their child/grandchild etc. would receive a doll or figurine of a different ethnic background;
- Regarding toy shop organisation, boy and girl sections in toy shops are not helpful for the majority of respondents. Almost two-thirds of the respondents considered that the “boys and girls” sections of toy shops are not useful. What’s more, two out five respondents considered that this organisation is useless;
- On toy marketing, a majority of respondents believe that advertising reinforces stereotypes and that more neutral and inclusive advertising would reduce stereotypes. First of all, nine out of ten respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that toy advertising accentuates stereotypes. Then, 80% respondents do consider that more neutral toys and toy advertising would reduce stereotypes, but women and younger respondents to a higher degree than men and older respondents;
- Last, but not least, respondents considered that the awareness of the family (65%) and more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys (65%) are key for promoting inclusive toys. On the other hand, there is broad consensus among respondents on the main barriers to the acceptance of inclusive toys, which are a mix of internal and external influences: society (61%), media and advertisers (56%).

Each of us has responsibilities to drive change. COFACE Families Europe encourages the parents and families, the different professionals, the public administrations, the industry, the unions, the NGOs, etc., to take stock of these findings, reinforce mutual learning, best practices and collaboration, and help promoting equal opportunities for boys and girls.

Inspired by the “Toy stories” of so many people and by this report, COFACE Families Europe will continue raising awareness on Toys and Diversity, in an open and continuous dialogue with families and all the concerned partners. Equality starts in childhood, and toys and advertising play a great part in this.



# I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

I used to have "Action man", my sister Barbie dolls. I had the blue toy, she had the pink toy. I had the castle, she had the princess castle. That didn't stop us from swapping toys and playing with them by mixing them, and I had more «girlie» toys myself, but the split was real and became more pronounced with age. Concerning the ethnicity of the toys, the playmobils were far too all white.

(France, male, aged 18-25)

Our children must be what they want, including the so-called stereotypical views on girls or boys, if they want to.

(Finland, female, aged 36-45)

In 2016 COFACE Families Europe published a European study on toy catalogues "Making or breaking stereotypes?", that aimed to voice concerns and raise awareness among parents and families on marketing directed to children.

On the basis of our study of Toy catalogues, COFACE developed six key principles with a view to raising awareness of our key concerns in relation to toy marketing and advertising. The principles are the following:

1. **Let children decide what they want to play with: No more division into boys and girls sections.**
2. **Do not channel children into stereotyped professions and life patterns: Let them play to be whomever they want to be.**
3. **Join your voice to end gender-based violence and bullying: promote non-violent images and behaviours.**
4. **Represent families in their diversity.**
5. **Children with disabilities play too: stop their invisibility and include them in the toy world.**
6. **Children with a diverse racial background: let's move to a fair representation.**

Since then we have run an annual social media campaign on Toys and Diversity to promote equal opportunities and to highlight gender, disability and ethnic stereotypes in toy production, marketing and shops. This successful campaign has raised awareness among consumers and also on toy producers, advertisers, and retailers about the need for toy diversity as a reflection of the pluralism of society.

**Three years on, we decided it was time to hear the stories of families in Europe about their toy-buying.** We wanted to explore what determines and influences their choices. In order to do so, we launched the first survey of its kind in Europe, of around 20 questions (see Annex) allowing us to collect a mix of quantitative and qualitative information. The survey was developed and translated by COFACE members into 13 languages that allowed for maximum outreach to families and beyond them, that is, all kind of consumers of toys. The survey was symbolically launched on Universal Children's Day, 20th November 2019, and the data collection took place until Christmas 'Day, collecting more than 2,000 responses from all ages and all countries of the EU and beyond.

To collect the information, we used a multi-lingual online platform which allowed survey respondents to provide feedback, once only and anonymously, but also given them the option to leave their email address in order to receive the results of the survey. The survey was disseminated via numerous channels (European and national newsletters, social media networks).

The COFACE report is not and does not pretend to be a scientific one, nor does it aim to reflect all the views of European societies. But the broad range of countries and age range means that the responses are very diverse and rich in nature with a pluralism of opinions as in any democratic society.

The report starts with a general profile of the respondents of the survey (age, gender, country they are from, etc.), followed by an analysis of specific findings on issues that surrounds the world of toys. These include the following:

- The attitude, concerns, perceptions and potential stereotypes of the consumers/ buyers, when purchasing toys;
- The way toy shops are organised and how this is perceived by consumers, asking respondents if a more "inclusive" organisation is needed;
- How toys are advertised by media and marketing;
- Finally, some potential solutions and remaining challenges in relation to toys and diversity are provided.

The report also includes personal "Toy Stories" of some respondents, which help best to understand their motivations, feelings, concerns, challenges in relation to toys and stereotypes.

## II. WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY: THE PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

### All EU countries participated in the survey, but some more than others.

The survey received 5,000 views and 2,065 people responded. Response came from all countries of the EU, as well as non-EU countries. However, this representation is unequally shared, as almost 9 out of 10 respondents come from 10 countries. Respondents took 7 minutes on average to complete the whole survey. A large majority of respondents are women (84%), men only represented 15% of the respondents and 1% marked themselves as "other". In terms of age, the majority of respondents are between 26-45 years of age (60%).

Table 1: **Absolute number of respondents – Top 10 countries**

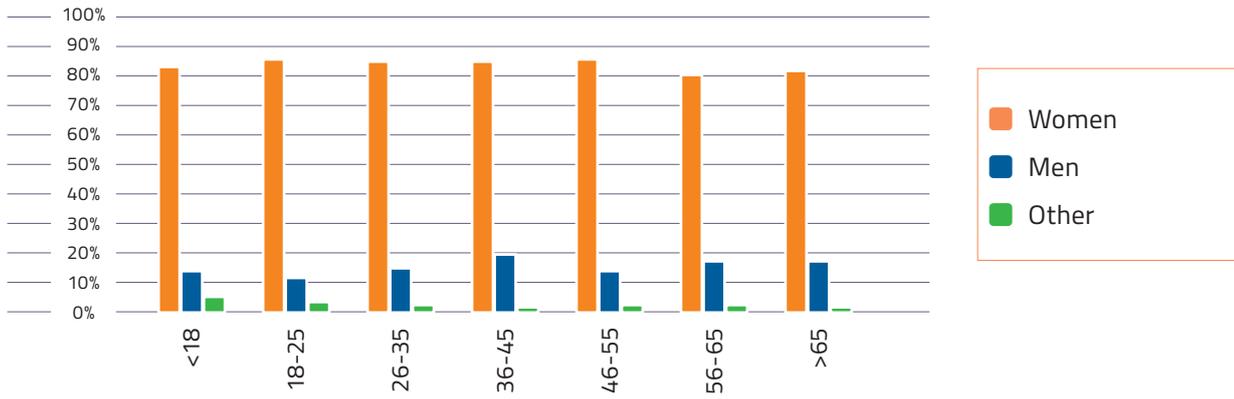
Country	Number of respondents	% of Total
Spain	700	33,90
Belgium	286	13,85
Italy	177	8,57
Germany	143	6,92
Sweden	138	6,68
France	133	6,44
Finland	65	3,15
Czech Republic	58	2,81
United Kingdom	52	2,52
Croatia	41	1,99
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>86,83</b>

### Gender and age of the respondents

84% of the respondents of the T&D survey are women, 15% are men and 1% marked their gender as "other". The high proportion of women among respondents could be for a variety of reasons, such as their interactions with social media, the tendency for women to purchase toys for the family and friends, or that women (still) have generally more care-giving responsibilities than their male counterparts do. The highest proportion of responses from men came from the cohort of age above 56 years old (16.5% in both 56-65 years old and above 65 years old) and the lowest in the respondents who are between 18 and 25 years old (11%). There were no major differences among the other age ratios. (Table 2)

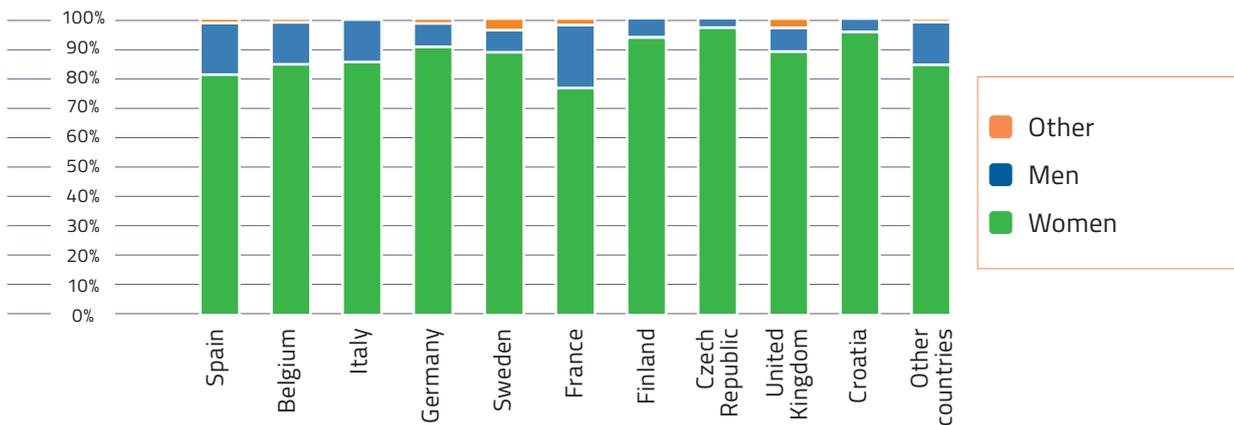
When we analyse the gender-ratio per countries, there are considerable differences (Table 3). The highest proportion of male respondents appeared in France (21%) and the lowest in the Czech Republic (3%). Only two countries are above the average

Table 2: **Gender-Age (Total, in percentage)**



of the survey, the above-mentioned France and Spain (18.5%). As both countries represent above 40% of the total respondents of the survey, their impact in the survey average is significant. Belgium, Italy and the “other countries” (those not included in the top-10) are around the average with respectively 14.5%, 13.6% and 14% of male respondents. The rest of the countries that are in the top-10 of the total respondents have low male response rates (less than 10%).

Table 3: **Gender percentage per country**



Looking at the age of the respondents, we find that three out of five respondents are between 26 and 45 years old, a good quarter are above 45 years old, and only 10% are below 25 years old (Table 4). For a question of representative samples, we have decided to divide the respondents by age, that is, below and above 46 years old. We can see that in terms of gender comparison, both groups are homogenous as each of them gathers 85% of women and 15% of men (Table 5).

Table 4: **Age percentage (total)**

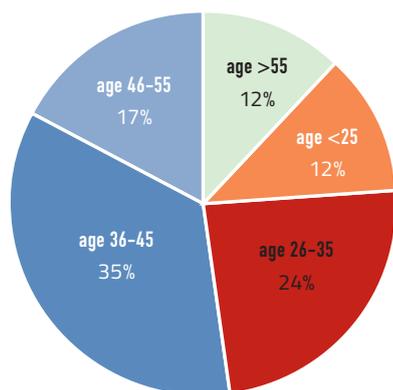
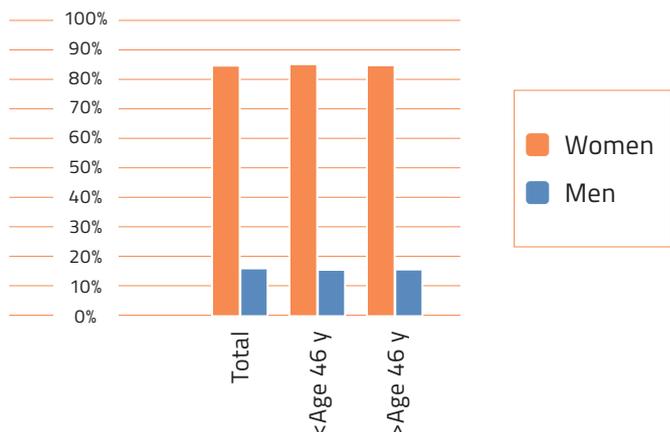


Table 5: **Age-gender comparison (in percentage)**



## Toy consumption mainly for and linked to the family environment, but not only...

Half of the respondents declare themselves **parents of the children they mostly buy toys for**. The results are the same regarding the gender (52% for both men and women) but substantially differ regarding the age:

- Seven out of ten respondents to the survey who are between 36-55 years old declare themselves as parents of the children they mostly buy toys for;
- 4 out of 10 respondents to the survey who are below 36 years old declare themselves as parents of the children they mostly buy toys for;
- Every one of 10 respondents to the survey who are above 55 years old declare themselves as parents of the children they mostly buy toys for.

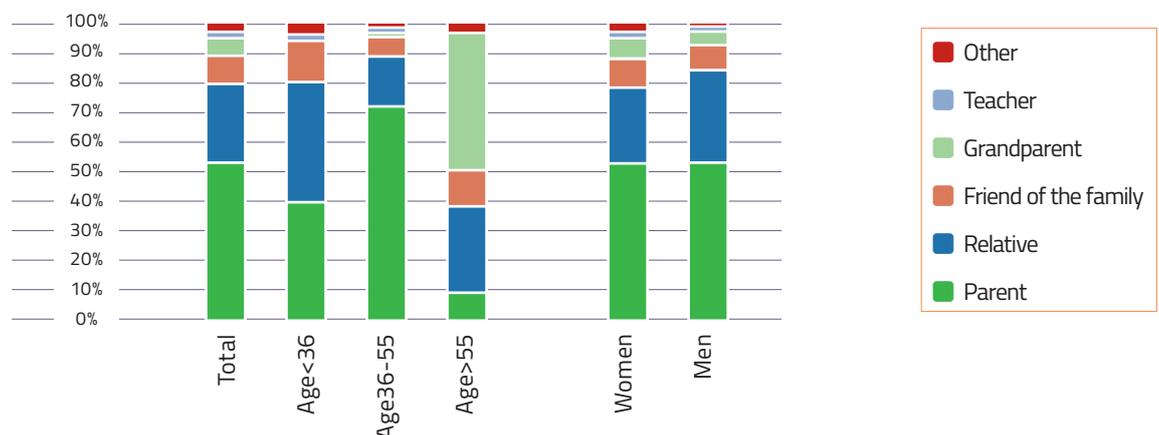
The second most chosen option in the survey regarding the relationship was the **relative (sibling, uncle, cousin) with almost 30% of the respondents (27%)**. The results regarding this option are more homogenous on gender than on age:

- 26% of female respondents and 31% of their male counterparts declared being a relative of the children they mostly buy toys for;
- Four out of ten (41%) of the respondents below 36 years declared being a relative of the children they mostly buy toys for;
- Two out of ten (17%) of the respondents between 36 and 55 years old declared the same relationship;
- Finally, three out of ten (29%) of the respondents above 55 years old declared being a relative of the children they mostly buy toys for.

Then, the option of **friend of the family** came in third position. 10% of the respondents marked this option and results are rather homogenous on both gender and on age:

- A tenth of female respondents (10%) and as well a tenth of their male counterparts (9%) declared being a friend of the family of the children they mostly buy toys for;
- 13% of the respondents below 36 years and 12% of the respondents above 55 years old declared being a friend of the family of the children they mostly buy toys for.

Table 6: **Relationship with the child/children respondents mostly buy toys for (Age and gender, in percentage)**



The option of **grandparent** comes in the general results as fourth option with less than 6%.

Last but not least, it is interesting to underline that **4% of the respondents declared being neither a direct relative nor a friend of the family of the children they most buy toys for**. One of the alternatives was “teacher” and there was another option with “other”.

**Teachers** was an option chosen by some 2% of the overall respondents (nine out of ten respondents who declared being teachers are women). Teachers are not the only profession to use toys, as indicated in the diversity of profiles of respondents who marked the “other” box: **physiotherapists, psychologists, social workers, childcare professionals, non-formal education educators** (children’s leisure activities’ monitor, babysitters...). While the Toy Stories survey indicates that many consume toys for and within a family environment, building partnerships with different professions could further boost work on “toys and diversity”.

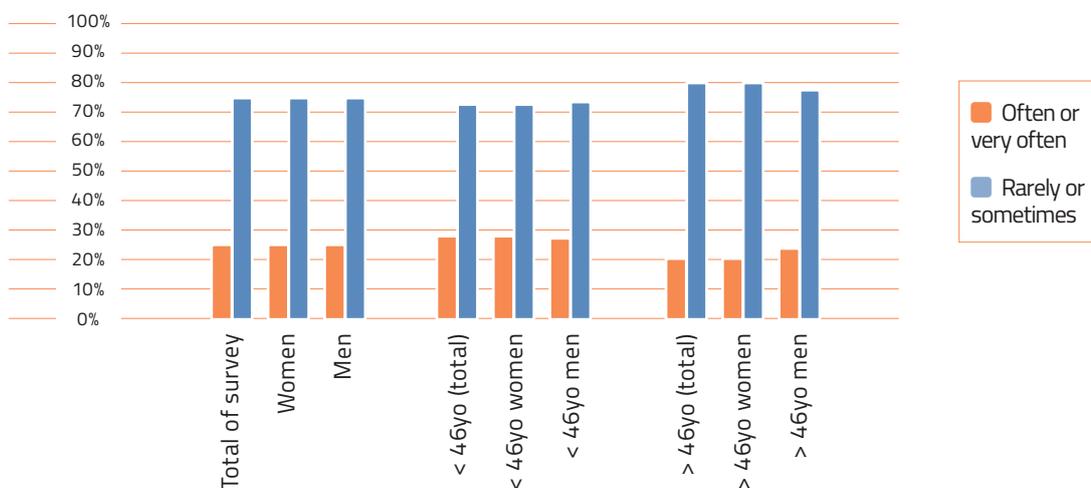
It would have been interesting to compare the attitudes of parents and teachers and analyse if there were potential significant differences, through cross-tabulations. However, the sample obtained of “teachers” was not statistically significant (less than 2%), and the gap with the “parents” too wide (more than 30 times). Therefore, this gap makes it difficult to allow for any valid comparisons.

Regarding the frequency of purchasing toys, a **fourth of the respondents declare to buy toys either often or very often**. The trend is the same by gender as 26% of female respondents marked one of these two options and 24% of men did the same.

However, the trend is different regarding age: younger generations tend to buy more often toys than older ones. **Almost 30% of the respondents below 46 years old** declare to often or very often buy toys. This figure raises to 40% for the respondents who are between 36-45 years.

On the other hand, only a **fifth of the respondents who are above 46 years old** declare buying toys often or very often. What is interesting in the sample of respondents above 46 years old, is that the number of males declaring they often or very often buy toys is slightly higher than the female respondents. (23% for males above 46 years old and 20% for females of the same age trend).

Table 7: **Frequency of the respondents purchasing toys (Age and gender, in percentage)**



### III. ATTITUDES, CONCERNS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TOYS AND STEREOTYPES

What influences me most when buying a toy for a child? That the toy is made of natural material that is not harmful to health, under which conditions it was produced (no people are exploited, no toxic substances are produced, the environment is not polluted) and how useful it is for the age/the current development of the child.

(Germany, female, aged 36-45)

The Toy Stories survey pretends to better understand the influences and concerns of buyers when they purchase toys. A question was more specifically targeted to parents, as being the primary influence of children.

What are the main influences on the decision-making of buyers when purchasing toys? To what extent is the children's influence important? Do buyers consider that some toys are more suitable to children depending of their gender?

#### At first sight, the gender of the children is not something to think about for the respondents when purchasing a toy...

The first conclusion we can draw from the survey is that, when buying a toy for a child, **few respondents think in terms of the gender**, that is, people do not buy toys for boys or toys for girls: less than 5% of the respondents considered this option as an influence when buying a toy for a child.

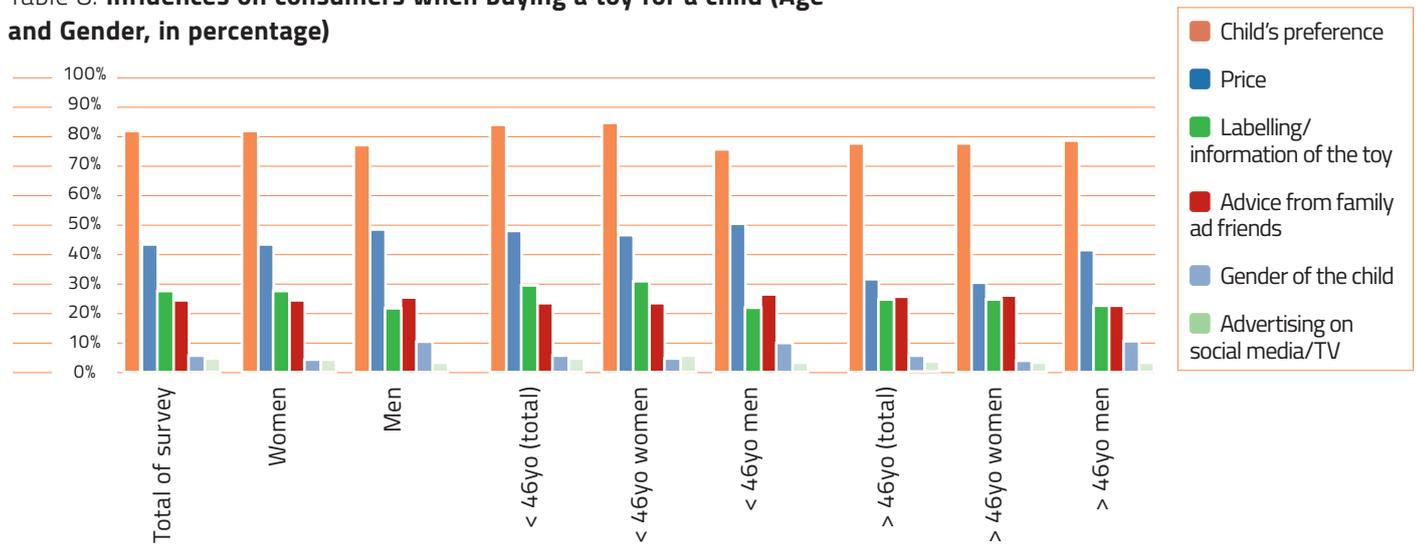
People put the **child's preference as their first influence when buying a toy**, irrespective of gender and age, followed by the **price, the information about the toy and the advice from family or friends**. (Table 8)

The respondents were asked to mark three options in a series of several options. More than four-fifths of female respondents marked the **"child's preference"** as one of their three options, and three out of four male respondents did the same. In terms of age, the results are homogenous as well, as 83% of the respondents below 46 years old and 77% of the respondents above 46 years old marked the **"child's preference"** as one of their three options. Therefore, there were no major differences between age and gender regarding the child's preference as the first concern when buying toys since **all the potential indicators resulted around 80%**. (Table 8)

The second and third more marked options regarding this question were respectively **"price"** and **"labelling or information about the toy"**, but with interesting (although minor) differences on gender and age.

Around **two-fifths of the respondents considered the price of the toy as a key influence on their toy buying**. The economic capacity of the respondent can therefore be considered as an important aspect in that sense: toy affordability matters. We have here some differences among gender and age: **younger generations value**

Table 8: Influences on consumers when buying a toy for a child (Age and Gender, in percentage)



**more the price than older ones.** Indeed, half of the respondents who are below 46 years old marked the “price” option (47%), while only three out of ten in the above 46 years cohort did so (31%). In terms of gender, **men tend to value slightly more the price than women do** (48% of men marked the price option against 42% of women). When cross-tabulating gender and age, we can find that female respondents above 46 years are the group who value less the price as a factor for purchasing a toy (30% of them marked the price option) in comparison with other age-gender groups. (Table 8)

Regarding the third most marked option, the “**labelling or information about the toy**”, almost three out of ten of the respondents marked this option. The results of “labelling or information about the toy” are quite homogenous on both gender and age. Indeed, three out of ten female respondents (28%) marked this option as one of the three alternatives and a fifth of male respondents (21%) did the same. Regarding the age, three out of ten respondents (29%) below 46 years old and a quarter of the respondents (24%) above 46 years old marked this option. When age and gender are cross tabulated, women below 46 years are the respondents with a higher score of this option (30%) and the male respondents of the same age trend with the lower (21%). (Table 8)

A quarter of the respondents (24%) marked “**advice from family and friends**” and the results in both gender and age are very homogenous, even when both variables are cross-tabulated. In terms of gender, both a quarter of female (24%) and male (25%) respondents marked this option as one of their three answers. As regards age, both a quarter of respondents below (23%) and above (25%) 46 years old marked this option. Even when age and gender are cross-tabulated, results are still very homogenous: women above 46 years old and men below 46 years old are the respondents with a higher selection of this option (26%), and the men above 46 years of age with the lower (22%). (Table 8)

The rest of the alternatives<sup>1</sup> were lagging behind the four first as none of them attained 10% as one of the marked options.

My preferences for purchasing a toy are the potential impact on the child's learning and development.

(Belgium, male, aged 26-35)

1. In decreasing order and with the total respondents in brackets: whether a child has certain disabilities (8%); what other children are playing with (7%); the ethnicity of the child (e.g. skin colours of dolls or figurines) (5%); the gender of the child (5%) and the advertising on social media, catalogues, TV (4%).

What is interesting to underline here is that the “gender” and the “advertising on social media” options seems not statistically relevant, as less than 5% of the respondents marked these options. There is a slight significant variance between age and gender: men marked twice as much the option of “gender” than women (10% against 4%). However, the fact that only one out of ten men marked this option seems to indicate that, for the respondents (irrespective of their gender and age) the gender of the child is not a relevant influence when it comes to purchasing a toy. (Table 8).

What influences me the most when buying a toy for a child is that the toy should be fun and creative, non-electronic, respectful and non-violent.

(Spain, female, aged 46-55)

Last but not least, respondents had the option to write other potential answers regarding their influences when purchasing a toy for a child. Almost one out of five respondents marked this “other” option (16%). A large amount of answers considered that the toy should be **educational and bring creativity** to the child. Other mentioned influences by the respondents were the following:

- Place of production of the toy
- Upgrade the child’s skills
- Contribution to learning of various kinds of cultures
- Sustainability of the toys (environmentally friendly)
- The material of the toys (wood, ecological...)

### ...But some stereotypes still prevail regarding the gender of the child

I think it is more acceptable for a girl to play with «boy» toys than vice versa. I also realised this from the way I responded to the survey, even though I try to use different toys with children in my own environment, I feel that I am having trouble and that is something I want to shake off.

(Greece, female, aged 26-35)

Two questions of the survey included a series of six toy pictures. The respondents were asked which of these toys they would buy **for boys and girls**, picking up to three of them.

The results of this part of the survey **indicate that, regarding toy purchases, some gender stereotypes still prevail. In other words, some toys are still considered more “suitable” depending the gender of the child.**

The toy that seemed more “gender neutral” was highly picked out regardless of the gender of the child: **“a female, male and baby playmobil figures that are sitting together on a table”** (Picture 1) was the most popular option for both boys and girls (76% of the respondents picked it for boys, 86% picked it for girls).

Picture 1 was more picked up by younger generations, irrespective of gender, than the older ones: four-fifths of the respondents younger than 46 years picked this option, fifteen points more than the respondents older than 46 years old. The generation gap is bigger for boys than for girls. (Table 9)

However, the **second most marked option differs regarding the gender of the child, with substantial gaps between choices for girls and choices for boys.**

Regarding boys, the second most marked toy was the **white hand playing with a red toy tractor** (Picture 6). 72% of total respondents considered it suitable for

Picture 1: Playmobil figurines



Picture 2: Tool box



Picture 3: Elephant fluffy toy



Picture 4: Barbie doll



Picture 5: Figurines from a famous computer game



Picture 6: Red toy tractor



boys, but only 41% selected it for girls (more than thirty points less), and **that irrespective of gender and age**. Seven out of ten (71%) of the female respondents considered Picture 6 suitable for boys, and only 41% of them marked this picture suitable for girls. Three-quarter of male respondents (74%) picked Picture 6 for boys, and only four of ten of them marked this picture suitable for girls. Regarding the age, three quarters of the respondents (75%) below 46 years old picked up the tractor for boys and less than half for girls (47%). As for the respondents above 46 years old, 65% of them picked the tractor for boys and only three out of ten for girls (29%). **This trend indicates respondents considered a tractor more "suitable" for boys than for girls.** (Table 9)

As for the second most marked toy for girls, the same situation appeared, irrespective of age and gender. 67% of the respondents marked the option of the **"elephant fluffy toy in grey with a pink bowtie and pink flowers in both ears"** (Picture 3) for girls, almost twenty points more than for boys (49%). Two-thirds of female respondents (67%) picked this toy as one of their three options for girls but only a half did the same for boys (49%). Male respondents answered the same way as their female counterparts: seven out of ten (70%) picked this toy as one of their three options for girls, twenty points more than for boys (50%). Regarding the age, 70% of the respondents under 46 years old picked the elephant for girls and barely more than a half for boys (51%). As for the respondents above 46 years old, six out of ten (57%) of them picked the elephant for girls and less than a half for girls (44%). **Therefore, respondents generally considered the elephant as more "suitable" for girls than for boys.** (Table 9)

**The same pattern appears for both pictures 2 and 5 but the gaps in the results between boys and girls are not as wide as for pictures 3 and 6.** Respondents marked these toys more **frequently for boys than for girls, irrespective of the age and gender of the respondents**. Could it be perhaps because these toys are seen by respondents as more "gender-neutral", and therefore "suitable" for any child irrespective of their gender?

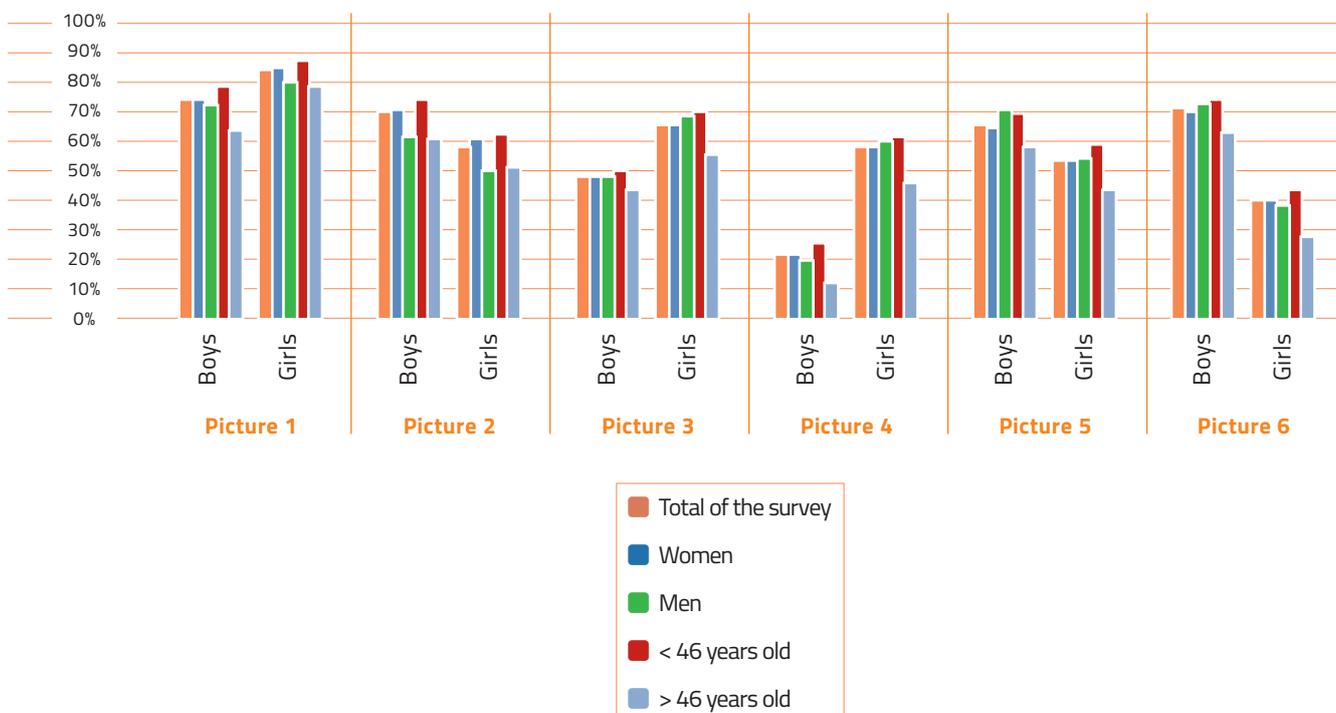
Seven out of ten respondents (71%) marked **picture 2** (a tool box) for boys, while six out of ten did so for girls (60%). The tool box is a toy that has stereotypically been associated with boys, but it is interesting to see that many respondents saw it also as suitable for girls, even if to a lesser extent. Regarding gender, 71% of the female respondents marked picture 2 for boys, ten points more than for girls (61%). As for male respondents, three-fifths picked picture 2 for boys (63%), ten points more than for girls, with barely a half of them (51%). Regarding the age, three out of four (75%) of the respondents under 46 years old picked picture 2 for boys, twelve points more than for girls (63%). The respondents above 46 years old were fewer to select this figurine: six out of ten (62%) of these respondents chose picture 2 for boys and barely a half for girls (52%).

The same appears with **picture 5**, two figurines from a famous computer game. However, although respondents marked more this toy for boys than for girls, and that irrespective of gender and age, the difference in the results is not very significant. Two-thirds of the respondents (67%) marked this option for boys and 55% for girls. (Table 9)

Last, but not least, the wider gap between the six offered alternatives appeared in **picture 4** (a Barbie doll), a toy that has been traditionally associated with girls: 23% of the respondents would buy the doll for boys, and almost 60% for girls. The wide gaps can be found in both gender and in age, as table 9 shows.

We can draw the conclusion that the survey respondents, irrespective of their age and gender, clearly associated the Barbie doll with girls (Table 9).

Table 9: Purchase of toys for boys and girls (Age and Gender, in percentage)



## Towards more “inclusive” thinking in toys?

I am the mother of a blind child, and he needs expressive toys that are very difficult to find now: cars with eyes, boats with wheels, dolls with strange proportions, plenty of lights and colours, very visual. The toy sounds are of a terrible quality. We often have to adapt the toys or make them ourselves.

(Spain, female, aged 36-45)

Again let the children decide what toy they want...no such thing as inclusive toys.

(Malta, female, aged 56-65)

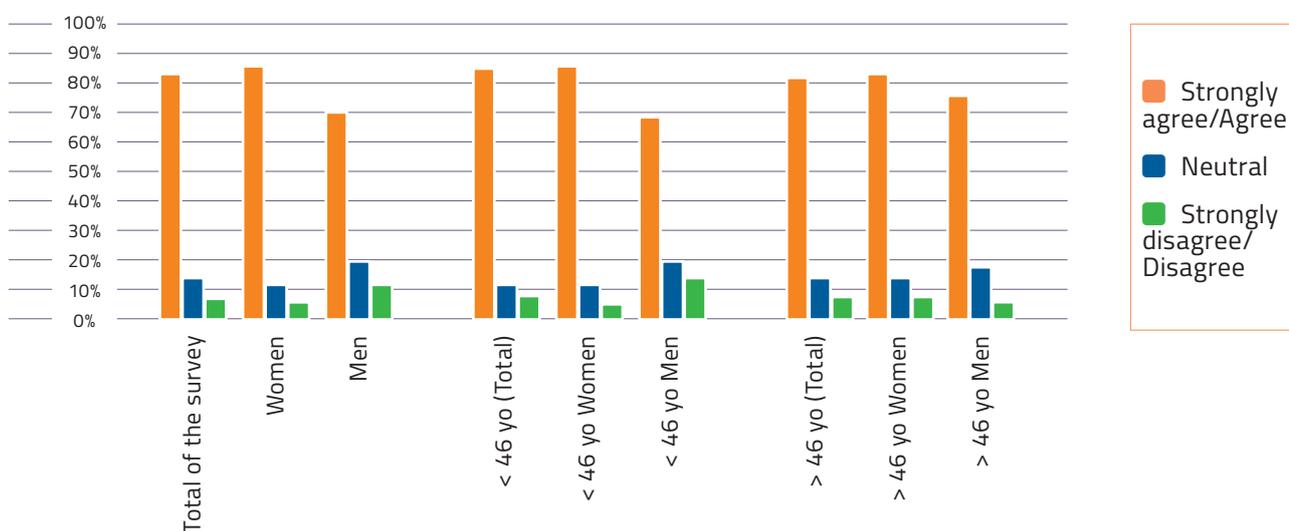
The survey included questions on the **use and promotion of more “inclusive” toys, that represent different ethnicities, genders and ability statuses, and toys which are not restricted to or associated with a specific gender.**

To the first question, whether making children with disabilities visible in toy adverts and producing more toys adapted to their needs could change the way society looks at them, **more than four-fifths (82%) of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement.** If both women and men, and younger and older generations, massively marked one of the above-mentioned two options, some differences remain: 84% of women marked one of these two available options, fourteen points more than men. (Table 10)

In terms of age, the results are very similar (83% of the respondents younger than 46 years old did so, three points more than the respondents older than 46 years old). What remains interesting is the gap within younger generations: 85% of the younger women either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” to the above-mentioned statement, almost twenty points more than their male counterparts did (68%). **Younger male respondents seem therefore a little more sceptical than the other age cohorts about driving change in societal perceptions via greater visibility of people with disabilities through toys and toy adverts.** (Table 10)

Regarding the second question -whether the respondents of the survey would feel uncomfortable if their child/grandchild, etc. receives a doll or figurine of a different ethnic background-, the **survey results also highlight the potential of toys to promote respect of ethnic diversity in society.**

Table 10: **Do you think that making children with disabilities visible in toy adverts and more toys adapted to their needs could change the way society looks at them? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



My daughter was offered a black Barbie 30 years ago. This Barbie is now my “colleague”. For the last ten years, she has been part of my official toy and children’s book exhibition “Vielfalt Spielen (“Playing with variety”). She is especially loved by the children in the refugee shelters who can identify with her.

(Germany, female, aged 56-65)

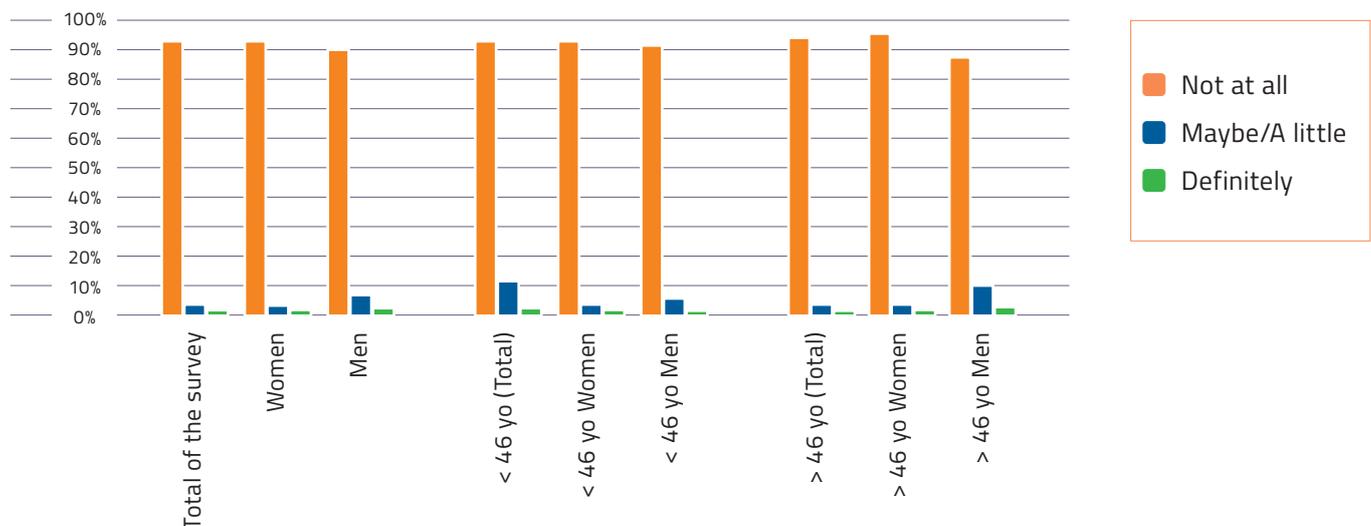
Tolerance and acceptance of diversity have nothing to do with children’s toys.

(Spain, male, aged 46-55)

Almost 95% of the respondents of the survey declared not having any inconvenience if their child/grandchild etc. would receive a doll or figurine of a different ethnic background. The gap differences between gender and age are very small: there is only a three-point gap between women and men (95% and 92% marked the option “not at all” uncomfortable) and only one point by age (94% of respondents below 46 years old and 95% of the ones above 46 years old marked this option). (Table 11)

The wider gap appears within the above 46 years old respondents, but it is not a substantial one: 96% of female respondents of that group of age marked the option “not any inconvenience”, seven points more than their male counterparts did. (Table 11)

Table 11: **Would you feel uncomfortable if your child/grandchild etc. receives a doll or figurine of a different ethnic background? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



When I asked in the Playmobil store if they had black figurines, the saleswoman replied: "Yes, of course. For example, the chimney sweep. They are always black". Unfortunately, this was no joke and, of course, the chimney sweep was white with black clothes; she had not understood at all what I wanted - and this was not an isolated incident.

(Germany, female, aged 46-55)

Children want to recognize themselves and their world in their toy figurines. My children do not have a single child with African roots, not a single child with visible disabilities in their school classes or in their private environment.

(Germany, female, aged 36-45)

## IV. TOY SHOP ORGANISATION: IS THERE A NEED FOR MORE DIVERSITY?

### Boy and girl sections in shops are not helpful for the majority of respondents...

Shops often organise their toys into “boys and girls sections”, using specific colours or shades to refer to boys or girls (e.g. pink and pastel colours for girls, blue, darker and bolder colours for boys).<sup>2</sup>

The survey included a question regarding the extent to which this gender division by toy shops helps them as customer, based on a scale from 0 (useless) to 10 (extremely useful). The responses indicate that for some, this is helpful to make their toy purchases. On the other hand, for the majority of respondents (two-thirds) it is not considered useful and is seen as reinforcing the idea that some toys are “suitable” depending on the child’s gender.

The results are interesting to analyse more closely in terms of gender and age, as there are some interesting differences.

**Almost two-thirds of the respondents considered that the “boys and girls” sections of toy shops are not useful, marking the options from 0 to 4 (63%) and a good third (37%) believe that this organisation is, at least, somehow useful (options 5 to 10). Two out of five respondents (39%) considered that this organisation is useless (marking the option 0). However, some gender differences appear here.**

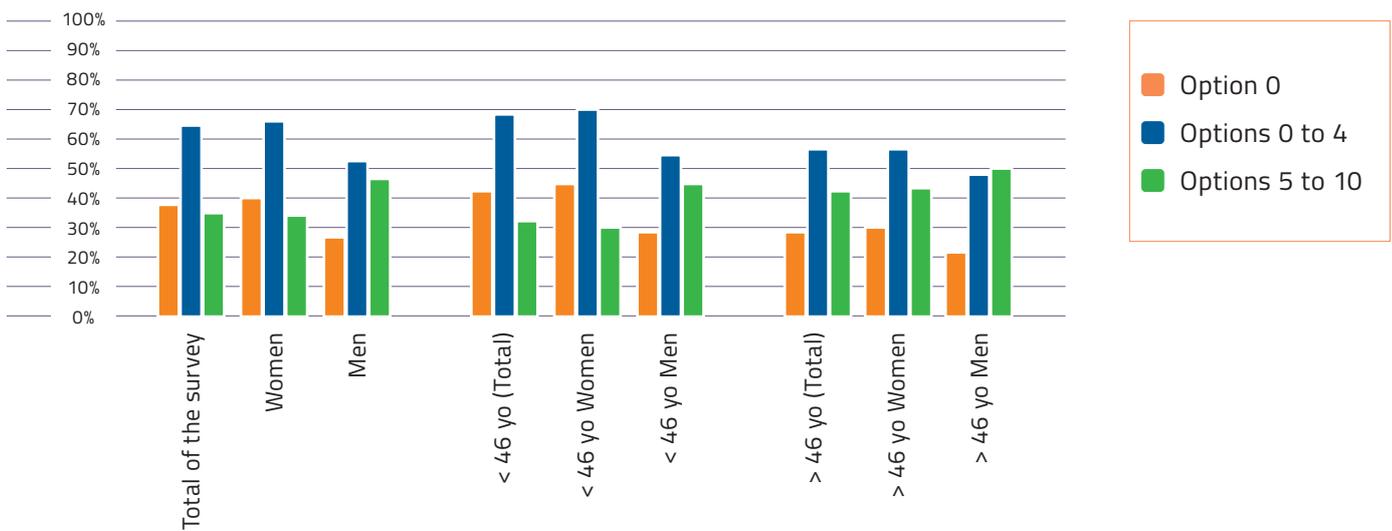
Two-thirds of female respondents (66%) marked options between 0 and 4, and therefore considered this toys ‘shop organisation not really useful, while barely a half (53%) of male respondents marked the same options. **Half of the male respondents considered that this gender organisation by retailers is at least somehow useful.** What’s more, 41% of women marked the option 0 while only 27% of men did so. (Table 12)

By age, there are differences too. **Respondents below 46 years old consider the “boys and girls” organisation less useful than those above 46 years old.** More than two-thirds (68%) of the former marked alternatives from 0 to 4, more than ten points than the latter (57%). More specifically, and when age and gender are cross-tabulated for those who have marked options from 0 to 4, the wider gap appears between **younger women and older men.** Seven out of ten (70%) of female respondents below 46 years old marked options between 0 and 4, twenty points more than the male respondents above 46 years old (49%). What is more, almost half (46%) of female respondents below 46 years old marked the option 0, twice as much as the male respondents above 46 years old did (22%). (Table 12)

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2. See for instance “Making or breaking stereotypes?”, COFACE study, 2016. Available at: [http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Toys-and-Diversity\\_2016.pdf](http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Toys-and-Diversity_2016.pdf) and “Let toys be toys campaign” (<http://lettoysbetoy.org.uk/>)

Table 12: **Shops often organise their toys into Boys and Girls sections. Does this help you as a customer? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



## ...But, once again, some stereotypes prevail regarding the gender of the child.

Generally speaking, it is clear from the figures that **respondents feel neither uncomfortable with a girl wanting a toy from a boy section nor the other way round**, but with some interesting differences. Both questions were asked in the survey.

**Although the survey shows answers expressing few gender stereotypes regarding toys, the results indicate a tendency towards thinking it is more “acceptable” seeing a girl wanting a toy from a “boy section” than a boy wanting a toy from a “girl section”.** Do we have again, as the previous section showed, the “Barbie doll effect”, namely that girls are more accepted playing with “boy’s toys” than the other way round?

Indeed, respondents are less uncomfortable with girls wanting a toy from a boy section (90% answered the option “not at all uncomfortable”) than the opposite (81% marked the same option), and this, as we can see below, irrespective of age and gender. Moreover, respondents expressed more reluctance for boys than for girls: 11% of the respondents of the survey marked the option “maybe” regarding the question on boys, which is almost twice more than they marked for the one on girls (6%). (Table 13)

Regarding gender, **female respondents marked the “not at all uncomfortable” option in a higher proportion than the male respondents** for boys and for girls. 84% of female respondents marked the option “not at all uncomfortable” with a boy wanting a toy from a girl section”, in contrast with 74% of their male counterparts. The same trend appears for the other way round ...but with higher response rates: 92% of women and 84% of men do not feel at all uncomfortable with a girl wanting a toy from a “boy section”.

**Both female and male respondents expressed more reluctance for boys than for girls.** A tenth (10%) of women who completed the survey marked the option “maybe” for boys, which is twice as much as they did for girls (5%). **Men who completed the survey were more reluctant than women but they were less so for girls than**

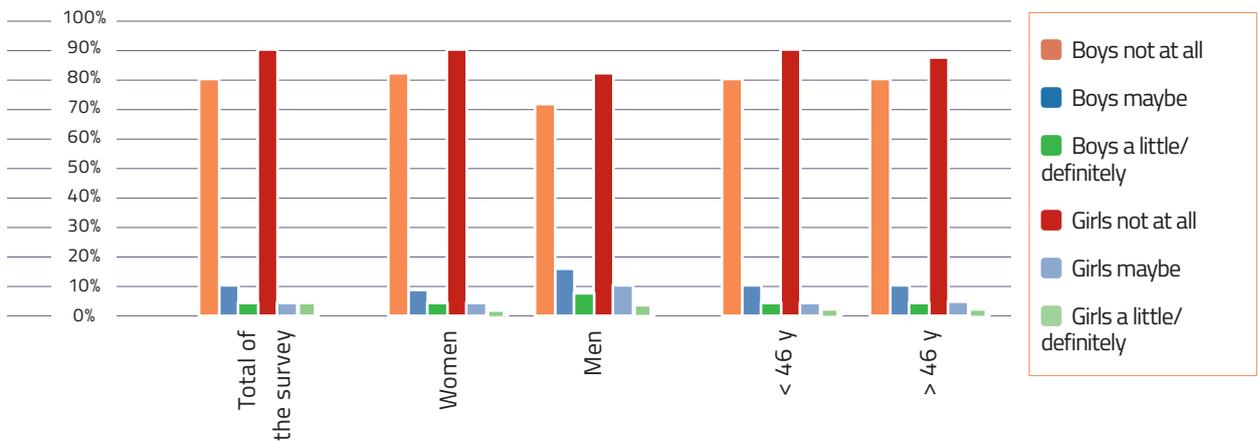
**on boys:** almost a fifth (17%) of male respondents marked the option “maybe” for boys, which is five points much as they did for girls (12%).

Regarding age, there are no significant differences. **Both younger and older respondents than 46 years old do not feel at all uncomfortable for both boys and girls with landslide majorities, but again more so regarding girls.** In both age generations, women more frequently selected “not uncomfortable at all” for both boys and girls, with the female respondents below 46 years old making up the highest proportion. (Table 13)

Four-fifths (83%) of below 46 years old respondents do not feel uncomfortable at all with a boy wanting a toy from a “girl section”, which is ten points less than what they marked for a girl wanting a toy from a “boy section” (91%). They expressed less openness for boys than for girls: 11% of the respondents below 46 years old marked the option “maybe” regarding the question on boys, which is twice as much as they marked for the one on girls (5%).

As for the respondents above 46 years old, four-fifths (82%) marked the option “not at all uncomfortable” with a boy wanting a toy from a “girl section”, which is almost ten points less than what they marked for a girl wanting a toy from a “boy section” (89%). Once again, stereotypes seem to prevail more for boys than girls: 12% of the respondents above 46 years old marked the option “maybe” regarding the question on boys, which is almost twice as much as they marked for the one on girls (7%). (Table 13)

Table 13: **Would you feel uncomfortable with a girl/boy wanting a toy from a Boy/Girl section? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**





# V. TOY MARKETING: LOOKING AT STEREOTYPES AND BEYOND

Toy businesses spend billions of euros every year to advertise their products, trying to influence children and their parents. Some organisations<sup>3</sup> have criticised toy advertising for reinforcing stereotypical behaviours, and have asked for more gender-neutral advertising moving away from the traditional “pink for girls and blue for boys”.

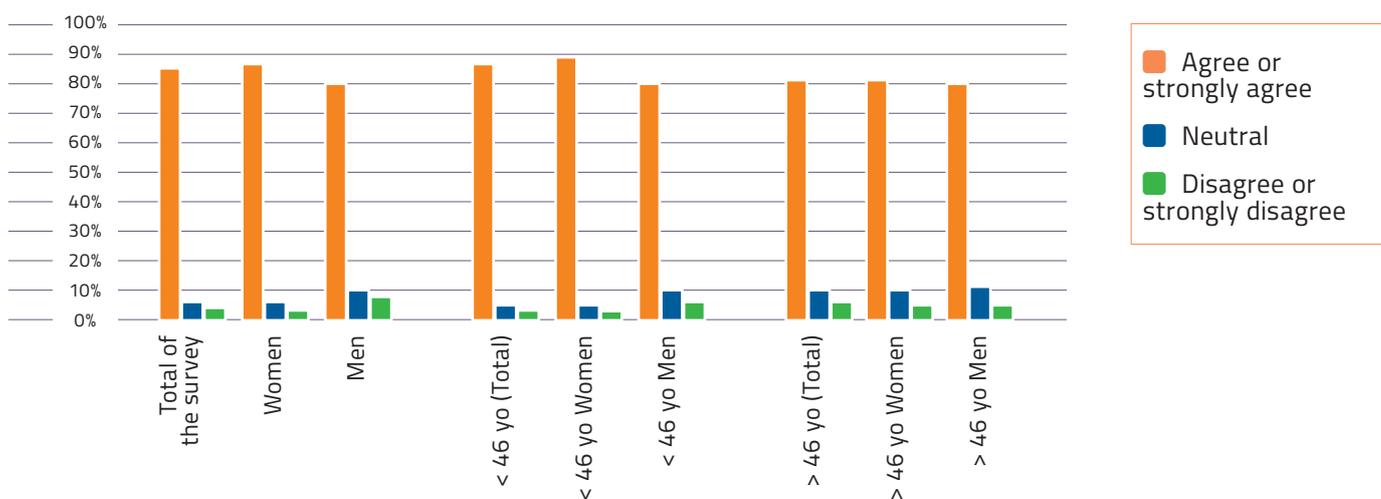
## Majority believes advertising reinforces stereotypes

The survey included two questions on advertising and stereotypes. The first one asked whether advertising reinforces stereotypes, and the second one if more neutral and inclusive advertising would diminish stereotypes.

To the first question, **nine out of ten respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” (87%) that toy advertising highlights stereotypes.** These scores are **higher among women and respondents younger than 46 years old:** nine out of ten female respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement (88%), while eight out of ten of their male counterparts did so (81%). Regarding the age, the same pattern occurs: nine out of ten of the respondents below 46 years old “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement (89%), while eight out of ten of their above 46 years old counterparts did so (82%). (Table 14)

**A wider gap appears within the below 46 years old respondents:** 91% of female respondents of that group of age marked one of the two above-mentioned options, ten points more than their male counterparts did. (Table 14)

Table 14: **Do adverts for children reinforce stereotypes about what girls and boys should play with? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



3. See for example the UK campaign, “Let toys be toys” or the French one, “Pepite Sexiste”

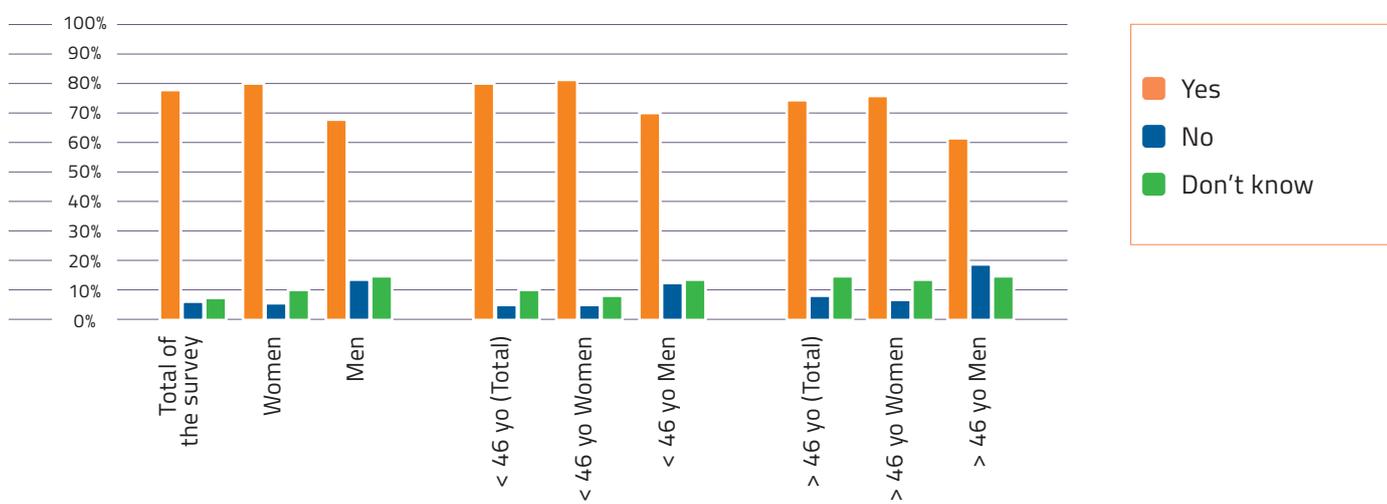
Last but not least, female respondents and respondents younger than 46 years old marked the option “neutral” to a lesser extent than their male and older than 46 years old counterparts. Less than a tenth of female respondents (7%) marked this option, four points less than their male counterparts (11%). As for differences between age cohorts, twice as many respondents above 46 years old marked the option “neutral” than those below 46 years old (11% and 6% respectively). (Table 14)

The survey also asked another question to respondents on **the potential of more neutral and inclusive advertising to diminish stereotypes**. The general results for this question are in line with the above-mentioned trend of agreement with the fact that inclusion of people with disabilities within society would be boosted through toys and toy adverts.

The toy itself is neutral. It is the marketing around the toy that is not neutral. The only difference between a Ken figurine and an Action Man is the marketing that is done around it.

(Belgium, female, aged 26-35)

Table 15: **Would more neutral toys and toy advertising reduce stereotypes? Answers from the respondents (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



The support to this assessment is still very high but to a lesser degree than the previous question on advertising reinforcing stereotypes. Furthermore, the gaps within the age and gender variables are wider. (Table 15)

Four out five respondents do consider that more neutral toys and toy advertising would reduce stereotypes, but women and younger cohorts to a higher degree than men and older respondents. Eight out of ten female respondents do agree with that assumption, but younger generation do to a higher extent (83% of female respondents below 46 years old and 77% of female above 46 years old respondents. Regarding men, seven out of ten agree with the fact that more neutral and inclusive advertising would reduce stereotypes, and once again younger than older generations (72% and 63% for younger than 46 years old and older than 46 years old respectively). It is interesting to highlight that the cohort of male respondents above 46 years disagreed with the assessment three times more than the cohort of female respondents below 46 years (20% and 6.5% respectively). (Table 15)

## Toys and disability: could more equal representation further boost inclusion?

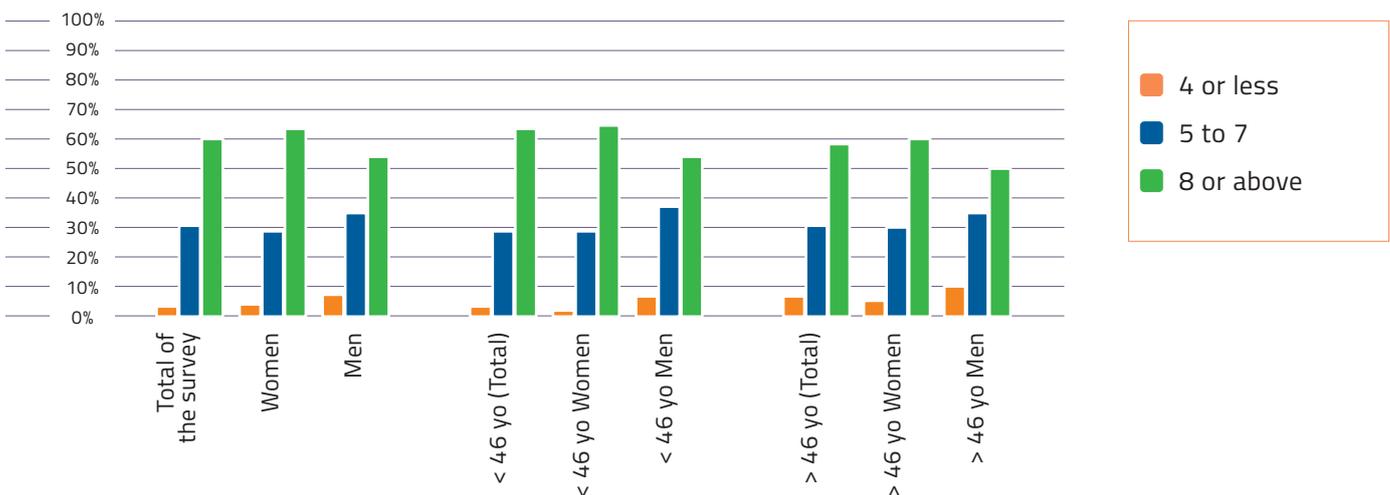
COFACE strives to build inclusive societies, and is fully aware of the huge impact of media and advertising in shaping thinking, perceptions and habits in both children and adults. In Europe millions of children live with a disability. Children with disabilities play, dream and go to school every day. Like any other children, they play with toys and have fun.<sup>4</sup>

The Toy Stories survey allowed for a brief exploration of the relationship between toys and disability by including a question on whether it would help the inclusion of persons with disabilities if children were aware of disabilities through toys and toy advertising.

Respondents were asked to answer on a scale from 0 (Not useful) to 10 (Extremely useful). **Almost two-thirds of the total respondents strongly supported this assessment**, marking the options above or equal to 8 (63%), and only 5% disagreed, marking the options below or equal to 4.

However, some gaps do exist between age and gender: women more than men strongly support the above-mentioned assessment (65% and 55% respectively) and younger generations more than older ones (65% and 60% respectively). The wider gap occurs between younger women and older men, with 14 points difference (66% and 52% marked an answer at least equal or above 8 respectively). It is also relevant to underline that older women do strongly support this assumption more than men below 46 years old do (62% and 55% respectively).

Table 16: **Would it help the inclusion of persons with disabilities if children were aware of disabilities through toys and toy advertising? (Scale from 0-10, in percentage)**



4. See "Making or breaking stereotypes?", *op.cit.*



## VI. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND A WORLD WHERE TOYS ARE NEUTRAL AND REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY

What are the potential solutions to obtain toys that are more inclusive and break stereotypes? What are the main challenges and barriers that hinder the achievement of more inclusive toys? What kind of impact would it have on children a world where toys are neutral and reflect the diversity in society? We asked respondents their opinion on these issues.

When we were kids my parents, who never gave us any preferences about what kind of games we should play with, asked my sister and me not to tell people that my brother played with Barbie dolls with us, so as they wouldn't make fun of him.

(Italy, female, aged 26-35)

I am against governments and companies performing social engineering

(Sweden, female, aged 36-45)

### Shared responsibility for promoting inclusive toys and reduce stereotypes...

The survey included a question regarding the **potential solutions** to promote toys that are **more inclusive**. Seven different options<sup>5</sup> were offered to respondents, who had the opportunity to express other options through the answer "other". Each respondent had to tick the three answers which best matched their thoughts.

Four options were chosen at least by a third of respondents in at least one of their three marked answers. These are the following, with two of them clearly well ahead the rest:

- Awareness of the family (65%);
- More neutral and inclusive marketing of toys (65%);
- More diversity in toy production (44%);
- Laws to regulate toy advertising (37%).

Other alternatives included the awareness of teachers (26%) or the expert coverage in the media (22%). (Table 17)

5. Laws to regulate toy advertising, campaigning by NGOs, awareness of families, awareness of teachers, expert coverages in the media, more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys, and more diversity in production.

The results of the survey especially highlight family responsibility on the one hand, and the toy and advertising industry on the other. The two most selected solutions for promoting inclusive toys are **awareness of the family and more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys**. The latter solution, is in line with the above-mentioned trends on the role of the toy advertising and marketing. Some differences can be noted regarding the age and the respondents.

Female respondents selected the option of **“more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys”** slightly more than their male counterparts (67% while barely half of male respondents did). On their side, male respondents consider to a higher extent the **“awareness of families”** (69% for the male respondents and 65% for the female ones). (Table 17)

The same trend appears regarding the age of the respondents: younger generations marked to a higher extent the option of **“more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys”** (69% of the respondents below 46 years old marked this option, while barely half of the respondents above 46 years old did so), while older generations gave more importance to the **“awareness of families”** (70%, seven points more than their below 46 years old counterparts) as a way to promote inclusive toys.

If the variables “age” and “gender” are cross-tabulated, the survey indicates interesting results: **male respondents** (above and below 46 years old) **and women above 46 years had broadly similar response rates** (70% for each group) regarding the **“awareness of families”** as most chosen option (six out of ten female respondents below 46 years did so). On the other hand, women below 46 years old primarily pointed out the responsibility of the toy and advertisement industries, as **“more neutral and inclusive marketing of toys”** was the more marked option (72% of them picked this option among the three possible) in comparison with the other groups, which marked that option to a lesser extent (around 50% for each group) (Table 17).

The child often just says that some toys are for boys (she is a girl). I never told her that toys are divided into toys for girls and toys for boys ... I often ask her how she knows that it is just a toy for a boy, and she remains confused. She started to divide colors into those for boys and those for girls. The influence of the media and society on the upbringing of children is enormous, we are not even aware of it.

(Croatia, female, aged 26-35)

Regarding the third more marked option (**“more diversity in toy production”**), younger generations seems to appreciate this more as a solution than the older ones: almost half (47%) of younger than 46 years old picked this answer, eleven points more than their above 46 years old counterparts. Regarding the gender variable on this option, the results are very similar (44% of female respondents picked this answer, four points more than their male counterparts).

Many respondents considered as well that **legislation matters to achieve more “inclusive” toys**, specifically in relation to regulating toy advertising. When “age” and “gender” are cross-tabulated, we see however that male respondents above 46 years old are slightly more cautious with this option: three out of ten male respondents above 46 years old picked this alternative, while the other groups attained 40%. (Table 17)

Last but not least, some respondents (2% of them) marked the option “other”, underlying that there were some potential alternatives that were missing to them.

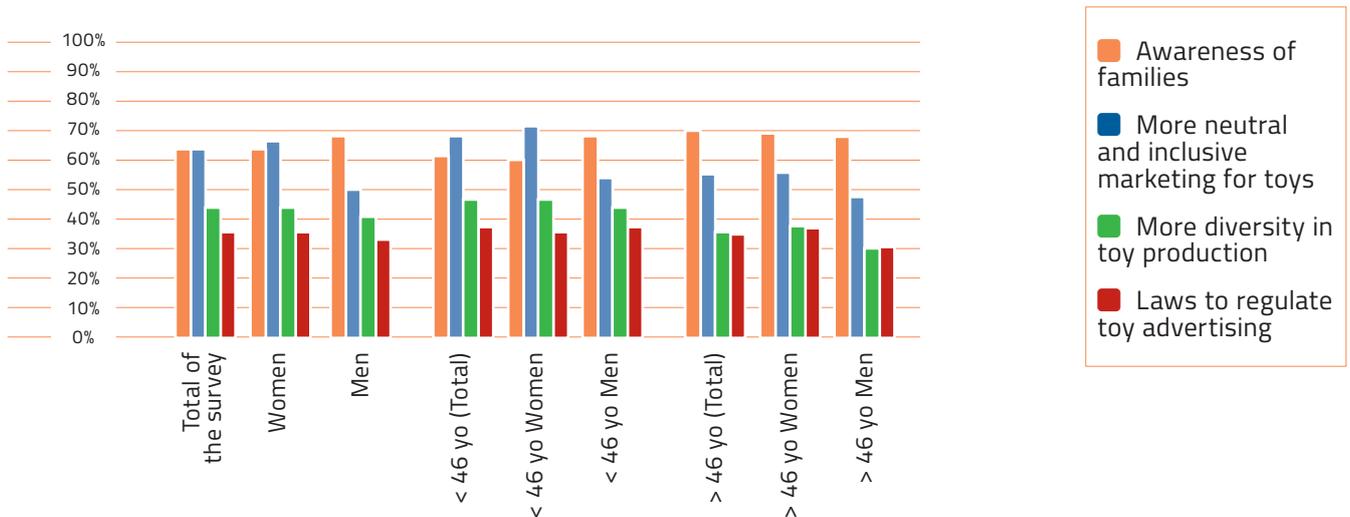
Other solutions to achieve more inclusive toys mentioned by the respondents were the following:

- Informative talks during peak moments for toy purchases (e.g. Christmas)
- Awareness of toy shops about diversity and stereotypes
- Financial support to businesses that produce and market inclusive toys to make their prices more competitive
- Targeted emphasis and awareness on diversity (eg: via children TV programmes)
- Making the economic case for inclusive toys.

Market testing with different toys and children of different ages to show their appeal. Companies need to be convinced there is profit in it.

(United Kingdom, female, aged 36-45)

Table 17: **What would help promote toys that are more inclusive?: the four most chosen options (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



## Broad consensus on the key barriers to the acceptance of inclusive toys: a mix of internal and external influences

My little brother used to play with a doll with a different skin colour than we do. It is ridiculous that children are sometimes approached about their toy preference: «that's not for girls» or «pink is a girl's colour». Toy shops and producers can take the lead by subtly and gradually changing the boundary between so-called boys'/ girls' toys. I think this can best be done subtly without a lot of fuss in the media.

(The Netherlands, female, aged 18-25)

Children themselves are the main barrier. They tend to prefer to play for example with a with a playmobil or doll with no physical disability.

(Spain, male, aged 36-45)

The survey included a question regarding the **main barriers to the acceptance of more “inclusive toys”**. Seven different alternatives<sup>6</sup> were offered to respondents, who had the opportunity to express other options through the answer “other”. Each respondent had to tick the three answers which best matched their opinion.

Once again, four options were chosen at least by a third of respondents in one of their three marked answers. These are the following, with two “barriers” ahead of the rest:

- Society (61%);
- Media and advertisers (56%);
- Toy companies (45%);
- Parents/family (34%).

Other alternatives included bullying by children/peers (27%) or the responsibility of toy shops (16%).

**“Society” and “media and advertisers” seem to be to respondents the main barriers to a greater acceptance of inclusive toys, irrespective of gender and age, as more than a half of respondents marked both options** (61% of respondents marked “society” and 56%, “media and advertisers”). They are **closely followed by “toy companies”**, an option which was selected by almost half (45%) of the respondents. (Table 18)

**Female and younger than 46 years old respondents marked the two most chosen alternatives to a higher extent than the male and older than 46 years old respondents.**

Indeed, the option “society” was picked up by 63% of female respondents, six points more than their male counterparts. Regarding the age, the percentage is very close: 63% of the younger than 46 years old respondents marked this option, five points more than the older than 46 years old respondents. The same

6. Parents/family, bullying by children/peers, society, toy companies, media and advertisers, toy shops, and schools.

trends appear regarding the second and third most chosen options, “media and advertisers” and “toy companies”. Although the percentage of answers is very close, both answers were more frequently picked by female and below 46 years old respondents.

Six out of ten (57%) female respondents chose “**media and advertisers**” as an option, more than ten points more than their male counterparts did (47%). Within the age comparison, the results are very similar: 57% of the respondents below 46 years picked this option, four points more than the older generations did. (Table 18).

As for the third most picked up option, “**toy companies**” results are even closer than the former option: almost half (46%) of female respondents marked this answer, four points more than their male counterparts did. Regarding age, above and older than 46 years old respondents marked to the same extent this option: 46% for the former and 44% for the latter.

However, male respondents picked “**parents/family**”, the fourth most chosen option to a higher degree than their female counterparts did (38% and 33% respectively). Younger generations picked this option more than the older generations did (37% and 26% respectively). (Table 18)

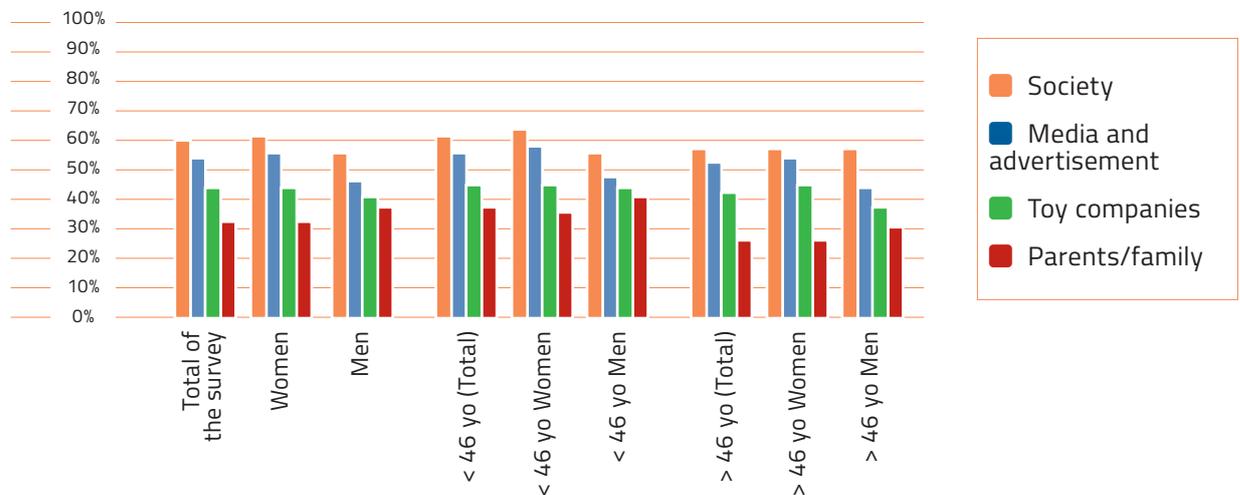
Last but not least, some respondents (3% of them) marked the option “other”, underlying that there were some potential alternatives that were missing to them.

Other perceived obstacles to the acceptance of inclusive toys were the following:

- Children’s preferences
- Price
- Lack of information about the benefits of inclusive toys and the costs of non-inclusive policies

Once again, answers such as “**children’s preferences**” and “**price**” come to the fore.

Table 18: **What are the main barriers to the acceptance of “inclusive toys”?: the four most chosen options (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



Finally, what is interesting to underline, after the questions relating to the promotion and the barriers of “inclusive toys” is that female respondents tend to value more than their male ones the role of toy businesses and advertising. On their side, male respondents are prone to value more the role of parents and family than their female counterparts do.

It is not only advertisement that creates barriers to more inclusive toys. Adults need to change their mentality too. They have been conditioned into thinking girls play with a certain kind of toy and boys with a different kind. Children who don't fit into those two boxes are looked at differently. I'm a woman and as a child, my own choice, I played with cars, trains and dolls. My son has the same influence from myself. Advertisement will be the start. Why Lego Friends is targeted to girls and you even have a girl in the instructions leaflet? Or in the Frozen sets? All of this has to change.

(Spain, female, aged 36-45)

## If toys were neutral and reflect the diversity of society, what would be the impact on children?

There are neutral toys and they reflect the diversity in society today. It is up to parents to explain, guide and encourage their children in their games. My children don't play with girl-specific or boy-specific toys only - they play with what they like, and what they were taught how to use (i.e. my 3-year-old daughter is using a toy drill, my 7-year old nephew is sleeping with a pink elephant)

(Belgium male, aged 26-35)

**Imagine a world where toys are neutral and reflect the diversity of society. What kind of impact would it have on children?** This question was included in the survey, where the respondents had to mark the option they considered the most appropriate, among three general scenarios<sup>7</sup>.

There was an option that was well ahead the two others. **“Children would still express preferences, but their choice would express their personal preferences based on who they are and not influenced by societal pressure or advertising”** was marked by seven out of ten (72%) respondents. The second most chosen option (which received 22% of the answers) was **“Stereotypes between genders**

7. Three scenarios:

- Stereotypes between genders and ethnicities would gradually disappear and all children would play with the same toys;
- Children would still express preferences, but their choice would express their personal preference based on who they are and not influenced by societal pressure or advertising;
- There would be no difference in toy preferences. Girls would play mainly with dolls and boys mainly with cars.

**and ethnicities would gradually disappear and all children would play with the same toys".** (Table 19)

A large majority of respondents considered therefore that **society and toy production/ advertising are a barrier to promoting toys and diversity**. If toys were "neutral", children would therefore express their preferences with more freedom. Although the answers within age and gender are quite homogenous, there are some differences.

Regarding gender, female respondents marked the option of "children would still express preferences (...)" to a higher extent than their male counterparts (73% and 65% respectively). As for the age variable, younger respondents marked more this option than older ones: three out of four (74%) respondents below 46 years old selected this option, almost ten points more than the above 46 years old respondents did (65%). Finally, if both variables are cross-tabulated, we can see that **women below 46 years old marked this answer to a higher** extent than the other groups (76% for this group, and between 10 and 15 points more than the other groups<sup>8</sup>, (table 19). It is interesting to highlight that all of this is in line with the question of barriers to obtain more inclusive toys, where women **below 46 years old respondents marked to a higher extent the options of "society" and "media and advertisers" as barriers to the acceptance of inclusive toys** (Table 19).

The second most marked option was **"stereotypes between genders and ethnicities would gradually disappear and all children would play with the same toys"**. Two out of ten respondents (22%) chose this answer. Regarding gender, the results were identical (22% of female respondents and 21% of male ones marked this option), but differ regarding age. Indeed, older generations marked this option to a higher degree than the younger ones (28% for above 46 years old respondents and 19% for below than 46 years old ones). (Table 19)

The third option, **"There would be no difference in toy preferences. Girls would play mainly with dolls and boys mainly with cars"** was **lagging behind the other two, with only 5% of the respondents picking this option**. What it is interesting to underline here are the differences within gender: twice as many male respondents marked this option than female respondents did (9% to 4% respectively). If age and gender are cross-tabulated, we can see that no matter the age of male respondents, they marked to a higher extent this option than female respondents (9% for both male below and above 46 years old respondents, 3% for female younger than 46 years old respondents and 5% for female above 46 years old respondents) (Table 20) **Male respondents consider to a greater extent than their female counterparts that even if neutral toys are available to children, the latter would still be playing with "gendered" toys.** (Table 19)

Last, but not least, the question offered as well the opportunity to mark as answer "other". Some respondents (2% of them) marked the option "other": some respondents underlined again the importance of **"family/parents as major driver of change"**, while other respondents focused on the **importance of toy shops**. A few respondents as well underlined the role of **education and language**.

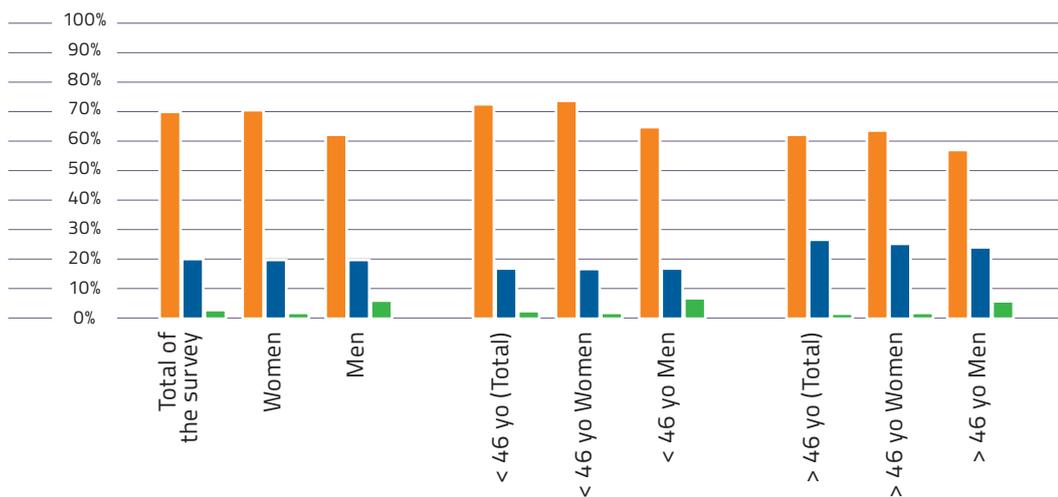
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8. 67% of male respondents below 46 years old, 66% of female respondents above 46 years old and 60% of male respondents above 46 years old marked this option

It might be a little different, but I have my doubts. Don't forget that the parents are the ones who choose the toys in most cases. They are the first to raise awareness. And rather than making a gender distinction a distinction according to the needs or abilities of the child would be more appropriate. It would be more relevant to convince the parents I think.

(France, female, aged 18-25)

Table 19: **Imagine a world where toys are neutral and reflect the diversity of society. What kind of impact would it have on children? (Age and Gender, in percentage)**



- Children would still express preferences, but their choice would express their personal preference based on who they are and not influenced by societal pressure or advertising
- Stereotypes between genders and ethnicities would gradually disappear and all children would play with the same toys
- There would be no difference in toy preferences. Girls would play mainly with dolls and boys mainly with cars.

## ANNEX: SURVEY QUESTIONS

### I. HOW OFTEN DO YOU BUY TOYS FOR CHILDREN?

- A. Rarely
- B. Sometimes
- C. Often
- D. Very often

### II. WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD/CHILDREN YOU MOSTLY BUY TOYS FOR?

- A. Parent
- B. Grandparent
- C. Relative (sibling, uncle, cousin)
- D. Friend of the family
- E. Teacher
- F. Other (please specify)

### III. WHAT INFLUENCES YOU MOST WHEN BUYING A TOY FOR A CHILD? (CHOOSE UP TO 3 OPTIONS)

- A. Whether a child has certain disabilities
- B. The ethnicity of the child (e.g. skin colours of dolls or figurines)
- C. The child's preference
- D. The labelling or information about the toy
- E. The price
- F. What other children are playing with
- G. Advice from family and friends
- H. The gender of the child
- I. Advertising on social media, catalogues, TV
- J. Other (please specify)

### IV. SHOPS OFTEN ORGANISE THEIR TOYS INTO BOYS AND GIRLS SECTIONS. DOES THIS HELP YOU AS A CUSTOMER?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not useful					Extremely useful					

**V. WHICH OF THESE TOYS WOULD YOU BUY FOR A BOY? (MULTIPLE CHOICE POSSIBLE)**

**VI. WHICH OF THESE TOYS WOULD YOU BUY FOR A GIRL? (MULTIPLE CHOICE POSSIBLE)**

**VII. WOULD YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH A BOY BUYING A TOY FROM A "GIRL SECTION"?**

- A. Not at all                      B. Maybe                      C. A little                      D. Definitely

**VIII. WOULD YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH A GIRL BUYING A TOY FROM A "BOY SECTION"?**

- A. Not at all                      B. Maybe                      C. A little                      D. Definitely

**IX. DO YOU THINK ADVERTS FOR CHILDREN REINFORCE STEREOTYPES ABOUT WHAT GIRLS AND BOYS SHOULD PLAY WITH?**

- A. Strongly disagree                      B. Disagree  
C. Neutral                      D. Agree  
E. Strongly agree

**X. DO YOU THINK THAT MORE NEUTRAL TOYS AND TOY ADVERTISING WOULD REDUCE STEREOTYPES?**

- A. Yes  
B. No  
C. Don't know

**XI. WOULD YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE IF YOUR CHILD/GRANDCHILD ETC. RECEIVES A DOLL OR FIGURINE OF A DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUND?**

- A. Not at all                      B. Maybe                      C. A little                      D. Definitely

**XII. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE GREATEST CONCERN OF PARENTS WHEN IT COMES TO TOYS? (CHOOSE UP TO 3 OPTIONS)**

- A. The use of batteries for the toy  
B. Following society standards  
C. The preferences of the child  
D. The material the toy is made of  
E. The noise level of toys  
F. The sustainability of the toy (how long it will last)  
G. The design or appearance of the toy  
H. The multiple use of the toy  
I. Other (please specify)

**XIII. IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE TOYS ARE NEUTRAL AND REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY. WHAT KIND OF IMPACT WOULD IT HAVE ON CHILDREN?**

- A. Stereotypes between genders and ethnicities would gradually disappear and all children would play with the same toys
- B. Children would still express preferences, but their choice would express their personal preference based on who they are and not influenced by societal pressure or advertising
- C. There would be no difference in toy preferences. Girls would play mainly with dolls and boys mainly with cars
- D. Other (please specify)

**XIV. THERE ARE 93 MILLION CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WORLDWIDE (SOURCE: UNICEF). THEY ARE EXCLUDED OR MISREPRESENTED BY THE TOY AND ADVERTISING INDUSTRIES. DO YOU THINK THAT MAKING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES VISIBLE IN TOY ADVERTS AND MORE TOYS ADAPTED TO THEIR NEEDS COULD CHANGE THE WAY SOCIETY LOOKS AT THEM?**

- A. Strongly disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Strongly agree

**XV. ON A SCALE FROM 0-10, WOULD IT HELP THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IF CHILDREN WERE AWARE OF DISABILITIES THROUGH TOYS AND TOY ADVERTISING**



**XVI. WHAT WOULD HELP PROMOTE MORE INCLUSIVE TOYS? (CHOOSE UP TO 3)** By “inclusive toys” we refer to toys that represent different ethnicities, genders and ability statuses, and toys which are not restricted to or associated with a specific gender.

- A. Laws to regulate toy advertising
- B. Campaigning by NGOs
- C. Awareness of families
- D. Awareness of teachers
- E. Expert coverage in the media
- F. More neutral and inclusive marketing of toys
- G. More diversity in toy production
- H. Other (please specify)

**XVII. WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS TO THE ACCEPTANCE OF “INCLUSIVE TOYS” ? (CHOOSE UP TO 3 OPTIONS)**

- A. Parents/family
- B. Media and advertisers
- C. Bullying by children/peers
- D. Toy shops
- E. Society
- F. Schools
- G. Toy companies
- H. Other (please specify)

**XVIII. SHARE YOUR TOY STORIES, OPINIONS, SUGGESTIONS WITH US.**

**XIX. ARE YOU A...**

- A. Woman
- B. Man
- C. Other

**XX. WHAT COUNTRY DO YOU LIVE IN?**

- |                |         |                 |                |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|----------------|
| Austria        | Finland | Lithuania       | Slovenia       |
| Belgium        | France  | Luxembourg      | Spain          |
| Bulgaria       | Germany | Malta           | Sweden         |
| Croatia        | Greece  | The Netherlands | United Kingdom |
| Cyprus         | Hungary | Poland          |                |
| Czech Republic | Ireland | Portugal        | Non-EU Country |
| Denmark        | Italy   | Romania         |                |
| Estonia        | Latvia  | Slovakia        |                |

**XXI. WHAT IS YOUR AGE?**

- A. Less than 18 years
- B. 18-25 years
- C. 26-35 years
- D. 36-45 years
- E. 46-55 years
- F. 56-65 years
- G. Above 65 years







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